



CART ASSESSOR GUIDE

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T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

About the Child Abduction Response Team (CART) Certification Program.....3

Limitation of Liability4

History of the CART Program5

Objectives of the CART Certification Program6

The AATTAP CART Certification Team: Roles and Responsibilities7

 CART Certification Manager7

CART Assessors.....8

AMBER Alert Regional Liaisons.....10

CART Certification Criteria and Standards.....11

 Section 1: Response Criteria.....11

 Standards for Section 1: Response Criteria12

 Section 2: Team Composition12

 Standards for Section 2: Team Composition.....12

 Section 3: Notification Protocol13

 Standards for Section 3: Notification Protocol.....13

 Section 4: Communications.....15

 Standards for Section 4 - Communications.....15

 Section 5: Command and Control16

 Standards for Section 5: Command and Control.....16

 Section 6: Search, Canvass, and Rescue Operations17

 Standards for Section 6: Search, Canvass, and Rescue Operations.....17

 Section 7: Training.....18

 Standards for Section 7: Training.....18

 Section 8: Legal Issues19

 Standards for Section 8: Legal Issues.....19

 Section 9: Equipment Inventory20

 Standards for Section 9: Equipment Inventory20

 Section 10: CART Protocols21

 Standards for Section 10: CART Protocols.....22

 Section 11: Victim Assistance and Reunification23

 Standards for Section 11: Victim Assistance and Reunification.....23

 Section 12: Community24

 Standards for Section 12: Community.....24

CART Certification Requirements.....25

 Certification Eligibility25

 Applying for CART Certification.....26

 CART Certification Assessment Criteria26

CART Assessor Protocol28

 The Onsite Certification Exercise: Assessor Presentation and Guidance28

 Field Exercise30

 Assessor Closing Statement31

The Lead Assessor’s Final Report.....32

CART Certification Process: Evaluation and Quality Assurance34

Appendix A.....35

 Publicly Available CART Certification Resources.....35

 Secure/Portal Access Only CART Certification Resources.....36

Appendix B: Sample Schedule: CART Onsite Assessment Field Exercise37

 Day One.....37

 Day Two38

Appendix C: Example Certification Award Letter from AATTAP39

Appendix D: Sample CART Certification Press Release.....40

About the Child Abduction Response Team (CART) Certification Program

The Child Abduction Response Team (CART) **Certification Program** has been developed to assist local, tribal and state jurisdictions in the creation and implementation of CART programs. This program guide provides those AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program (AATTAP) staff and associates with valuable information on best practices regarding the components of assessment for agency compliance with required certification standards.

The companion guide to this publication, the [CART Certification Manual and Agency Guide](#), offers CART programs interested in preparing for and achieving certification detailed information on the overall process and all standards for which compliance must be demonstrated to be awarded the status of official certified team by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Both guides have been developed by subject matter experts, practitioners and legal advisors, and are intended to provide a basis to determine the operational readiness of jurisdictions committed to the protection of children and especially missing, endangered or abducted children.



Limitation of Liability

To the extent allowable by law, the agency seeking certification agrees to indemnify, hold harmless and defend Fox Valley Technical College, the United States Department of Justice, its agents, servants and employees, from any and all lawsuits, claims, demands, liabilities, losses, and expenses; including court costs and attorney's fees for or on account of any injury to any person, or any death at any time resulting from such injury, or any damage to property, which may arise or which may be alleged to have arisen out of, or in connection with the work covered by this project.

For more information on CART, or for other AMBER Alert publications, please contact:

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History of the CART Program

In 2006, the United States Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) launched the Child Abduction Response Team (CART) Training program as part of its AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program (AATTAP) initiative. Like AMBER Alerts, a CART represents a critical tool to provide law enforcement with an effective and efficient response to a missing child incident where a child is believed to be endangered or abducted. As a result of the initial success and acceptance of the CART initiative by law enforcement professionals, the program has now evolved to be recognized as an essential component of a community's work to develop and strengthen an enhanced comprehensive child recovery strategy.

Leading subject matter experts, practitioners, policymakers, and other child protection specialists have developed operational standards of excellence and evidence-based best practices related to the recovery of missing children. These professionals have worked with the U.S. DOJ and AATTAP to develop a process and criteria whereby jurisdictions can voluntarily seek an opportunity to demonstrate CART policy, procedures and continuous improvement strategies which meet more than 47 standards of compliance across an array of operational readiness areas. This established CART Certification process culminates in a rigorous practical field exercise, observed and evaluated by a team of trained assessors, to confirm a CART program's ability to rapidly and effectively operationalize, carrying out all functions and maintaining all critical documentation and records, over the life of an endangered or missing child incident.

As mentioned earlier, the companion guide to this publication, the [CART Certification Manual and Agency Guide](#), offers CART programs detailed information on the overall process and all standards for which compliance must be demonstrated to be awarded the status of official certified team. The CART Certification process is framed around the following areas of demonstrated compliance.

- Successfully complete application for CART Certification, submitted by the team's CART coordinator, with all required documentation included as per the application's instructions.
- Compliance with 47 specific standards covering 12 areas of operations.
- Extensive review of all CART policies and operational procedures.
- Interviews with designated CART personnel.
- In-depth examination of the CART program's training requirements.
- Onsite/live observation and evaluation of a full-scale CART field exercise by an AATTAP assessment team.

Upon completion and receipt of all application requirements, an onsite CART assessment is scheduled and confirmed between the AATTAP CART project coordinator and the requesting team's coordinator. This initiates the important preparations related to policy and procedure compilation and preliminary review which occurs in the weeks leading up to the onsite assessment of the full-scale field exercise.

The onsite event, which generally spans two full days, is comprehensively observed and evaluated by a team of trained AATTAP assessors. Over the course of the field exercise, each of the 47 standards is observed through a combination of team actions and related procedural documentation and interviews of key CART personnel. Successful completion of the field exercise and subsequent field report documentation establish that the CART program has demonstrated the highest standards of excellence both in policy as well as practice.

Objectives of the CART Certification Program

The following objectives of CART Certification have been established.

- Develop and implement evidenced-based standards of excellence which require CART programs to build, execute, and continuously improve capacities, competencies, skills and abilities to safely recover missing children.
- Enhance the critical and specific capacities and competencies of personnel from agencies comprising CART and other community components to safely recover missing children by maintaining adherence to recognized best practices.
- Require CART programs to continuously update and improve policies, written directives, utilization and identification of resources, and other necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities as part of a comprehensive child recovery strategy.
- Provide policymakers, elected officials, public safety organizations, child protection professionals, and the general public assurance of due diligence, adoption of the highest standards of child recovery initiatives, and overall confidence of operational readiness to protect, respond to, and recover endangered missing and abducted children.

The AATTAP CART Certification Team: Roles and Responsibilities

CART Certification Manager

The CART certification manager (CCM) is an associate role which may be utilized by AATTAP, in addition to the AATTAP CART project coordinator staff position, to provide robust stewardship of the overall CART certification process. The CCM and AATTAP CART project coordinator will work with a designated lead assessor and one or more co-assessors to comprise what will hereafter be referred to as the **AATTAP assessment team**.

The CCM (if utilized) and the AATTAP CART project coordinator will provide overall coordination and oversight for the certification process and will serve as the principal point of contact with the AATTAP Administrator for discussion and decision points throughout each CART certification process.

The Principle Duties and Responsibilities of the CCM and AATTAP CART Project Coordinator

- Oversee the CART certification process.
- Coordinate, with the AATTAP Administrator, the final eligibility of any CART applying for certification.
- Assist as needed in the training and management of CART certification lead and/or co-assessors.
- Work closely with the AATTAP Administrator and staff to review applications and assess team and/or jurisdictional readiness/ability for applying teams to meet the established CART certification objectives.
- Contribute to certification application decisions and assist with scheduling/confirmation onsite assessment events.
- Review all documents and reports completed by CART assessors for completeness, accuracy, and consistency with certification requirements and expected outcomes.
- Recommend certification approvals to the AATTAP Administrator.
- For CARTs not recommended for certification following an onsite assessment event, coordinate with assessors to remedy non-compliance issues and/or deficiencies identified and documented by onsite assessors, to include official correspondence to the designated applying CART's agency points of contact.
- Review lead and co-assessor peer performance feedback and evaluation input as received from the applying CART's coordinator via the prescribed post-event quality assurance online survey.
- Perform all other duties and project tasks as assigned by the AATTAP Administrator.

Benchmarks for Key Duties in the Overall Certification Process

- Review all standards/proofs and the proposed field exercise submitted by the CART requesting certification; as needed, discuss questions/concerns internally with AATTAP Administrator and/or AATTAP assessment team prior to any follow up with the requesting team's CART coordinator. Review of the standards/proofs should be completed across no more than 3 total days/24 hours of offsite work, no later than 30 days from receipt of the last standard/ proof from the requesting agency/team's CART coordinator.
- **Within 3 business days** of this review completion, the CCM and/or AATTAP CART project coordinator will discuss concerns or corrections/changes to be made on standards/proofs/field exercise with the requesting team's coordinator; *corrections should be returned to AATTAP within 5 business days of this joint review.*
- **Within 5 business days** of receipt of corrected/final files from the requesting team's coordinator, the CCM and/or AATTAP CART project coordinator will approve the standards/proofs and field exercise and will notify the requesting team's coordinator of this decision.
- **Within 15 business days** of approval, the CCM and/or AATTAP CART project coordinator will author a summary report for the certification file and will upload that file to the AATTAP CART database.
- **Not later than 45 days prior** to the scheduled onsite CART certification event, the CCM and/or AATTAP CART project coordinator will notify all AATTAP assessors of their assignments.
- **Not later than 30 days prior** to the scheduled CART certification event, the CCM and/or AATTAP CART project coordinator will meet with onsite assessors via teleconference to review the CART's proposed field exercise and standards/proofs, and to discuss any issues or concerns.
- **Not later than 15 business days prior** to the certification event, the CCM and/or AATTAP CART project coordinator will meet with AATTAP assessors and the requesting team's coordinator via teleconference to review the schedule for the onsite evaluation and to discuss and confirm all event logistics.

CART Assessors

Appropriately trained assessors are utilized for onsite CART certification assessments. These assessors are proven public safety professionals who possess extensive knowledge, and who bring to the process a wide variety of important skills and abilities. Assessors are assigned to specific components of the overall CART certification process to ensure careful and targeted observation and evaluation of a team's ability to demonstrate compliance with each certification standard over the course of the onsite event.

The Principle Duties and Responsibilities of CART Assessors

- Upon invitation from AATTAP, complete the online web form to submit the assessor application.
- Review and develop extensive working knowledge of all CART standards and demonstrate understanding of applicability.
- Successfully complete required assessor training. Attend child protection training courses as advised by the AATTAP Administrator and/or AATTAP CART project coordinator for skill enhancement.
- Undergo required performance reviews with the AATTAP CART project coordinator.
- Assessors will disclose any potential conflict of interest in performing their duties as an assessor in writing to the AATTAP CART project coordinator prior to performing any duties associated with a certification.
- Manage and coordinate all facets of the onsite assessment with the requesting agency's CART coordinator, to include scheduling of necessary personnel for interviews, providing workspace and onsite transportation and coordinating any other facet of the onsite assessment as requested and deemed appropriate.
- Prepare and submit for review and approval a comprehensive evaluation report following the onsite assessment, to be completed as soon as is feasible following the field exercise, and/or as directed by the AATTAP CART project coordinator.
- If non-compliance with CART standards is identified and corrective measures prescribed for the requesting CART to achieve certification, those will be addressed in the draft report; once the measures are remediated, the assessor will include those details in the report and submit the final report to the AATTAP CART project coordinator within 15 days of completion.
- Upon conclusion of the field exercise, assessors are **instructed not to advise** any CART program personnel about the status of their performance or certification; such decision and communication will **only** be made by the AATTAP Administrator and designated staff (generally the AATTAP CART project coordinator and/or CCM)

AMBER Alert Regional Liaisons

The AATTAP Administrator has designated five geographical regions and has established liaisons for each to support effective communication and collaboration with AMBER Alert partners in the U.S. states and territories.

CART Program Development and Team Certification: AATTAP Regional Liaison Support

- Within the assigned region, and utilizing the CART Administrative Database located on the AMBER Advocate partners portal, create and update information on all CART programs, providing data and documentation on all required elements of the database’s ‘CART Record’ format (including but not limited to items such as contact information, training and certification dates, resources provided and/or developed, etc.).
- Market CART initiatives to include the certification process within the designated region and provide referral information to the appropriate liaison for any contacts received outside the assigned region.
- Through the AMBER Advocate Partners Portal CART database and through monthly activity reporting tools on the portal, create and maintain contact records for all assistance provided to CARTs in the assigned region (e.g., training/resource referrals, meetings/teleconferences, etc.).
- The liaison may serve as the initial point of contact for any CART expressing a desire to pursue certification; however, all administrative actions will be completed by AATTAP staff and approved by the AATTAP Administrator.
- Provide CART programs who request information about team development and/or certification with guidance on the location and best use of the CART Resources page on the AMBER Advocate website (<https://www.amberadvocate.org/cartresources>), where best practice guides, the certification manual, operational form templates, as well as certification and recertification forms, can be viewed/downloaded/submitted.
- Provide other assistance to CART programs as specified by the AATTAP Administrator or CART project coordinator.



CART Certification Criteria and Standards

Following each standard criterion, you will find **bolded text** indicating the documentation and/or observations to be obtained as part of the assessor's evaluation of the CART's compliance with that standard.

Section 1: Response Criteria

This section describes the basis for a CART activation, mobilization or call-out. CARTs must have established criteria in order to know when activation, mobilization or call-out is appropriate. Standards require the criteria be well defined and acknowledged by all participating agencies. 'Activation', 'mobilization', and 'call-out' are terms utilized interchangeably which characterize the assembly and deployment of a CART.

The following are examples of criteria for a CART activation, mobilization or call-out discussed during CART training; however, additional deployment criteria may be considered/adopted by member agencies.

1. The true (non-family) abduction of a minor child (under the age of 18).
2. The abduction of a minor child (under the age of 18 or consistent with state, tribal, or local statutes for proper age designation) with a belief of endangerment or imminent harm circumstances.
 - These circumstances must clearly be articulated to the CART coordinator in order to activate, mobilize and deploy the team members.
 - The child's disappearance or abduction should meet the agreed upon criteria if the child's life or well-being is perceived to be at-risk (due to violence or health conditions), or if the identified parental abductor has a potential for violence or could endanger the child.
 - These may reflect the appropriate AMBER Alert criteria or any other activation criteria indicating endangerment of the child.
3. Any other abduction or missing child investigation that requires immediate response in order to protect the well-being of the child. All incidents at this level shall require the approval of the CART coordinator or his/her designee.

To initiate a request for assistance, the criminal justice agency administrator (designated point of contact/commanding officer) must contact the appropriate CART coordinator, or other appointed administrator in the absence of the CART coordinator, who will approve or deny the request based upon the criteria specified in the policy or operating procedure governing the CART. This process should be guided by interagency agreements or memoranda of understanding.

Standards for Section 1: Response Criteria

- 1.1 The CART has a written set of criteria to determine the circumstances in which CART activation can occur. **(Policy | written directive | proof of distribution)**
- 1.2 The criteria have been communicated to all participating agencies, and such criteria are supported through written documentation clearly indicating all member CART agencies agree. **(MOU | training roster | policy | proof of distribution)**
- 1.3 The criteria shall be incorporated in all participating agencies' policies, directives and/or standard operating procedures. **(Sample policies from all applicable agencies | proof of distribution)**

Section 2: Team Composition

This section addresses the composition of the team and personnel selection, to ensure team membership represents the various stakeholders involved in incidents of endangered missing and abducted children. For a CART to be successful during an activation, mobilization or call-out, the team must have personnel available with a level of expertise which affords swift and accurate response, and which supports the effective activation of the CART. Examples include personnel experienced in interviewing, canvassing, search and rescue, search and seizure, forensic evidence collection, information analysis, and other areas relating to endangered missing and abducted child cases.

Standards for Section 2: Team Composition

- 2.1 The CART has an assigned CART coordinator who has responsibility and oversight of the CART coordination, process, team development, training, debriefings, after action reports, and other logistical needs as determined by the CEOs and CART members. The CART coordinator determines who is responsible for coordination in the event of CART call-out. The CART coordinator can be either sworn or non-sworn and must possess supervisory responsibilities with a proven background in leadership and management. **(Job description document | proof of distribution | posted announcement)**
- 2.2 The CART roster and team makeup will be posted at member agencies and distributed to all personnel of each agency. The CART coordinator is responsible to maintain and update the CART roster, including all contact information and version history/date of last update. **(Roster of personnel | effective date version history | revisions)**
- 2.3 The CART should include representatives of various agencies, to include: public safety personnel (federal, state and local), U.S. Attorneys, correctional personnel, child welfare personnel, school

resource officers, crime stoppers, search and rescue groups and/or personnel from other organizations who could assist the CART in the event of an endangered missing or abducted child. **(Roster of personnel to include agency and specialty; should be current and reflect version history/revision | interviews | observation)**

- 2.4 The CART coordinator is responsible for maintaining selection criteria for assignment and replacement of CART personnel. Consideration should be given to members regarding specialized skills. Written policy or directive should outline in detail the selection process, include position descriptions, all appropriate training and skills inventories, along with any other policy guidance. These items and documentation should demonstrate that personnel being utilized possess appropriate and significant expertise in serving as members of the CART.
- 2.5 The CART must have demonstrated capacity to sustain activation, mobilization and deployment over multiple days. **(Relief schedule document | call-out schedule | example(s) of how sustained activation has been accomplished previously by the team)**

Section 3: Notification Protocol

This section relates to important considerations for the activation, mobilization, or call-out of a CART. For a CART to be successful in its mission, the agency of jurisdiction must have a proven and effective method to execute the team's deployment. The CART coordinator or designee must know who to contact and the team must be able to respond immediately.

Standards for Section 3: Notification Protocol

- 3.1 Each participating law enforcement or public safety agency has a written policy that provides specific and detailed information regarding how to activate, mobilize, call-out, and deploy the CART. Further, the policy or written directive shall describe in its procedures the person within the organization who has the authority to request activation. **(Policy | directives for all involved agencies on CART | proof of distribution)**
- 3.2 The CART has written documentation stating how the CART coordinator is notified and how activation, mobilization, call-out, and deployment is approved. **(Policy | directives on notifications and approval | examples of past processes)**
- 3.3 The policy or directive shall include the designated CART coordinator and applicable succession plan in the event the designated CART coordinator is unavailable. This succession plan must be included in the policy or directive and updated prior to any announced changes to the CART Coordination

protocol. **(Organizational chart showing chain of command | proof of distribution)**

- 3.4 There shall be written procedures/processes for CART activation, mobilization, call-out, and deployment, including all items below. **(Policy | directives | observations and interviews can supplement policy or directives)**
 - a. Method and manner of notification to responding CART members and any other personnel
 - b. Responsibilities of responding CART members
 - c. Time requirements for response
 - d. If applicable, equipment that assigned members should bring
- 3.5 Governance policy and written directives should include specific equipment availability, operational protocols for equipment use, and any specific designation of personnel responsible to obtain and deliver the referenced equipment to the designated scene, location or staging area. Current contact information for all CART personnel must be maintained and made accessible to all member agencies. **(List of current contact info, dated and reflecting version history/revisions | if directives have been tested, include copy of after-action results)**
- 3.6 The CART has an established method to ensure proper identification of/for CART members during CART activation (such as identification cards with photo, agency member name, and name of CART member). Such protocol shall not conflict with an agency's security and confidentiality requirements. If such conflict exists, the specific agency must be identified and a substitute identification protocol must be in place prior to an activation, mobilization, or call-out. **(Observed | photo should be placed in file)**
- 3.7 The CART policy or written directive shall include an expected response time for activation, mobilization, or call-out to the designated location. This policy or directive should include proof of agreement by participating member agencies.

Section 4: Communications

The purpose of this section of standards is to establish written protocol, directive, or policy on communications protocol, coordination, and specific interagency agreements to support the CART and investigative response. During CART activation, mobilization, call-out, and deployment, multiple agencies will be on scene in staging areas or actively engaged in the investigation, requiring internal and interagency communications. CART agencies must recognize the need to have established communication protocols to accommodate the host of challenges associated with deploying to investigate, rescue and recover endangered missing and abducted children.

Standards for Section 4 – Communications

- 4.1 The CART has a process in place to immediately establish a hotline number (preferably toll-free) for tips and leads. **(Written directive | SOP/policy | observation of phone bank/lead processing operations | interviews)**
- 4.2 The CART has written guidelines indicating how staffing will occur at the hotline number/call center/phone bank to accomplish effective intake and logging of calls. **(Written directive | SOP/policy | schedule of call-takers/telecommunicators | observation | interviews)**
- 4.3 The CART has an established process/system for leads management, including the coordination, assignment, prioritization, tracking, and resolution/closure of leads. **(SOP/policy | directive | training roster | lesson plan | copies of lead sheets/examples of completed lead sheets)**
- 4.4 The CART coordinator maintains a current list of all communication equipment to be utilized in CART activation. The list must include all the items below. **(SOP/policy | inventory list | testing schedules | maintenance records | training records | skills inventory | emergency measures if failure occurs)**
 - a. Personnel responsible for maintenance and upkeep (e.g., regular testing, fresh batteries, proper storage and transport)
 - b. A log of personnel trained and tested for proficiency in the use of assigned equipment
 - c. Field test records to ensure equipment is compatible with all jurisdictions covered by the CART with written backup plan(s) for equipment failure
- 4.5 A procedure is in place to ensure equipment can be accessed in a timely manner in the event of activation, and the equipment is accessible by more than one person. **(SOP/policy | observation | interviews)**

Section 5: Command and Control

This section recognizes the nature of CART activation, mobilization, call-out or deployment and acknowledges multiple agencies/jurisdictions may be responding. The CART serves as an enhancement resource comprised of experts, equipment and a planned strategy to respond to critical incidents of endangered missing and abducted children. It is imperative a command and control structure and policy be in place that is understood and agreed upon prior to such activation. The requesting agency shall maintain the lead role during CART activation, mobilization, call-out and deployment.

Standards for Section 5: Command and Control

- 5.1 The CART maintains an organizational chart detailing roles and lines of authority and reporting for the entire team. The chart should include detailed language on who oversees the overall CART, and how authorizations are affected across all CART functions. **(Organizational chart | SOP/policy | directive | command responsibilities | supervision)**
- 5.2 A written directive must be agreed upon by all participating agencies which details an Incident Command System (ICS) including the role of the CART coordinator, the role CART plays in the establishment of a command post, how the incident commander is determined once the CART has arrived on scene, and how conflicts are resolved between CART and other responding entities (e.g., federal, state or local authorities). ICS protocol shall be a component of the CART policy, directive and training, and shall be consistent with the uniform ICS adopted by each state and political subdivision or tribal nation. The ICS is a standardized, on scene, all-hazards incident management approach developed and adopted by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. **(SOP/policy | MOUs | directives | ICS training logs | lesson plans)**
- 5.3 A written directive exists describing the various assignments necessary during CART activation, mobilization, call-out, and deployment; including, but not limited to, a lead investigator(s), emergency operations coordinator (EOC), AMBER Alert representative, witness coordinator, leads analyst, media representative, support/logistics representative, search coordinator, family liaison, technical support, legal advisor and a crime scene/forensic evidence collection representative. **(Directive | SOP/policy | assignment roster | training schedules/agendas/certificates | CART organizational chart)**

Section 6: Search, Canvass, and Rescue Operations

This section recognizes the intricacies involved in conducting searches. The importance of the search, canvass, and rescue operations cannot be overstated in CART activation, mobilization, call-out, and deployment. In endangered missing and abducted child events, time is of the essence, and agencies should use all available means to search the immediate and collateral area; and to potentially obtain a direction of travel or investigative leads. Immediate and collateral areas include the last known location of the child or children, witnessed locations of activities of the suspects, individuals with knowledge of the abduction, and other identifiable locations critical to the determination of the location of the child or children. Analysis and review of child abduction investigations clearly indicates it is imperative for searches to be controlled, coordinated and conducted by trained personnel. Additionally, experience strongly supports the use of tracking dogs, when available, as they are essential with these incident types and the scope and complexity of investigations they require. K9 assets used in search and tracking often provide information that leads to the rapid recovery of the child. The following standards reflect the various elements that must be in place to ensure searches are conducted quickly and effectively and are not compromised.

Standards for Section 6: Search, Canvass, and Rescue Operations

- 6.1 The CART has a document detailing the types of searches on which the team has been trained, and the forms to be used when conducting these searches (e.g., neighborhood canvass, sex offender interviews, roadblock canvass, and grid searches). Documents should be personnel-specific and should include any specialized skills or certification, such as K-9 certification. **(SOP/policy | directives | training logs | lesson plans | sample documents | certification documents)**
- 6.2 The CART has a designated search coordinator responsible for ensuring searches are conducted properly during an activation, search areas and search participants are logged, searchers are briefed and updated, search perimeters are defined, and procedures are in place for handling evidence. **(SOP/policy | directive | training certificates | lesson plans)**
- 6.3 The CART has a written protocol in place for a tracking dog to be dispatched to the scene within a defined response time. **(SOP/policy | directive | interviews)**
- 6.4 If CART utilizes volunteers, all appropriate personnel information, training, equipment and the volunteers' roles should be clearly explained and agreed upon. Special emphasis should be placed on integrity and background clearances of selected volunteers. If an agency does not utilize volunteers, a plan must be in place to deal with volunteers who self-dispatch to the area to offer assistance. **(SOP/policy | directives | interviews)**

Section 7: Training

This section addresses the minimum training standards for CART development and ongoing proficiency. There should be a designated training coordinator for CART. The designated training coordinator can be a member of the CART or participating agency with the requisite skills, knowledge, competencies and abilities to design, develop and deliver required or designated training to support the CART. CART training should be designed and delivered for individual and team assignments, emphasizing expectations and responsibilities to ensure an effective multi-disciplinary and multi-agency and response. The standards in this section provide direction as to who should be trained and the need for a set of training standards which outline required competencies and capacities across the scope of all team roles/functions.

Nothing in this standard should be interpreted to be inconsistent with established state, local or tribal statutes, legislative acts or executive orders to establish minimum training standards for law enforcement or public safety professionals. Appropriate minimum standards established by each state, local or tribal legislative or executive branch shall be the threshold for referenced training and will represent the minimum standards for competencies, skills, knowledge and abilities.

Standards for Section 7: Training

- 7.1 There is a designated training coordinator for the CART. **(Organizational chart | job description)**
- 7.2 Training occurs semi-annually, at a minimum, and team members practice and/or train together. At least 60% of CART members must attend each training session or designated specialty training.
- 7.3 CART-related training for team members must be documented and maintained to provide proof of compliance. **(CART meeting/training schedule | SOP/policy | directive | rosters | lesson plans)**
- 7.4 A mock activation exercise or tabletop exercise is conducted annually if the team has not had a real activation during the same time frame. At least 60% of CART members must attend the scheduled exercise. **(After action report | SOP/policy | directive | copy of field exercise | roster of attendees | copy of debriefed document)**
- 7.5 Assigned team members who require specialized skills, such as investigators, crime scene, search/rescue and K-9 personnel, etc., will receive training from their agencies for these skills. **(SOP/policy | directives | training roster | schedules | lesson plans | copy of certificates/certification)**
- 7.6 A current skills inventory document is maintained and includes details of all training each team member receives and the knowledge, skills, and abilities each member possesses as a result of the training. **(Directive | SOP/policy | personal history form on each member | training roster | schedules)**

Section 8: Legal Issues

The goal in endangered missing and abducted child cases is to rescue the child and develop a solid, prosecutable case against the offender(s) without violating the constitutional rights of the innocent or the accused. This section contains standards required to ensure these elements are achieved and that issues such as search and seizure and the role of the prosecutor in the CART command post are addressed in the overall CART protocol. When establishing a CART, agencies must be fully aware of potential legal issues. If legal opinions are necessary or legal action needs to be taken immediately during a call-out, it is essential to have proactively developed a relationship with a legal advisor, and to have considered and addressed all known/potential jurisdictional issues and liability concerns. This supports having in place, before these incidents occur, all necessary Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) or Mutual Aid Agreements. The complexity and time-critical nature of endangered missing and abducted child incidents necessitate solid readiness by the CART to execute investigative actions which supports effective prosecution of the offender(s) and careful protection of the victim(s).

Standards for Section 8: Legal Issues

- 8.1 The CART has written policy or directive establishing/outlining the authority team members must have to operate outside their area of jurisdiction. **(SOP/policy | directive | MOU/Mutual Aid Agreements | copy of law/authorization | interview)**
- 8.2 There is written policy or directive, and through Mutual Aid Agreements, state statute and/or MOUs, that address all liability issues, including protection of CART members (who may be injured while on an activation), as well as protection of members and their agencies from civil liability. **(SOP/policy | directives | MOU/mutual aid agreements, statutes/administrative rules)**
- 8.3 There must be written policy or a directive addressing the role of the prosecutor in the CART command post. **(SOP/policy | directive | MOU | operating agreement)**
- 8.4 The CART has a relationship with a legal advisor(s); and in case of civil litigation jurisdictions within, the CART would have appropriate access to legal representation. **(SOP/policy | directive | MOU | binding legal statute | city and state administrative rules)**

Section 9: Equipment Inventory

Previous sections of this document treat the availability of human resources during CART activation, mobilization, call-out, and deployment. This section relates to the physical resources and equipment necessary during the activation such as command vehicles, thermal infrared imaging systems, air support, tracking dogs, all-terrain vehicles, etc. The standards in this section provide ways to address how the CART can answer the following questions regarding the team's resources.

- a. What is the resource?
- b. Who has it?
- c. Who maintains it for operability?
- d. How is it accessed?
- e. Is access different depending upon time of day or day of week?
- f. What is the response time for acquiring the resource?
- g. Are there any costs involved with the resource?

Standards for Section 9: Equipment Inventory

- 9.1 The CART maintains a current list of equipment, guidelines for use and any expert personnel who can be utilized to operate and/or troubleshoot the equipment during the CART activation, mobilization, call-out, or deployment. Documentation directives shall include a list of all equipment and resources available to the CART. This directive must be updated at least semi-annually and is accessible to all members of the team. **(SOP/policy | directive | interview | observation | AAR-prior incidents)**
- 9.2 The directive for the CART inventory shall provide specific details for gaining and securing operational access to each specified item of equipment or resource. This standard requires the inventory of resources and assets to include the following documentation for all equipment and resources to be used by the CART. **(SOP/policy | directive | MOU)**
 - a. Each item of equipment or resource
 - b. Pre-agreement for use by the owner of each item of equipment or resource
 - c. Estimated response time for mobilization of each item of equipment or resource
 - d. An assumption of cost agreement by the CART from the agency possessing the item of equipment or resource
- 9.3 The CART inventory must demonstrate the team's full capacity to respond to the endangered missing or abducted child incident with the appropriate amount of physical and asset resources. This standard is assessed by CART Assessors prior to and during the onsite assessment and evaluation process. CART Assessors will determine the reasonable and appropriate resources and assets

available to the CART that are needed in order to effectively respond to, locate, and safely rescue/recover endangered missing and abducted children. (SOP/policy | directive | interview | observation | organization chart | rosters | MOU)

Section 10: CART Protocols

This section focuses on the need for establishing protocols and operating procedures and inclusion of these items in a CART manual. This is to ensure the CART functions in a manner consistent with the standards established herein, and that any changes to team dynamics, policies, or procedures are appropriately documented and maintained in a designated location.

While the standards in this section reflect documents and protocols developed by the CART member agencies and managed by the CART coordinator, all directives and documents are required to be shared and accepted by each participating agency. Signatures of the participating CEOs in the CART are required to signify acceptance and adoption by each of the respective agencies comprising the team.

The standards for operational protocols establish the responsibilities of the CART coordinator during activation, mobilization, call-out, and deployment, as well as specific information required for inclusion in written protocol, policy, or directive under CART assignments.

Responsibilities of the CART coordinator

1. Initiate the activation, mobilization, call-out, and deployment notice for CART members.
2. Coordinate the AMBER Alert (if applicable or designated) in accordance with department/agency procedures.
3. Activate and provide notice to establish a public telephone number in order to receive information and leads from the public.
4. Respond to the scene of the incident and assume or appoint the role of Incident Commander in order to facilitate the rescue, recovery and investigation.
 - a. Establish law enforcement contact with lead agency
 - b. Assign CART members to designated positions, location, or staging area
 - c. Obtain and document comprehensive incident briefings
 - d. Make investigative assignments as necessary or make assignments to supervisory investigative point of contact
 - e. Coordinate all activities on the scene with requesting (lead) agency

- f. Coordinate the utilization of crime scene unit(s)
 - g. Ensure the communications center has made all required notifications
 - h. Ensure CART resources (EOC, private organizations, media, etc.) are utilized and initiated immediately
 - i. Provide or designate a point of contact or public information for the lead agency to manage all media inquiries and information releases
5. Provide timely and periodic briefing summaries to the lead agency and CART members.
 6. Provide other coordination and management as determined by the CEOs of respective agencies participating in the CART.

Standards for Section 10: CART Protocols

- 10.1 A written CART response manual shall be developed and approved by participating agencies to include at a minimum the following items. **(SOP/policy | directives | CART manual with all referenced items highlighted and listed on table of contents | interviews | observation | AAR- prior incidents)**
 - a. The role of the CART coordinator
 - b. All current standards as reflected in the [AATTAP Cart Certification Manual](#)
 - c. Other critical team assignments, notification or activation, mobilization, call-out, and deployment of team members
 - d. Use of equipment
 - e. Use of an incident command structure on the scene
 - f. Designation of an Incident Commander
 - g. Legal documents
 - h. CART forms to be used
 - i. Leads tracking capability
 - j. Use of a tip line
 - k. Use of volunteers
 - l. A list of predetermined activities that will immediately take place as soon as CART arrives on scene, in order to limit downtime
- 10.2 Written documentation is available indicating and reflecting a debriefing is conducted and an after-action report is created after each real or field exercise. The documentation must also address how issues identified during the activation are resolved.
- 10.3 For purposes of the field exercise conducted for certification, the assessor report will serve to meet the after-action reporting requirement. A structured debriefing is required following the field

exercise. (SOP/policy | directives | AAR/debrief documentation, to include minutes and plan for collection and/or roster of attendees, and date and location of debrief to include distribution schedule)

Section 11: Victim Assistance and Reunification

A child abduction can absolutely devastate a family and paralyze a community. Families who have experienced this type of tragedy have indicated they were not prepared for all of the issues they faced, such as being thrown into the spotlight of the media, being the focus of the investigation to eliminate them as suspects, and dealing with psychics, volunteers and others who arrive at their doorstep or call to offer help. CART should identify a victim advocate or have other/additional resources available to assist the family and to act as a liaison with the responding law enforcement agency.

Once the child has been recovered, it is imperative services be made available to the child and victim family as soon as possible; not only to assist the child with any physical or medical needs, but also to assist in determining psychological needs resulting from the abduction. The existing body of research supporting this standard clearly indicates a forensic interview should be conducted by a recognized interviewer immediately following the recovery of the child or children. The forensic interview should be conducted to assist in apprehending suspect(s), determining if other crimes were committed against the child, and determining if returning the child to his or her home provides an appropriate, safe environment. Additionally, the forensic interview may provide information to assist in the prosecution of defendants and identify other potential victims and/or suspects resulting in additional investigations. This section contains standards that shall be in place as part of the CART initiative to clearly outline responsibilities to child victim and family, and to ensure proper support responses are immediately available for them. This standard also requires that a reunification plan exists as a part of the CART policy and procedure.

Standards for Section 11: Victim Assistance and Reunification

- 11.1 The CART has procedures in place to ensure medical and psychological assistance is readily available during CART activations, mobilization, call-outs, and deployments. The purpose of this standard is to ensure medical and psychological services and assistance are available. This standard mandates a protocol to provide the services but does not require a specific law enforcement or responding agency or organization to provide such services or assistance. (SOP/policy | directives | MOU/contract with service providers | redacted examples)
- 11.2 The CART has a key position assigned to the team (e.g., victim advocate) to address family assistance

during the investigation and reunification; and advocacy in the event the abduction resulted in the child's murder. This standard requires a description for the position, inclusive of the role of victim advocate. **(Organizational chart | skills inventory | SOP/policy | directives | observation | interviews)**

11.3 The CART has a plan in place that identifies services and resources available at the community, state, and national levels to assist in victim and family support during the investigation, reunification, and post-reunification referrals. These resources are documented in the CART's Resource Inventory. **(Resource Inventory)**

11.4 The CART procedure includes a requirement for a detailed forensic interview of the child by a qualified forensic interviewer. If possible, forensic interviewers will be identified prior to activation of the CART and all listed forensic interviewers will provide a statement of qualifications accepted in the jurisdiction of prosecution. **(Organizational chart | SOP/policy | directive | redacted examples of previous interviews)**

11.5 The CART procedure includes a requirement for a risk assessment and background check on the family/shelter prior to returning the child to the family/shelter. **(Copy of form/document to be used | examples of previous cases | MOU | SOP/policy | directive)**

Section 12: Community

This section focuses on the importance of CART in community education both for adults and juveniles. The standards stress the vital need for community outreach for all citizens, including children, to understand the proactive measures necessary in the prevention of missing, abducted and exploited children, which in turn will make communities safer for all.

Standards for Section 12: Community

12.1 Jurisdictions represented in CART have an established community outreach plan relating to the prevention of child abductions and the AMBER Alert plan utilized in that jurisdiction. **(Lesson plan or established curriculum | roster | appointment letter | agenda | social media account/page, or other public-facing website/page)**

12.2 Jurisdictions represented in CART hold educational sessions for juveniles and/or their parents regarding internet safety and other child safety prevention programs. **(Lesson plan | roster | appointment letter | agenda)**

CART Certification Requirements

Certification Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for CART Certification, jurisdictions must meet and/or complete the following items.

- The designated CART coordinator and the core members of the team must have attended a US-DOJ sponsored CART training program or other appropriate AATTAP sponsored training.
- The CART coordinator or designee will maintain a training record of AATTAP training attended by personnel assigned to the team and assure each member has received sufficient training and appropriate certifications to serve on the CART.
- Conduct one tabletop or field scenario exercise annually to test operational readiness and complete an appropriate after-action report. The report is to be submitted as part of the application package.
 - » If the CART has experienced an activation in the previous 12 months, this may be substituted, but an after-action report must be completed.
 - » Activation is defined as a mobilization of a substantial number of CART member components or the entire team, where a mission has been established and credible evidence supports activities to reflect an actual good faith response of a CART.
 - » The CART coordinator may submit the after-action report, or the prescribed version provided in the CART Certification Manual.
- Complete the CART Certification application to include an endorsement letter by the chief operating officer (CEO) of the lead agency for the CART.
 - » The CEO of the lead agency is defined as the authorized or statutorily provided, appointed or elected official with policy (legislative) and budgetary powers for a political subdivision of a state or a state entity or federally recognized tribe.
 - » The intent of this working definition is to provide guidance on the identification of the elected or appointed executive designated as a CEO; if needed and upon request, further clarification can be provided by the AATTA Program Director.
- If several agencies are designated as a lead agency in the CART organization, all lead agency CEO's must provide endorsement letters or sign a joint letter of agreement or memorandum of understanding. The documents should be included with the application packet.
- The CART must agree to an onsite certification event conducted by a designated team of assessors and which includes the following requirements.
 - » The CART will make all available appropriate personnel available.
 - » A full-scale mock field exercise will be conducted and observed by the AATTAP assessment team for the purpose of demonstrating practical and proficient understanding of CART standards and

best practices.

- » The mock exercise will be conducted without live weapons; designated training weapons (Red or Blue Guns) can be utilized during the exercise (refer to the [Safety Plan Form](#)).
- The AATTAP CART project coordinator, as well as the CCM and assessor team assigned to the certification event will thoroughly review all pertinent documents and proofs related to all CART Certification standards as established in this manual.

Applying for CART Certification

CART programs interested in pursuing certification from AATTAP and the US-DOJ can make application by completing the [online CART Certification Application form](#). This form is completed and submitted online **by the requesting CART program's CART coordinator**, and a complete copy of the form is automatically emailed to designated AATTAP staff and the submitter. Signed letters of agreement from all lead agencies, or a signed and dated MOU with all agency CEO signatures, are submitted electronically, via document upload as part of the online application form.

CART Certification Assessment Criteria

The following are guidelines regarding file review and compliance to be reviewed and understood by both the requesting CART coordinator and the AATTAP CART Certification team (AATTAP CART project coordinator, and the assigned lead and co-assessors).

- Review what the CART had to demonstrate and achieve before being eligible to request participation in the certification process, to include the following elements.
 - » Commitment from CEO (name) and other partners (names).
 - » Team composition established.
 - » All policy and procedures/protocols developed and accepted.
 - » Confirmation of ability to meet/demonstrate compliance with all CART Certification standards (12 sections consisting of 47 standards).
 - » Submission of complete CART Certification Application to AATTAP with all required documentation, such as team leadership roles and assignments, training and readiness information, after-action documentation (field/tabletop exercise and/or actual call-out), CEO signatures, etc..
- All standards must be in full compliance. If disputes arise regarding compliance, they are to be discussed amongst the AATTAP CART certification team as noted above, and a formal response/clarification provided to the requesting agency's CART coordinator by the AATTAP CART project coordinator or lead assessor (if authorized).

CART CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

- Standards can be addressed through a variety of proofs to include: General orders, standard operating procedures, written directives, interviews, or observations. However, where standards require specific documentation or proof, the language included in the standard will stand as the absolute requirement.
- Any documents presented as proof of compliance must be signed by the appropriate authority for other directives or policy by member agencies, show a current date and must be incorporated as part of official policy of the CART. Distribution of documents to all applicable individuals must be exhibited. The purpose of this guidance is to ensure the CEO for each member agency establishes directives reflecting CART participation and creates authority of enforcement of all directives.
- Standard Compliance documentation (SCD) and all necessary proofs related to them will be submitted by the requesting CART to the AATTAP CART project coordinator, and uploaded/managed electronically via secure portal, for use by the assigned CART certification team in offsite review of standard compliance, and in preparation for the onsite assessment. Assessors will provide review input in accordance with direction and parameters established by the AATTAP CART project coordinator.
- In the event a standard which is observed/confirmed as part of the onsite event is not in compliance, the CART coordinator may be able to achieve compliance before the conclusion of the onsite event. However, if not completed to the satisfaction of the assessors, the requesting agency CART coordinator and the lead assessor will develop a strategy to correct any deficiencies.
- For any standard requiring observable or documented action, if an action has occurred previously, proof of that action should be included/attached with relevant notation to the applicable SCD record(s) for that standard.
 - » Similarly, if a standard has an observable component, a photo/digital image should be included/attached to the applicable record(s) as well.
 - » The proofs requested for each standard serve as guidelines and all the proofs listed for a standard may not be needed. However, generally, as much proof as possible should be placed in the file.
 - » When proof elements (documents, images) are added to an SCD record, the applicable component of the element should be noted (e.g., 'See page 2 of attached SOP for relevant proof information').
- Simulation of certain events/tasks by the CART during the field exercise must be pre-approved by the CART lead assessor before the onsite visit.
- Many agencies have different terminology when addressing policy, written directives, and standard operating procedures. When in doubt, the requesting CART's definition and utilization of such documents will take precedence over the AATTAP certification team's definition. Generally, the following definitions apply.
 - » Policy – a binding document signed by CEO and distributed to all personnel in the agency.

- » Written Directive – a binding document signed by CEO but often distributed only to specific individuals serving a specific function.
- » Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) – Generally distributed to the impacted unit only, this is a binding document usually targeting a particular unit, skill, or expertise and serving as a “how to” manual for applicable personnel.

All forms related to CART Certification can be found in [Appendix A](#).

CART Assessor Protocol

The following guidelines are intended to provide direction and techniques for assessors when conducting a CART Certification. If required interviews and review of field exercise components have not already been completed via offsite/virtual meetings and/or correspondence with the requesting CART Coordinator and other applicable members, AATTAP assessors will use the morning of day one of the onsite event to conduct this work. During the afternoon of day one, an initial meeting will be held between the AATTAP assessors and members of the participating CART. This meeting may also include various members of the community and media and will provide an opportunity for the CART and AATTAP assessors to discuss various aspects of the certification process. As such, all statements/comments made by AATTAP assessors should clearly and consistently reflect only those official policies and positions of the DOJ/OJP/OJJDP and the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program.

The Onsite Certification Exercise: Assessor Presentation and Guidance

The following items represent elements to be presented/covered by the AATTAP assessment team during the two-day onsite certification field exercise event. Final agendas for each CART Certification event will be directed/approved by the AATTAP CART project coordinator and the AATTAP Administrator; as such, these items are intended to provide a general overview.

- A PowerPoint presentation will be delivered by the AATTAP CART assessment team which addresses the following items.
 - » **Introduction of Assessors:** Provide a brief background summary for each assessor.
 - » **The Purpose of CART:** Cover the overarching mission and supported outcomes of the CART initiative.
 - The US DOJ’s National Strategy to respond to reports of endangered missing and abducted children.

C A R T A S S E S S O R P R O T O C O L

- Training has been developed using best practices gained from actual incidents/cases.
 - The importance of jurisdictional/region-specific training on all CART program requirements and operational considerations (and confirmation/acknowledgment of the present CART's accomplishment of such training).
 - Provide, at the time of the event, the number of U.S. CARTs identifying/reporting to AATTAP as operationally ready, versus those programs that have successfully completed the US DOJ certification process.
 - The evolution of existing CART Certification standards as more CARTs are developed across the nation and the body of best practices is thus expanded.
- » **What Achieving Certification Represents:** Review what achieving certification represents for a CART program.
- Validation of the time/commitment/cost dedicated to team development.
 - Enables the CART to demonstrate its readiness to respond to reports of endangered, missing or abducted children.
 - Demonstrates the team's capacity and capabilities to meet the US DOJ's CART best practices; for the good of the members comprising the CART, the agencies represented, and the community it serves.
- » **Brief overview of the CART Certification Process:** Review the actual CART certification process that has occurred up to this point, and which will culminate over these last two days; describe what the AATTAP assessment team evaluates throughout the process.
- **Team Application:** Prior to the AATTAP assessment team's arrival at the onsite event, the team conducts an extensive review of documents supporting application, including all policies, procedures, MOUs, and other pertinent/required records.
 - **Interviews:** Prior to and/or during the onsite event, AATTAP assessors interview selected CART members to determine the team's level of understanding as it relates to the CART protocols and conduct onsite records review.
 - **Mock Abduction Field Exercise:** The certification requires a mock abduction field exercise to be held which includes the actual activation of the team and deployment of equipment and resources.
 - » **Prior to the onsite exercise:** In many cases, one or more members of the AATTAP assessment team may schedule an onsite visit with the CART lead agency/coordinator at a time prior to the date of the actual field exercise in order to see each location to be utilized during the event (to address any logistical concerns including site safety and participant safety).

- » **During the onsite exercise:** The assessment team will be evaluating identified critical components to determine team capabilities (i.e., policy vs. practice, team activation protocols, AMBER Alert activation protocols, call intake procedures, leads management capabilities, Incident Command Structure, incident and resource management, IT and telecommunications support, deployment and utilization of specialized assets such as K-9's, Air Ops, etc.). AATTAP assessors may interact with individuals on the CART to request identification, review roles/responsibilities and evaluate actions/operations of volunteers, search and canvass procedures, victim advocate participation, and/or reunification efforts.
- **Presentation Conclusion:** Provide explanation of next steps and remedy procedures required if the team does not meet a standard.
 - » For example, the CART coordinator will be provided documentation regarding the standard(s) in question and will then provide the team an opportunity to demonstrate proficiency. This may occur onsite during the event or may require further training and documentation in the days or weeks immediately following the event. Once the identified deficiency has been corrected and documentation submitted and approved (and once all other standards are met), the certification process is completed.
- **Question and Answer Session:** Assessors will provide a 'Question and Answer' opportunity for members present.

Field Exercise

Prior to any onsite assessment for certification, correspondence/discussion (phone, web-conference and/or email) between the AATTAP assessment team and the requesting agency CART coordinator will have occurred at predetermined intervals as guided by the AATTAP CART project coordinator and Lead Assessor. This process begins with the submission of a CART Certification Application by the requesting agency/CART coordinator, and continues as the CART submits information (both with and following the initial application) to demonstrate readiness/compliance around the specific prerequisites for conducting the 2-day onsite field exercise event.

Included in this pre-onsite certification preparation is the review by AATTAP of all details and logistics related to the field exercise. The exercise must be designed to allow an opportunity for the CART to exhibit capacity and proficiency around all best practices established by AATTAP for CART operations, and to demonstrate full compliance with CART standards. As noted earlier, all locations within the geographic area planned for the exercise should be visited around 4-6 weeks prior to the actual field exercise, and must be reviewed and approved by the AATTAP assessment team and the AATTAP CART project coordinator to ensure the assessors

will have ample opportunity to be present for direct performance evaluation of all sites during the exercise.

Simulation of a limited number of tasks relating to the field exercise will be allowed if approved by the full AATTAP assessment team. Generally, the pre-staging of equipment is discouraged; however, personnel can be made aware of the pending exercise so that equipment can be readied at original storage sites. Activation of resources to include personnel should be conducted in a real time manner to gauge actual response times to a given situation. Any other scenario-related task, such as neighborhood canvassing and sex offender checks, should be conducted in a real time manner.

The field exercise is generally conducted on Day 2 of the certification process. The assessors will have met prior to the beginning of the exercise and determined which sites each assessor will be responsible for observing and evaluating during the exercise. It is incumbent for the assessors to be fully engaged for the duration of the exercise to ensure comprehensive evaluation/assessment. At the conclusion of the exercise and prior to the debriefing, the assessors will meet privately and discuss their findings and observations.

Each exercise shall include a debriefing of all participants on the day of the exercise. This debriefing is usually conducted by the CART coordinator or in some cases the agency CEO. Each CART component should be addressed by a respective CART representative and should include successes and any area identified as needing improvement. Oftentimes the CART coordinator or other members can address any corrective action item while the team is present and agree on the action and timeline. The CART coordinator should conduct a more formal debriefing and evaluation within two weeks following the exercise to include the utilization of the plan and address deficiencies as identified by the AATTAP Assessors. Once this occurs, the CART coordinator will contact and complete a call/web-meeting with the AATTAP lead assessor and discuss the content of the debriefing and its impact on the identification of deficiencies.

Assessor Closing Statement

An AATTAP assessment team spokesperson should be prepared to make a statement at the conclusion of the debriefing if requested by the CART coordinator. The AATTAP assessment team spokesperson(s) should be aware the audience may extend beyond CART members (such as media and community members). Be prepared to address assessment/certification results; specifically, anticipate the question, "Did the team pass certification?" The AATTAP assessment team will present their findings diplomatically and factually, with emphasis placed on team successes and any areas that will require follow up. Explain that a comprehensive evaluation report (including follow up actions/requirements) will be prepared by the assessors and submitted to the OJP/OJJDP

for full review in the final determination of the CART's certification.

Additional areas of emphasis will include the following elements.

1. The extensive training and preparation the CART has completed to provide optimal response to and protection for endangered missing and abducted children.
2. Acceptance of the challenge for CART Certification separates the community, public safety agencies, and others involved in child protection from most other communities.
 - Certification requires the CART to demonstrate its operational readiness for the worst-case scenario of child abduction.
 - Those involved have agreed to subject their preparedness to the highest evidenced based standards.
3. Leadership from the agencies comprising the CART and other supporting agencies/organizations underscores the commitment to child protection and recovery strategies.
4. The CART's assessment process has culminated in the extensive field exercise conducted over the past two days; final determination for certification will be made following a final review and evaluation by AATTAP of all concluding documentation.

The Lead Assessor's Final Report

Upon completion of the onsite assessment, the lead assessor will be responsible, with assistance from the co-assessor(s), for completing a final report to submit to the AATTAP CART project coordinator. The report will be completed as soon as practical after conclusion of the onsite event, and/or as directed by the AATTAP Administrator.

The report will consist of three documents.

Document 1 | Onsite Visit Overview

The overview will contain summary data or information relating to the assessors' onsite visit to include: CART program name, the date of onsite visit, assessors assigned, a brief description of the jurisdictions served, and the specific number of agencies represented on the CART. Include information on square mileage (or general demographics of the jurisdictions) served by the CART, to include a description of area information such as major universities, companies, landmarks, or waterways. CART member interview summary information should be included as well.

Document 2 | Assessor Standard Compliance Summary Report

The standard compliance summary will encapsulate the proof review, interview(s) and/or observation(s)

completed by the assessors for each of the 12 sections and 47 standards and, should any additional proof be required for certification, will contain details on the necessary documentation for achieving compliance.

Document 3 | Field Exercise Summary Report

The field exercise summary report will provide the CART program with details from the assessors' interviews of key personnel and the strengths recognized during the interview of the CART members. Additionally, the field exercise report will summarize all aspects of the field exercise to include the exercise scenario, exercise briefing and safety plan as well as the activation, mobilization and deployment of the team. Also included in the field summary report are highlights of the standards that were observed during the course of the exercise and the discussions on lessons learned during the exercise debriefing.

Upon submission and full review by the AATTAP CART project coordinator and/or AATTAP Administrator, any corrective actions deemed necessary will be outlined by the lead assessor and submitted by an official letter/correspondence to the requesting CART coordinator. The correspondence will detail all deficiencies and prescribe the specific remedies and any further proofs/documentation.

Upon receipt of this letter, the CART coordinator will have 90 days to achieve compliance. The CART coordinator will return appropriate documentation to the Lead Assessor, who will forward to the AATTAP CART project coordinator for review and final approval in conjunction with that of the AATTAP Administrator.

Once all remedies/proofs have been reviewed and approved, the AATTAP Administrator will submit the recommendation for certification to the OJP/OJJDP program management for final authorization to proceed with awarding of certification to the CART. Once made, the appropriate notifications will be made by the AATTAP Administrator and assessment team, as directed, to the CART coordinator.

CART Certification Process: Evaluation and Quality Assurance

In order to constantly improve individual and organizational efforts, an evaluation system will be utilized at all appropriate steps in the process. Two evaluations will be utilized upon conclusion of the certification process and award/announcement of certification.

Component 1 | External Evaluation: Requesting/Participating Agency Evaluation Feedback

- Survey Component 1 - The CART coordinator will be asked to evaluate their contact and relationship with the lead and co-assessor(s).
- Survey Component 2 - The CART coordinator will be asked to evaluate the overall certification process.
- Survey Component 3 - If an AATTAP Regional Liaison was involved with a CART's certification, the CART coordinator will be asked to evaluate the quality of the liaison's contacts/guidance and support over the course of the certification process.

Component 2 | Internal Evaluation: Annual AATTAP Evaluation of CART Certification Assessors

The AATTAP CART project coordinator will complete annual evaluations for all assessors who were actively assigned over the past 12 months to ensure retention and demonstration of skills and competencies, and to promote continuous improvement in the performance of CART assessor duties.



Appendix A:

CART Certification resources are found in two location on the amberadvocate.org website.

Publicly Available CART Certification Resources

The following resources are found at <https://www.amberadvocate.org/cartresources/>

- **CART Certification Manual and Agency Guide** | AATTAP Publication for use by CART programs interested in preparing for and achieving Certified CART Status by the US DOJ.
- **Online Application for CART Certification** | For **initial/first-time** CART certification. To be completed and submitted online, via a web form, along with documents uploaded as part of the submission process. This form **must** be completed and submitted by the requesting CART's Coordinator.
- **Online Application for CART Re-Certification** | For **re-certification by currently certified CART programs**. To be completed and submitted online, via a web form, along with documents uploaded as part of the submission process. This form **must** be completed and submitted by the requesting CART's Coordinator.
- **CART Certification After Action Report Form** | This form can be used to submit an AAR as part of certification and/or re-certification in the event the CART does not have its own AAR form.
- **CART Certification Standard Compliance Form** | This is a form used by CART Assessors but is also available on the public side of the website so the requesting agency CART coordinator/leadership team can see/view its format and information captured during the compliance review process.
- **Safety Plan for CART Certification Field Exercise** | Used by requesting CART programs to use in documenting their safety plan for field exercises, including that which is part of their final CART Certification onsite assessment event.
- **Quality Assurance for CART Certification** | These online surveys are completed by the participating CART coordinator to give feedback on the process. (There is one additional online survey that is **not** published on the CART Resources page – the AATTAP Regional Liaison survey. This survey is sent directly to the participating CART coordinator *if and only if their respective AATTAP Liaison was indeed involved in the certification process.*)
 - » Lead Assessor Survey
 - » Co-Assessor Survey
 - » Overall Certification Process Survey
- **Outside of specific reference to CART Certification**, the CART Resources web page contains other reference downloads and sample forms relative to CART operations.

Secure/Portal Access Only CART Certification Resources

The following web form is available for those invited to apply for the CART Certification assessor role.

- [CART Assessor Application | An online web form](#) used to apply to be an AATTAP CART program assessor. Application is by invitation only, upon approval of the AATTAP Administrator, or CART project coordinator.

The following resources are available via the [AMBER Alert Partners Portal Resource Library](#) area of the AMBER Advocate Partners Portal upon login. Simply type the form name into the predictive search at the top of the resource listing to easily locate each form for download to your local device/drive.

- **CART Field Exercise CHECKLIST** | Used by AATTAP CART assessors during the onsite certification field exercise event to document activities.
- **CART Certification INTERVIEW** | Used by AATTAP CART assessors to document any interviews conducted as part of standard proofs/compliance.
- **CART Field Exercise SUMMARY FINDINGS** | Used by AATTAP CART co-assessors to summarize the findings from their field exercise checklist, ensuring they provide documentation and summary findings of all areas they observed. Importantly the detail and documentation provided here will highlight any areas for which the requesting CART did not demonstrate compliance with the required CART certification standards.
- **CART Certification FINAL REPORT** | Completed by the LEAD ASSESSOR only. This final report details all final/overall findings from the CART Certification (including the field exercise). This report includes recommendations and expected outcomes for the CART program in resolving any issues of non-compliance found during the exercise.

Appendix B: Sample Schedule: CART Onsite Assessment Field Exercise

The following 2-day event schedule represents a basic framework for the AATTAP assessor team's work to conduct onsite assessment and evaluation activities. The final agenda and schedule for each CART Certification onsite event will be developed by the CART project coordinator with input as requested from the assigned assessor team, with final approval by the AATTAP Administrator.

Day One

8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. | Meet with CART Coordinator and Interviews of Designated CART Personnel

The assessors will meet with the CART coordinator upon arrival and discuss any final logistics for the day. The assessors will then interview specific members of the CART for policy or procedure clarification and to validate the policies are communicated to personnel. The interviews and potential interviewees will be pre-determined by the CART coordinator (e.g., Communications Center Supervisor, Public Information Officer (PIO), Investigations Chief, and Watch Commander) with the CCM. If CEO's request to speak with assessors or discuss any areas of the assessment, this can be done at this point.

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. | Site Visits and Select Personnel Interviews

The CART coordinator and the assessors will visit each site to be used during the exercise to address any logistical concerns including site safety and participant safety. Any additional personnel not involved in the exercise but involved in a true CART activation and missing child event (e.g. sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE), child abuse pediatrician, child advocacy center director, forensic interviewer, etc.) shall be briefly interviewed to verify their understanding of their roles and responsibilities during the missing child event, recovery and reunification.

1:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. | Agency Introductions

The agency head, CART coordinator and invited CART participants will begin this session with a welcome and introductions.

2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. | Field Exercise Briefing

A representative from each agency participating in the field exercise and primary participants will meet for a briefing.

4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. | Closing Onsite Review

The agency head, CART coordinator and any other invited agency representatives will meet to discuss preliminary findings and to answer any questions as a final preparation for the next day's events. It is expected that CEO's of each agency or appropriate command staff is represented.

Day Two

7:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. | Field Scenario Exercise

The activation begins at the Command Center.

12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. | Press Event/Media Availability

All agency representatives and major participants will meet to debrief with assessors and stress importance of command staff participation in exercise.

2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. | Closing Comments

At the conclusion of the certification process, the CART Assessment Team will meet with agency representatives and agency heads to provide observations regarding the assessment and notify the CART coordinator of the status of their certification process, including any necessary steps to complete CART Certification.

Appendix C: Example Certification Award Letter from AATTAP

Dear **[CART COORDINATOR TITLE/RANK AND LAST NAME]**,

The AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program is proud of the continued progress of Child Abduction Response Team (CART) Programs being developed throughout the United States, Tribal Communities, Canada, and Mexico. CARTs are an important asset for any community and create a response multiplier when a child is endangered, missing or abducted.

The Child Abduction Response Team Program and Certification initiative is a flagship program of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and its AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program. To date, more than ____ **[obtain current number from the AATTAP CART project coordinator]** teams have been trained across the continent to help prepare communities to respond and recover endangered missing or abducted children.

To raise the bar on performance and continuous improvement, the CART Certification Program was created to test the operational readiness of a CART. Certification standards and requirements have been developed by a broad consortium of law enforcement professionals representing state, tribal and local governments. The certification requirements establish the highest standards for responding to incidents of endangered missing and abducted children.

We are excited to acknowledge and recognize the **[Program Name]** CART and their achievements in completing the CART certification process. The team's demonstrated compliance with the standards and performance of the child abduction exercise clearly establishes the **[Program Name]** CART is prepared to respond when a child is missing or abducted. The team's diligence in meeting all requirements of the certification process illustrates their focus on standards for excellence.

On behalf of the U.S. Department of Justice, the **[Program Name]** CART is hereby certified and recognized for the professional readiness to recover endangered, missing or abducted children.

[Official Date of Certification Recognition]

[Signature Line(s)]

[AATTAP ADMIN NAME], Program Administrator
AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program
A U.S. Department of Justice Initiative

Appendix D: Sample CART Certification Press Release

[QUOTES CAN BE INSERTED WHERE APPROPRIATE, BUT THESE ELEMENTS/IDEAS SHOULD FRAME THE MAIN CONTENT OF ANY PRESS RELEASE FOR ANNOUNCING CART CERTIFICATION]

PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION

#####

[MONTH DAY, YEAR]

[CART PROGRAM NAME]

[CART POINT OF CONTACT NAME]

[LEAD AGENCY NAME (if applicable)]

[PUBLIC USE/PROGRAM PHONE NUMBER]

[PUBLIC USE/PROGRAM EMAIL]

AMBER ALERT ACCOMPLISHMENT

[NAME OF TEAM] CHILD ABDUCTION RESPONSE TEAM EARNS NATIONAL RECOGNITION

The **[NAME OF TEAM]** Child Abduction Response Team (CART) is being recognized for achieving the “gold standard” of certification in developing local resources to respond to incidents of endangered missing or abducted children.

The **[NAME OF TEAM]** **[will be {or} was - use appropriate tense based on a pre or post event release]** honored at a special ceremony on **[MONTH DAY, YEAR]** for achieving CART Certification as established by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and its AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program.

On **[DATE OF EXERCISE]**, the **[NAME OF TEAM]** CART successfully conducted a comprehensive mock abduction field exercise to demonstrate and evaluate response capacity and effectiveness, from first call/report through safe recovery of the endangered child. More than **[NUMBER OF FIELD EXERCISE PARTICIPANTS]** federal, state, and local law enforcement representatives and child search experts participated in this important event, which represents the final step in the rigorous CART certification process.

A P P E N D I X

Seconds count when an AMBER Alert is issued and the **[NAME OF TEAM]** CART will make sure valuable time is not wasted. Parents in **[COMMUNITY/REGION AND/OR STATE NAME]** can know a significant team of talented and professionally trained individuals will respond quickly with all the resources needed to recover a child. The worst nightmare parents can experience is the abduction of their child or fear their child is endangered. Having a community prepared to respond increases the likelihood of a safe recovery in a timely manner. And as evidence of the power of a comprehensive child recovery strategy based on swift and effective response to incidents of endangered missing and abducted children, and utilizing dynamic, multi-disciplinary strategies such as the AMBER Alert program and CART, to date **985 [update this number with each letter - insert current number from official NCMEC statement, as shown at the bottom of the www.AMBERAdvocate.org homepage]** children have been recovered through the help of AMBER Alerts.

The Child Abduction Response Team Program and Certification initiative is a flagship program of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and its AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program. To date, more than **___ [obtain current number from the AATTAP CART project coordinator]** teams have been trained across the continent to help prepare communities to respond and recover endangered missing or abducted children.

To raise the bar on performance and continuous improvement, the CART Certification Program was created to test the operational readiness of a CART. Certification standards and requirements have been developed by a broad consortium of law enforcement professionals representing state, tribal and local governments. The certification requirements establish the highest standards for responding to incidents of endangered missing and abducted children.

We recognize the **[Program Name]** CART and their achievements in completing the CART certification process. The team's demonstrated compliance with the standards and performance of the child abduction exercise clearly establishes the **[Program Name]** CART is prepared to respond when a child is missing or abducted. The team's diligence in meeting all requirements of the certification process illustrates their focus on standards for excellence.

On behalf of the U. S. Department of Justice, the **[Program Name]** CART is hereby certified and recognized on **[Official Date of Certification Recognition]** for the professional readiness to recover endangered missing or abducted children.

A P P E N D I X

[INSERT ALL APPROPRIATE DOJ/OJP/OJJDP/AATTAP SIGNATURE LINES]

[USDOJ/OJP ADMIN NAME], [TITLE]

U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

[AATTAP ADMIN NAME], Program Administrator

AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program, a U.S. Department of Justice Initiative



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