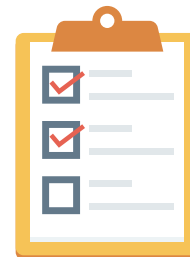




**AMBER
ALERT**

PREPARING FOR A MISSING CHILD INCIDENT

Missing child incidents and abductions are immensely serious matters with the potential to shake the very core of any department or agency. With such high stakes, it is critical that preparatory steps be taken to limit the risk of such incidents, and respond successfully when they do happen.



Key Types of Missing Child Incidents

Preparation for a missing child incident entails building background knowledge about the kinds of situations surrounding the disappearance of a child. All missing child incidents can be categorized in to one of the following:

- Non-Family Abduction
- Family Abduction
- Runaway
- Thrownaway
- Lost, Injured or Otherwise Missing

Understanding, recognizing and documenting the type of missing child incident will help an agency successfully respond with an organized plan or policy.

Crafting and Instituting a Policy for Missing Child Incidents

Missing child incidents are diverse cases that require a specific tailored policy that fits the capabilities of the agency. While every agency, structure, size, and situations are different, there are a few key elements that should be included in every missing child incident policy and plan.

1. All reports need to be taken seriously

A report of a missing child needs to always be seen as a potentially life-threatening situation. All efforts must be made to recover the child safely and promptly regardless of past experiences, lack of information, or timing of the report.

2. Jurisdiction issue guidelines

Jurisdictional issues are common for missing child incidents, and especially so for incidents in Native communities. It is important to understand jurisdictional boundaries, document clear procedures for responding to those boundaries, and prepare to act accordingly to successfully recover a missing child.

3. Activation of AMBER Alert System

The AMBER Alert System is one of the most powerful tools that can be used in a missing child incident. Successful activation of the system typically requires the responding agency to have the following information on hand.

- Law enforcement believes an abduction has occurred.
- Law enforcement believes the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death.



- Sufficient descriptive information about the victim, the suspect, and the abduction exists for law enforcement to issue an AMBER Alert.
- The child is 17 years old or younger.
- The child's name and other critical information, including the "child abduction" flag, have been entered into the National Crime Information Center system.

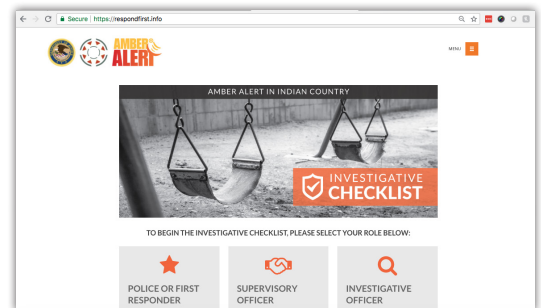
Activation of the AMBER Alert System should be included in any missing child incident plan or policy.

4. Roles for responding effectively to a missing child incident

Many missing child incidents can become complex cases with multiple roles and responsibilities for the responding agency. A solid and well-constructed missing child incident policy should include what the major roles are as well as what they entail. While these roles can be different and should be reflective of the agencies capabilities, most tasks can be organized into one of three categories.

- First Responder
- Supervisory Officer
- Investigative Officer

The **Investigative Checklist** breaks down the individual tasks that should be accomplished by each role and offers a starting place for identifying the recommended steps of response.



5. Holistic and detailed response procedures

An effective policy should have detail for every step of a missing child investigation including a plan for media outreach, organizing a community canvass, and providing family and community support. Additional details and planning will always strengthen a robust and effectual response to a missing child.

Training before the Incident

Training for a missing child incident is critical for community safety. Every agency should create, review, and practice an organized plan or response for when a missing child incident occurs.

Simply having a plan for a missing child incident has limited use if members of an agency are not familiar with the specific roles, procedures, and timeline of duties. Once a policy or plan has been created, be sure to practice the plan and look for ways to strengthen the response.

Additional Resources

To begin making an effective plan for responding to missing child incidents, please refer to the suggested roles and responsibilities in each of the checklists on <https://amber-ic.org/resources/checklists>.

Agencies should also be sure to review the **additional resources** available and add pertinent information such as community canvassing or responding to a missing child with disabilities to their internal policies.