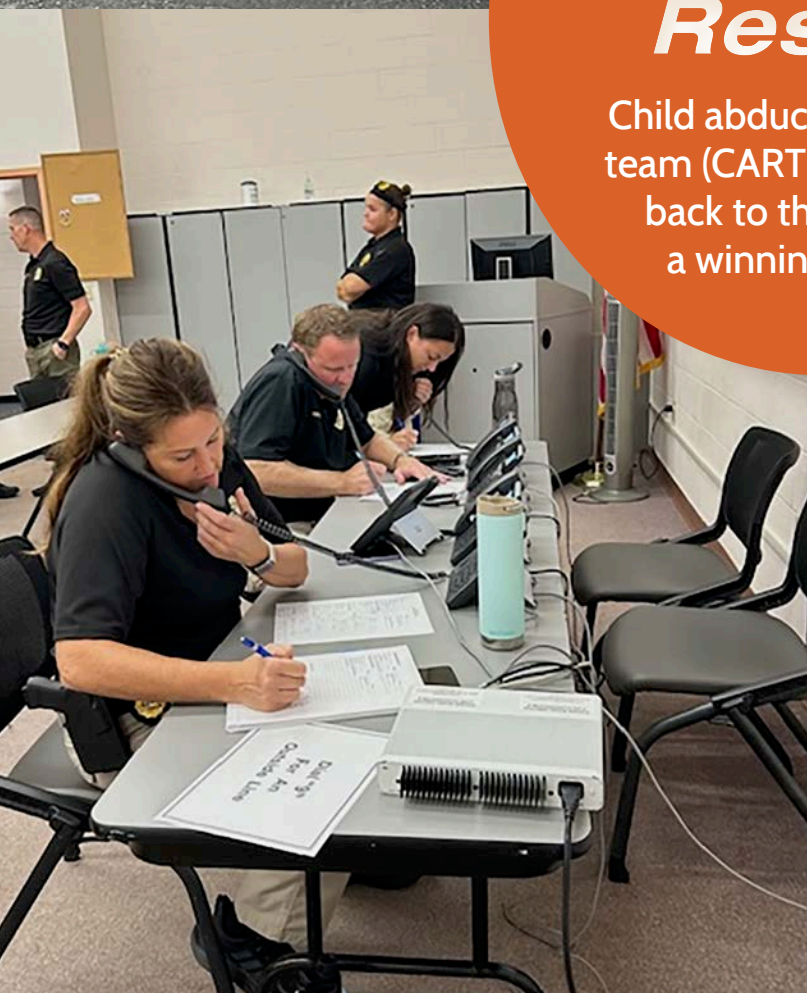


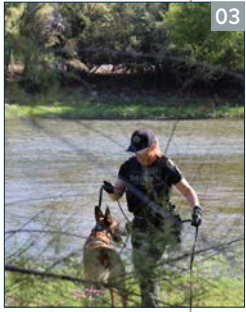
THE AMBER ADVOCATE



CART SMART *Restart*

Child abduction response team (CART) training goes back to the basics for a winning formula.





THE AMBERADVOCATE

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EDITORS' NOTES



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needed more follow-up and mentoring, one way to help struggling teams was to connect them with “the best of the best.” A year and a half ago, nationally recognized CART experts James Holmes and Stacie Lick became AATTAP’s CART Liaisons. Lick and Holmes now offer guidance to CARTs from the perspectives of former CART Commanders who know the ins and outs of a rapid response team’s creation and sustainability. So, problem solved, right?

Not quite. In some cases, fledgling CARTs also needed reminders of the core essentials needed to build a strong team. To resolve that, “maybe we needed to look again at how we were teaching the implementation course,” VanLuchene recalls.

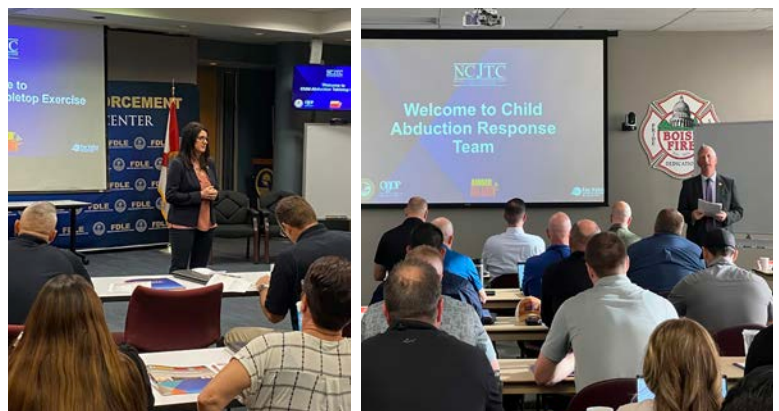
For two decades, the AATTAP—part of the National Criminal Justice Training Center (NCJTC) of Fox Valley Technical College—has been providing CART training and certification support funded by the U.S. Department of Justice. The process for managing and updating its training curriculum involves continually reviewing participant evaluation feedback, current research and case law, updated investigative resources, case studies, current trends, relevant adult learning strategies, input from subject matter experts, and more.

As a result, scores of CARTs have received assistance to create (and ultimately, federally certify) an effective, efficient, organized response team prepared for a missing child incident.

A eureka moment hit VanLuchene last fall, when he found himself updating the CART program’s two essential instructional manuals (see related sidebar, page 9) streamlining their content for ease of understanding. Essential to any CART’s implementation are “12 Core Components” (see related sidebar, page 7)—which include agreed-upon deployment criteria, experienced



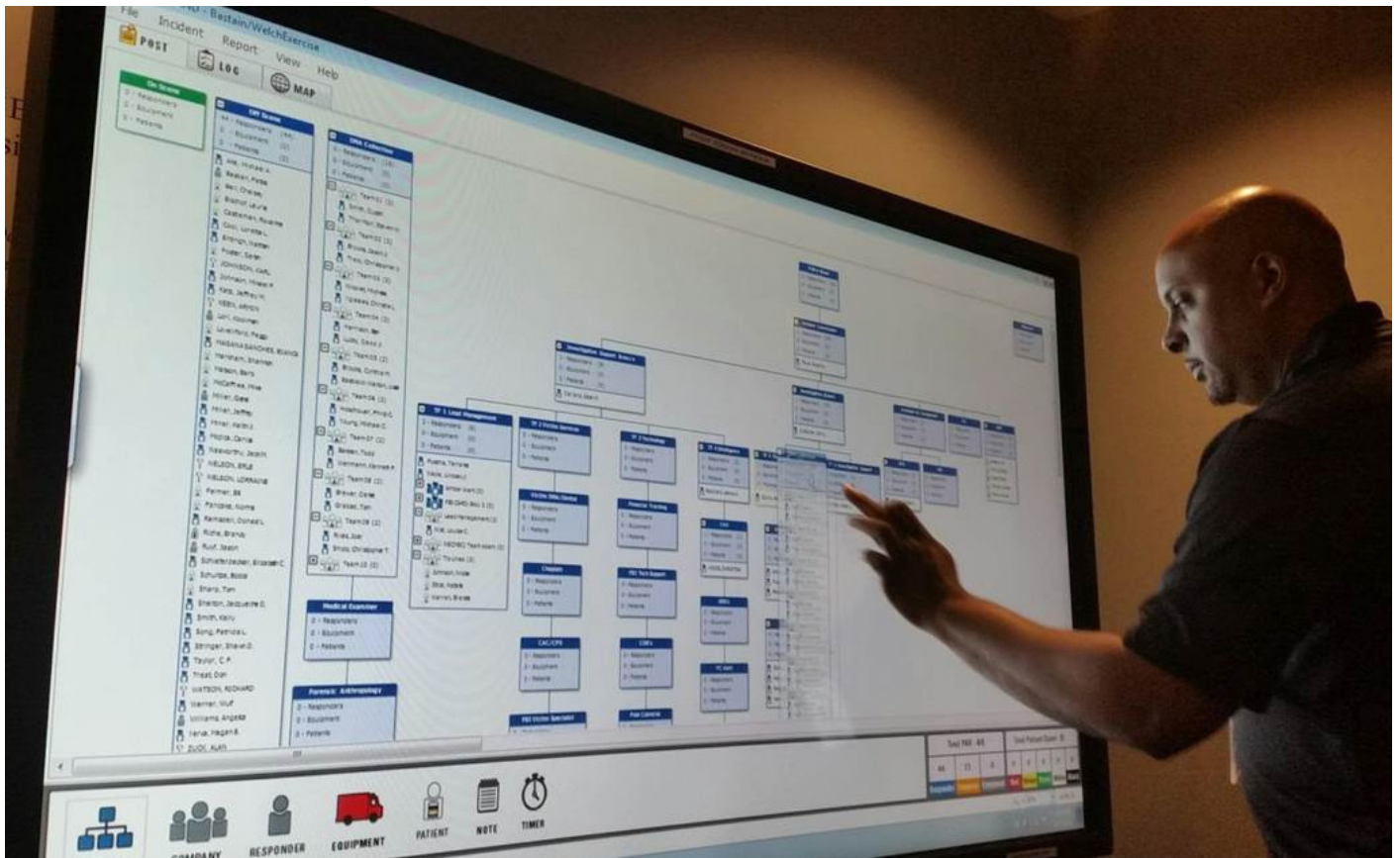
Above: AATTAP CART Program Manager Derek VanLuchene recently provided a framed CART certification to Salem County, New Jersey, Prosecutor Kristin Telsey and her team. **Below (from left):** AATTAP CART Liaisons Stacie Lick and James Holmes teach CART classes.



“The foundational pillar of our training development and delivery team is to deliver impactful, transformational education that meets learners where they are. This focus has allowed the AATTAP to move from static instruction to dynamic engagement in the field.

Byron Fassett

Deputy Administrator
AMBER Alert Training & Technical Assistance Program



and committed team members, well-crafted callout methods, and the like. But as important as those core concepts are, it dawned on VanLuchene that the instructional module centered on them received only two hours of focus time during three days of CART training. Perhaps that's why the essential information wasn't sticking, he wondered. They needed to spend more time on the components. "And frankly, while the old curriculum was good stuff, those components were worthy of their own course—or at least an updated course," VanLuchene says.

After discussing it with AATTAP Curriculum Manager Cathy Delapaz and Deputy Administrator Byron Fassett, the group agreed. "Derek's observation was brilliant," Fassett recalls. As a team they set out to restructure the CART implementation course. The 12 Core Components would be front and center throughout a new two-day intensive

course. What's more, the class wouldn't just address CART theory and best practices, "it would become a hands-on workshop, one in which the 12 Core Components are used to actually create a working CART in real-time," VanLuchene says.

A Three-Pronged Approach

The reformatted curriculum—the CART-smart restart, if you will—is achieved via a three-pronged approach to building a CART in real-time as opposed to discussing its eventual creation.

The first prong involves a pre-meeting with agency stakeholders who will review the types of CART members that are needed and resources available. "That's when we confirm that they're ready to make the CART happen via the second prong of planning"—the two-day class, or workshop, on the 12 Core Components—a deep dive into a successful CART's key ingredients,



Organizational charts help first responders see the big picture of how a CART will be structured during a missing child incident.



There are 95 active CARTs in the U.S.



During Louisiana CART trainings this summer (above), the Louisiana State Police Superintendent, Colonel Robert P. Hodges (right) talked with attendees.



“The simple path forward was not to reinvent the wheel. You just learn the CART process and 12 components—and apply them.”

Derek VanLuchene
Program Manager, above,
AATTAP

which can be applied to the agency's matrix of strategic personnel through a sample organizational flow chart that's proven its value in CARTs across the country. "This way they can better visualize and understand the CART's standard operating procedure (SOP)," VanLuchene says.

The third prong is a post-workshop meeting to confirm the CART team members and resources; it also includes mentoring from VanLuchene and one of the AATTAP Liaisons to help tie up any loose ends in CART configuration. "After all the prep work we've provided, when they come out the other side, they'll be ready," he says.

Louisiana as Pilot Project

Nine months ago, Louisiana State Police (LSP) Captain Jay Donaldson, who oversees Region 3 Criminal Investigations, was tasked by his superiors to form a statewide CART team that could work independently in each of the state's three regions while also working as a cohesive whole in case of a major disaster involving missing people (one on the scale of Hurricane Katrina, he notes).

To create the regional/state CART, Donaldson knew right where to turn: to Derek VanLuchene, whom he had gotten to know over the years during various

AATTAP-NCJTC trainings. Progress was swift, VanLuchene says. "No grass was growing under their feet; they wanted to get right on it." The meetings took place over a four-month period, "which was fantastic considering some CARTs can take a year or more to form."

After hearing about the updated CART curriculum, Donaldson was eager to get started. The first meeting was on February 19, with the more intensive hands-on sessions occurring on May 28 and 29. "I'm more of a workshop person myself," Donaldson recalls of the two-day workshops. "I was just hoping everyone else on our teams would be too. Thankfully they were."

With Louisiana serving as the new pilot project for the CART course that would soon play out around the country, Donaldson watched closely.

"What Derek did for us was exceptional," Donaldson says. "Whenever we were doing tabletops, he broke us up by region. He said, 'let's put people together who are going to actually work together. That way we'll see what happens, what ideas form.' And then, once he did that, everything just started working, everything just started clicking."

Continues on page 8

Good to know: The 12 core CART components

1 Response Criteria: This is a memorandum of understanding about the CART's criteria and area of service and should have complete buy-in by all of the stakeholders involved.

2 Team Composition: The predetermined callout team should include an experienced and committed group of subject matter experts in areas including search and rescue, interview and interrogation, expert witness testimony, command post operations, major case investigations (including cold cases), and more.

3 Notification and Deployment Protocols: For the CART to respond in a quick, preestablished timeframe, it must have a well-constructed and agreed-upon method to activate the callout and an updated list of contacts.

4 Communications: Each team should have a plan for how it will communicate with the CART commander, command post, and others during an activation. This includes having a well-staffed call center for public tips and dedicated personnel monitoring social media accounts. A leads tracking and management system is crucial for disseminating leads for follow-up.

5 Command and Control: This involves the structuring and outfitting of a command center, incident command system (command structure), and operational team leaders (search leads, volunteer management, and others).

6 Search, Canvass and Rescue Operations: Establish a plan for searching, canvassing, and rescuing that includes response time and deployment logistics, as well as tactics for the successful use of volunteers with predetermined tasks.

7 Training: Individual and CART agency training provides an opportunity for the team to test activation and callout procedures, revise rosters and contact information, update team members' training and specialized skill records, inspect equipment inventory, adjust assignments, and review protocols.



8 Legal Support: The goal in an endangered missing or abducted child case is to rescue the child, develop a solid prosecutorial case against the offender, and do both without violating the constitutional rights of members of the community. Issues such as search and seizure and the role of the prosecutor in the CART command post should be incorporated into the CART protocols. Every CART should include a prosecutor and/or legal adviser who should be involved in all trainings.

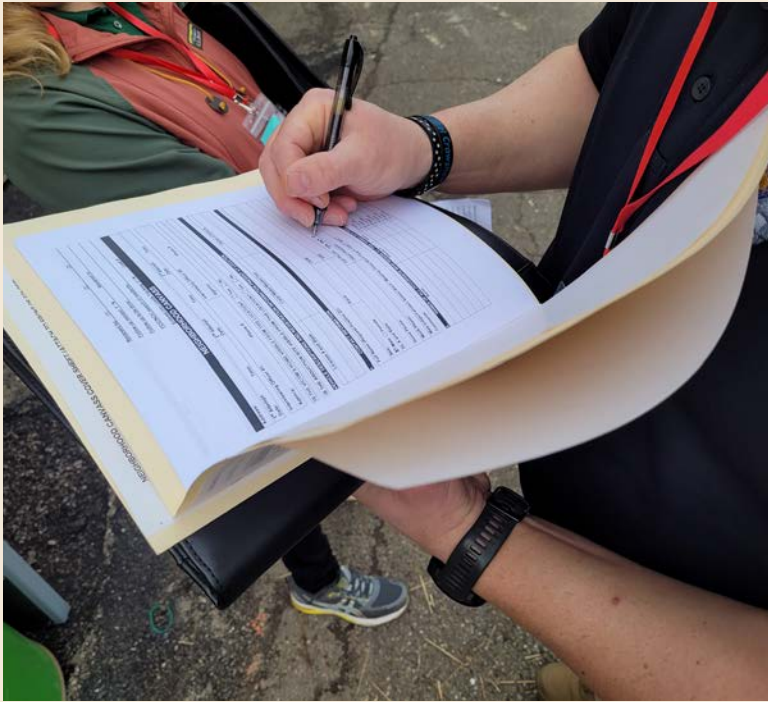
9 Equipment/Resources Inventory: The inventory list goes well beyond tangible deployment needs, but includes detailed instructions on how every possible resource (including experts not part of the CART core team) can be accessed regardless of time or day. Every resource should have backup contact information (telephone and email), as well as procedures for making an after-hours callout.

10 CART Protocols: Established protocols, along with operating procedures and manuals, will help ensure consistency in a CART's functionality. These documents must be shared among and accepted by all participating agencies, and any changes to policies and procedures must be documented in a consistent, singular location.

11 Victim Assistance and Reunification: When a child is recovered, it is critical for a variety of services to be made available as soon as possible—not only to address any physical/medical needs, but also the psychological distress resulting from the incident.

12 Community: Utilizing members of the team to provide training and awareness to the public may generate volunteering when an incident occurs.

— From *A Guide to CART Program Components and Implementation*. Learn more about this resource and others on page 9.



“Derek VanLuchene understands the audience; he relates well to police officers. I like the way he delivers training. It’s more conversational, more engaging.”

Jay Donaldson
Captain, *above*,
Louisiana State Police

Finding the right people to be involved in planning and execution of the CART details is crucial. In any agency, people will do things because they’re told to. Then they’ll want to do so because their heart is in the mission. The commitment Donaldson witnessed in the room during the two-day planning session “had me realizing we had all the people whose hearts would be in the right place,” he says.

Donaldson had faith that the new way of learning-by-doing was working not only for his team, but also for others. VanLuchene was equally pleased: “If they get a call tomorrow about a missing child, they could activate their CART team in whatever region it was needed. Their organizational chart is in place, their SOP is in place. They’re ready for deployment.”

Smart Solutions Ahead

A key obstacle to creating a CART is falling prey to misconceptions surrounding

them. Some administrators may look at a CART as another task force that needs to be managed—without the budget or staffing to do so. They need as many resources as possible for their regular caseload of crimes.

“But in helping teams formulate a CART, we’re not asking people to suddenly put aside their normal duties. We’re asking people to think differently about how they work together on a missing child case,” VanLuchene says.

“Why not take the 12 Core Components of a CART and apply them to your response so you get the most effective, organized, efficient outcome?” he asks. “It’s just that simple.”

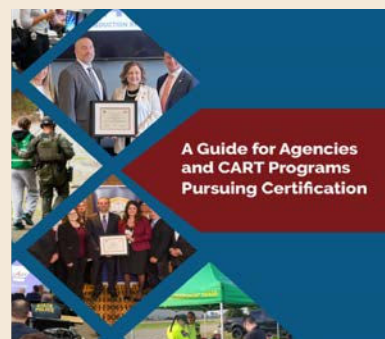
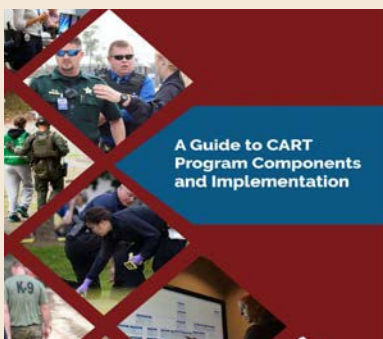
In other cases, where there are preexisting major incident response teams to tackle emergencies, those groups of responders can learn the 12 components of a successful CART and

Seeking CART training, resources?

The child abduction response team (CART) serves as an investigative enhancement tool and operational force multiplier, comprised of experts, equipment and resources, and a planned strategy to respond to incidents of endangered missing or abducted children.

>> Find AATTAP's two recently updated implementation- and certification-focused guides at AMBERAdvocate.org/CART/resources.

>> Find all the information you need to stay up to date on CART training objectives at AMBERAdvocate.org/CART/training.



walk away with an SOP. "You become an active CART team based on your ability to respond to cases involving missing kids," VanLuchene says.

Finding the resources can also seem overwhelming until stakeholders are invited to become a part of the process, says LSP Captain Donaldson. He cites one partnership in particular. "We invited the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to be involved in the training for the first time," he says. "They were keen to observe and see if being in a CART was a space they wanted to share with us."

That decision would be a natural. "Louisiana has so many bodies of water, and these guys know the camps or lakes or rivers or streams—which is where a child with autism, for instance, may be drawn to after a wandering incident," Donaldson says. "And thankfully, they're all in. They have the tools and resources, and these guys love what they do. Now

they're waiting for a mission. They're all about saving children, if they can."

The methodology for the new CART implementation course will also be used for AMBER Alert in Indian Country (AIIC) trainings. AIIC Program Manager Tyesha Wood and her team are currently observing the new curriculum in action and will be applying it to a forthcoming Tribal Response to Abducted Children (TRAC) initiative, which will help Tribal law enforcement bridge any gaps in child recovery knowledge and planning.

Meanwhile, CART Liaisons Lick and Holmes are working daily to ensure all current CARTs and ones in the making are taken care of. Both have managed CARTs so they relate to others' challenges. "They can say, 'Here's what we recommend based on our experience,'" VanLuchene says. "The Liaisons are helping bring the total CART training package together."

A testament to CART training:

"We often joke that after each training, we end up immediately responding to that type of call. This training is no different. After your visit we began actively looking for an infant taken by a noncustodial parent with mental health issues. And though we do not have an official CART yet, we are utilizing many of the tips we learned—and now pulling in the same direction together."

Lieutenant Elizabeth "Lissa" Gundrum
Kitsap County Sheriff's Office, Washington

Neighbor to the North

A veteran of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Josée Melanson is at the forefront of a collaboration to continue strengthening the AMBER Alert program.

Early in her career with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Josée Melanson realized that having a strong sense of urgency is essential in missing child cases. It's an urgency she now thrives on.

About six months into her job as a patrol officer in the northeast province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Melanson responded to a call from a frantic mother who had reported her young son missing. As Melanson and other officers ran in search of the child, she saw a dumpster in her periphery. Drawing on her training, she stopped. The boy was next to the trash receptacle, hiding and scared from hearing his name being yelled by unfamiliar voices.

"That was one of my success stories I'll never forget," Melanson says. That feeling of franticness related to having a lost child "is very different from the other types of calls we received," she says.

After 13 years as a patrol officer (also known as a General Duty member on patrol) and five years at the RCMP Training Academy, Melanson shifted to a position with RCMP's National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains (NCMPUR), headquartered in Ottawa,



We're proud to work with our national and international partners every single day to help locate and return children safely home to their families. You absolutely need everybody on the same train when it comes to these types of investigations.

Corporal Josée Melanson

National AMBER Alert Working Group,
National Centre for Missing Persons
and Unidentified Remains (NCMPUR)

Ontario. For the past two years, she has coordinated NCMPUR's National AMBER Alert Working Group, comprised of AMBER Alert Coordinators from provincial law enforcement agencies across Canada.

Melanson's work is a critical component of the AMBER Alert Training & Technical

Assistance Program's (AATTAP) Northern Border Initiative, which formalizes the long-standing cooperation between the two nations. We spoke with Corporal Melanson about her transition from patrol officer to national coordinator, the structure of Canada's AMBER Alert system, and why international partnership is non-negotiable when a child's life is on the line.

After being on patrol for more than a decade, how has it been settling into your role at NCMPUR?

One of the positive experiences with the RCMP is that you can work in different units, and this one is very different from what I did as a patrol member. I don't have a police car here. I don't wear my full uniform every day. It was definitely an inviting change—I could focus on the unit here. I've learned a lot and am still learning. I find as a police officer, it's important to challenge yourself and learn every day. That's what keeps my drive going.

Do you have the chance to work with AMBER Alert associates in the United States?

In my current position as the chair of the National Amber Alert Working Group (NAAWG), my role is focused on gathering training opportunities and best practices from our U.S. associates. Once we communicate about that, I share the information with AMBER Alert Coordinators here in Canada.

What type of work does NAAWG do?

First, we're not involved in investigations. One of our mandates is to facilitate an information exchange—and providing training opportunities for members here and support for AMBER Alert conferences. We meet virtually at least twice a year. We had one of our recent NAAWG meetings where we discussed courses

that are available through the National Criminal Justice Training Center (NCJTC) at Fox Valley Technical College (FVTC) to AMBER Alert Coordinators in Canada.

What about your AMBER Alert program—how is it structured?

In Canada, each province develops its AMBER Alert program independently, and the provincial committees have developed criteria to respond to the needs of their jurisdictions. Each province appoints an AMBER Alert Coordinator to oversee the program and each province



has its set criteria. We will be made aware that an AMBER Alert has been issued, but it is the provinces—the coordinators—that take full responsibility of it. Here at the National Center, we'll maintain and collect statistics on issued AMBER Alerts.

Tell us a bit about those statistics.

In 2024, there were eight total activations of AMBER Alerts in Canada. All of the 10 children involved were located safe and sound. In the first six months of 2025, two AMBER Alerts have been issued, with a total of four children involved. And again, all four children were found safe.

Continues on page 12



All 10 Canadian provinces have an AMBER Alert program in place. The three Canadian territories have not yet implemented AMBER Alert systems in their jurisdictions.



Response to cross-border child abductions between the U.S. and Canada is one of the topics Josée Melanson is delving into as part of AATTAP's Northern Border Initiative (see page 12).



Melanson, far left, makes a point while looking at a map. The National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains, where she works, provides Canadian law enforcement, medical examiners, and coroners with specialized investigative services in missing persons and other cases.

That’s impressive. How does 100 percent success make you feel?

Amazing. It’s a great day at work, right?—for all police officers throughout Canada. You feel the urgency when you know all the criteria are met and the AMBER Alert is issued. And then once the children are located, it’s a very powerful feeling.

What are your thoughts on cross-border collaboration via the AATTAP’s Northern Border Initiative?

I feel it’s crucial to have that, especially for

the effectiveness of AMBER Alerts here in Canada. Since I’ve been in the unit for the past two years, Canada and the United States have established partnerships, making it easier to work together, share information, and coordinate efforts when it is believed that a child has been abducted across our borders. All the information and the training that we can see from [AATTAP and FVTC’s NCJTC]—and me sharing that with the AMBER Alert Coordinators in Canada and with the NCMPUR team as well—is very beneficial.

Northern Border Initiative: What it is and what’s ahead

Child protection officials in the U.S. and Canada have had a longstanding working relationship. The Northern Border Initiative of the AMBER Alert Training & Technical Assistance Program (AATTAP) formalizes that as it focuses on strengthening preparedness for effective response to child abduction cases.

The collaboration, which is between northern states and Canada’s southern provinces, parallels AATTAP’s Southern Border Initiative with Mexico.

Yesenia “Jesi” Leon-Baron (left), Project Coordinator for International and Territorial Programs at AATTAP, says that partnering with Canada’s National AMBER Alert Working Group has helped pinpoint areas to address, such as additional training on alert activations that involve cross-border abductions. “Together, we’re building an understanding of Canada’s AMBER Alert coordination while developing training and technical assistance,” she says.

A virtual tri-national meeting with respective AMBER Alert

Coordinators from Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. is being planned, likely for 2026. The one-day training would cover topics such as initial investigative responses and how the AMBER Alert system works in each country.

“Child abduction knows no borders,” Leon-Baron says. “Evil doesn’t discriminate, and it’s not going to worry about borders either. So we need to make sure we are supporting each country’s investigations when it comes to abducted children. We can be a force multiplier.”





PHOTO: STAFF ILLUSTRATION

When an AMBER Alert was issued for an infant with a pressing medical issue, the public stepped up to help safely locate the child.

Engaging the public has always been at the heart of AMBER Alerts. The program, after all, was built on the premise of instantly galvanizing citizens and motorists to serve as extra eyes to help law enforcement safely locate an endangered missing or abducted child. The power of that concept played out literally and figuratively in a case that gripped the quiet county-seat town of Fallon, Nevada.

On March 31, 2025, the Nevada Department of Public Safety issued an AMBER Alert that was disseminated to broadcast media and cellular devices around Washoe County. Ten-month-old Lyric Smitten had been taken by his noncustodial mother,

AMBER Alert 3m
FALLON NV AREA 0800HRS. BLACK
2006 FORD EXPLORER 714S57 NV.
10MO JUVI NON CUSTODIAL
KIDPNAPPING, TAKEN BY MOTHER
CHELSEA DANIELS IS ARMED



How it unfolded From left, top to bottom: The AMBER Alert pinged cell phones shortly after 2 p.m. for the Nevada infant taken by his noncustodial mother and believed to be in imminent danger. The last reported sighting of the child was at a Walmart. An elementary school was placed on lockdown after a tip matched a general description of the mother's vehicle there. About an hour after the alert was issued, authorities acting on another tip spotted the vehicle and safely recovered the boy. Local media reported the news, to the relief of residents.

Chelsea Daniels, earlier that day. According to information released by the Churchill County Sheriff's Office, authorities were advised that Daniels had been distraught after a court removed the boy from her care and custody. She was reported to have a handgun and had threatened to harm herself and her son.

The case solidly met the criteria for activating an AMBER Alert. These criteria included the belief that the child was in imminent danger and there was enough descriptive information for the public to aid in the recovery.

Unlike most AMBER Alerts, this case had an additional layer of urgency: The child was scheduled to undergo heart surgery the following day.

As news of the missing boy quickly spread around Fallon and the other high desert communities of western Nevada, tips to 911 came in. Because the vehicle Daniels was driving was relatively common—a black SUV (specifically a Ford Explorer) with a Nevada license plate—several tips matched a general description.

Although the AMBER Alert provided the license plate number, motorists aren't always able to capture the exacting details. Officers knew the dire situation required taking all tips seriously, even those where the information matched just a general description of the SUV. One such tip led to a Fallon elementary school being placed on lockdown until authorities confirmed that the vehicle reported on the grounds wasn't Daniels'.

One particular tip, however, stood out. A caller reported seeing a vehicle matching the description and that was being driven by a woman in an area that aligned with earlier cell phone pings from the mother's phone. Patrol and investigative units were already in the area and took swift action. They spotted the SUV traveling on a mountain road.

After initially failing to stop, Daniels pulled over the vehicle, heeding the emergency lights and sirens from a sheriff's deputy's patrol vehicle. The infant was **found safe**; emergency medical responders also assessed the child's health. Authorities did not release information on the boy's heart condition or surgery.



In 2023, 59% of AMBER Alerts were for family abduction cases, according to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. The abductions tend to occur at transition points, such as when court-ordered exchanges of the child are scheduled to take place.

The Fallon Police Department took Daniels into custody on various charges, including kidnapping. Fallon authorities noted after the incident that concern about the child’s medical condition played a factor in the case rising to the level of an AMBER Alert.

Relieved Community

Similar to how the public responded with tips, local authorities were quick to praise the public for its vigilance that contributed to the safe resolution. Churchill County Sheriff Richard Hickox also credited the multiple agencies and emergency medical responders who were involved. “We are grateful for the citizens who called in with sightings and information,” Hickox **posted** on Facebook. “The successful resolution of this situation is a prime example of a collaborative effort by many agencies striving toward one goal—and that is the safety of the public.”

Residents greeted news of the child’s safe recovery with similar gratitude. “Thank you to the people who spoke up and reported!” one person wrote on the Churchill County Sheriff’s social media page.

The AAC Perspective

Carri Gordon, AMBER Alert Training & Technical Assistance Program (AATTAP) Liaison for Region 5 (which includes Nevada), considers the case an example of the AMBER Alert system working as it was intended: by engaging the public to

prompt a swift recovery. “I’ve activated alerts in the past where the tip came in within six minutes of the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) hitting cell phones, and it was from someone directly behind the suspect’s vehicle,” she recalls. “Law enforcement contacted and safely recovered that child in less than 15 minutes of the AMBER Alert going out. It’s literally lifesaving.”

During her 13 years as the state of Washington’s AMBER Alert Coordinator (AAC), Gordon handled more than 100 AMBER Alerts. Although alert activations for noncustodial parent abductions, such as in this case, have always been higher than stranger abductions, she reminds AACs that this doesn’t mean the child is free of danger. “Parents will—and do—harm their own children,” she says, dispelling a common misconception.

Gordon also knows from experience the pressure AACs feel every time an AMBER Alert is issued, even though they aren’t directly investigating the case. “As AACs we monitor our alerts as they go out and monitor the involvement on social media, such as the shares and likes,” she says. “When you see a case with a lot of public involvement—and tips that eventually lead to the location of the child—it makes you aware of how critical and valuable a tool like the AMBER Alert system is.”



“Law enforcement relies on the public to be on the lookout for critically endangered missing and abducted children. This case illustrates how critical it is to follow those leads.”

Carri Gordon
(above)
AATTAP
Region 5 Liaison
and former
AMBER Alert
Coordinator

NEWS BRIEFS

Florida operation recovers 60 missing children

The safe recovery of 60 “critically missing” youth at risk of violence and sexual exploitation and the arrest of eight individuals is being touted as the most successful such mission in U.S. **Marshals Service** history—and perhaps in U.S. history. William Berger, U.S. Marshal for the Middle District of Florida, made that statement in praising the approximate 20 law enforcement and child protection agencies involved in “**Operation Dragon Eye.**” The operation was unique, Berger said, in that it provided debriefing, physical and psychological care, and follow-up assistance for the children, ages 9 to 17.

Katherine Gomez, director of Human Trafficking Intervention with the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, said each recovered **child** now has a new opportunity. “It’s a chance, it’s a touchpoint, it’s a connection for that young person and the larger community,” she said. The eight arrests included charges of human trafficking and child endangerment.



Houston forensic artist recounts storied career

Age-progressed photos have long been used to help spark new leads in unsolved missing child cases. **Forensic artist** Lois Gibson spent four decades working with the Houston Police Department, where she sketched age-progressed portraits of children, as well as the likenesses of kidnappers and other suspected criminals. The face behind the faces shared her story—and creative process—as part of a national news feature. Gibson holds the Guinness World Record for the most criminals identified through art: 1,313. But it’s the happy endings she treasures most, such as when her age-progressed portraits reunited three siblings 30 years after being separated at a young age. “If this is the only case I helped solve, it would make my life worthwhile,” Gibson said.



Pennsylvania police launch rapid DNA testing

The Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) became one of the most recent law enforcement agencies to deploy **rapid DNA** analysis as a cutting-edge investigative tool. Fifteen automated genetic analyzers were deployed across the state as part of a testing program. The machines can generate a DNA profile in less than two hours, helping to quickly connect—or rule out—suspects in crimes, including those involving children. “Aside from investigative efficiency, this technology provides accuracy, fairness, and better outcomes for the communities we serve,” said Colonel Christopher Paris, PSP commissioner. Although rapid DNA can be used in cold cases involving a long-term missing person or one with unidentified human remains, Trooper Sara Barrett said the PSP is focused on using the rapid DNA technology to investigate and help solve current **cases.**



Rise in 'sextortion' reports involving children prompts U.K. action, international alarm

A growing threat in online grooming and “sextortion” prompted the United Kingdom’s National Crime Agency (NCA) to take action. After tech companies reported more than 9,600 cases of adults grooming children online in just six months—the equivalent of about 400 a week—the NCA launched what it called “unprecedented” public awareness campaigns. The campaigns alert U.K. teachers, parents, and children to the dangers of sextortion, in which victims are blackmailed into sharing abusive, explicit images. The British newspaper *The Guardian* outlined how **widespread** the threat is. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) noted a 192% increase from 2023 in reports from tech firms of adults across the world soliciting children. Law enforcement agencies are increasingly concerned that predators are finding more sophisticated ways to target children online. A lengthy manual giving detailed instructions on how best to exploit young Internet users was uncovered on online networks encouraging young men to commit crimes. That sextortion guide was allegedly produced by an Arizona man, whom the FBI **arrested** in late 2024.



Intensive investigation continues across Canada in search for two missing Nova Scotia siblings

Canadian investigators are poring through more than 700 tips and assessing forensic results on items recovered during searches for Lilly and Jack Sullivan, ages 6 and 4. The siblings were reported **missing** from their rural Nova Scotia home in May, prompting weeks of searches in a heavily wooded area. Allison Gerrard, senior communications advisor with the Nova Scotia Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), said agencies across Canada are assisting in the intensive investigation. Forensic testing had been done on a **pink blanket** found in the woods, which the family confirmed belonged to Lilly. Meanwhile, yard signs with photos and information about the missing children have been keeping the case top of mind with the public. “The more people that are thinking about these kids every day, the greater chance that we’ll have to be able to bring them home,” said Kent Corbett, a Pictou County resident who spearheaded the signage.



Police operation in northern India reunites 61 missing children with their families

Sixty-one missing children were safely located and **reunited** with their families in northern India as part of “Operation Milap.” The initiative by Delhi’s South-West District Police recovered 142 missing persons during an intensive month-long search mission. Law enforcement efforts included local inquiries, surveillance, and outreach at public transportation hubs, and examining records of nearby police stations and hospitals. Delhi Police said the operation brought the total number of missing people the district has reunited to just over 800—258 of them children—during the first six months of 2025. Deputy Commissioner of Police Amit Goel said the compassionate approach, methodical investigations, and swift action “brought hope and relief to many grieving families.”



New Mexico group hears about human trafficking

The New Mexico Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) Task Force heard emotional testimonies as part of its ongoing efforts to address the MMIP crisis. Family members and others attending the group's quarterly meeting recounted how Indigenous people have been impacted by human trafficking and the disproportionately high number of missing girls and women. Birga Alden, a **task force** member and chief communication officer at the nonprofit New Mexico Dream Center, emphasized the importance of hearing Indigenous voices and taking action. The task force, which collaborates with the New Mexico Department of Justice, is using its meetings to raise awareness of the **MMIP crisis** and to work toward updating a 2022 state response plan. That plan, released by the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department, outlines strategies to improve data collection and support for survivors and families.



California Tribes receive grants for MMIP projects

Native American Tribes in California are slated to begin a range of projects in conjunction with the state's Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) Grant Program. California awarded nearly \$13 million in **grants** to support 15 projects led by Tribes or Tribal collaborations to address the MMIP crisis. The **projects** are designed to develop culturally based prevention strategies, strengthen community outreach, and improve responsiveness in missing persons cases. The Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria plans to focus on youth programming, including establishing events to help youth understand the risks of trafficking. The Yurok Tribe's grant includes hiring a full-time MMIP victim advocate, while the Round Valley Indian Tribe is eyeing a modular office building to use as an MMIP headquarters. The Pala Band of Mission Indians' plans include purchasing a drone and providing training for volunteer search and rescue. The California Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) approved the grants under a program established in 2022.



Videos showcase AMBER Alert in Indian Country

Three new online videos highlighting the AMBER Alert in Indian Country (AIC) initiative can be a powerful resource for Tribal communities and law enforcement. The short videos—which are available to **watch** on the AIC website—highlight the importance of enhanced training and collaboration to help save children's lives. Tribes can use the videos to gain a better understanding of the AMBER Alert system and their community's preparedness. The videos are also a tool to encourage relationship-building among Tribes, state agencies, and law enforcement. In the videos, Tribal law enforcement and government leaders from around the United States share how the AMBER Alert system is vital to helping find missing and abducted children quickly and safely. The videos also show the value of multijurisdictional collaboration and response preparedness in Tribal communities. An AMBER Alert Training & Technical Assistance Program (AATTAP) AMBER Alert in Indian Country (AIC) team worked with an Indigenous-led production company on filming in New Mexico. AIC is part of the National Criminal Justice Training Center (NCJTC) of Fox Valley Technical College.





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