



# MISSING PERSONS

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## **I. POLICY**

The Department will accept, without any form of mandatory waiting period, a report of a missing person [Family Law Article 9-402(e); Public Safety Article 3-601(a)]. The Department will diligently investigate all reports of missing persons, whether they are adults or juveniles. The Department will not differentiate between “runaways” and missing juveniles for investigative purposes. All personnel must remember that missing person cases are not considered routine by the reporting person.

## **II. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to provide specific and consistent guidelines for the investigation of all missing person complaints. This policy also identifies the proper reporting requirements, as mandated by Maryland law.

## **III. DEFINITIONS**

### **A. Missing Adult**

Any person eighteen (18) years of age or older, whose whereabouts are unknown and unexplainable for a period of time that is regarded by knowledgeable parties as highly unusual or suspicious, in consideration of the subject’s normal behavior patterns, plans or routines.

### **B. Critical Missing Adult**

Any missing person, age eighteen (18) or older in which one or more of the following circumstances may exist:

1. The missing adult suffers from a neurodegenerative disease;
2. The missing adult suffers from mental/physical impairment or serious illness;

3. The missing adult is suicidal; or
4. There is evidence of foul play.

**C. Missing Child**

Any person under the age of eighteen (18) years; and who is the subject of a Missing Persons Report filed with a law enforcement agency in this State, and whose whereabouts are unknown [MD Family Law 9-401(c)].

**D. Critical Missing Child**

Any missing person under the age of eighteen (18) years, in which one or more of the following circumstances may exist:

1. The missing child has not been the subject of a prior missing person report;
2. The missing child suffers from mental/physical impairment or serious illness;
3. The disappearance is of a suspicious or dangerous nature;
4. The complainant believes the missing child may have been abducted;
5. The missing child has previously been the subject of a child abuse report filed with the State or local law enforcement agency; or
6. The missing person is under 14 years of age.

**E. Missing Emancipated Person**

Any person under the age of eighteen (18) years; and legally declared emancipated (released from parental care) by the laws of his/her state of residence; and, the subject of a missing person report filed with a law enforcement agency in this State; and, whose whereabouts are unknown; and the agency has signed documentation in its possession supporting the stated conditions (emancipation) under which the person is declared missing. If the emancipation documentation is not in our possession, the report is filed under the Missing Child status.

**IV. STATE OF MARYLAND MISSING PERSON REPORT**

A. All missing person reports will be taken in person by an officer unless the reporting person is at an unreasonably distant location, such as out-of-state. In these circumstances, a report made by phone or other electronic means is acceptable. There is no mandatory waiting period, or a specific age that a person must be prior to the initiation of a report [Family Law Article 9-402(e); Public Safety Article 3-601(a)].

B. The standardized two page State of Maryland Missing Person Report (SOMMPR), along with a supplemental narrative that documents the circumstances surrounding the disappearance of the missing person will be prepared for any person reasonably believed to have been in the County at the time of their disappearance, even if the subject of the missing person report resides outside of the County.

1. If the subject of the missing person report was last seen or was reasonably believed to have been in another jurisdiction at the time of their disappearance, the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction where the subject was last seen is responsible for taking the missing person report, even if the subject is a County resident. In these circumstances, a "Police Information Report" will be prepared (see Section V. Subsection C.).
2. If the facts of the case do not meet the criteria for a missing person, as defined in Section III of this Index Code, a "Police Information" report will be prepared (see Section V. Subsection D.)

C. All written reports regarding missing persons, including follow-up supplement reports must be submitted prior to the end of the officer's tour of duty.

**V. OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES**

A. Upon receiving a complaint of a missing person, the investigating officer will:

1. Immediately make personal contact with the reporting person. Contact by phone or other electronic means is acceptable for reporting persons who are at an unreasonably distant location, such as out-of-state.
2. Request a recent photograph of the missing person. Note the case number, missing person's name and date of the photograph on the back of the photograph and attach it to the report.

3. Conduct a preliminary and thorough investigation (The scope of the investigation will depend on the age of the missing person, the circumstances of the person's disappearance, and any evidence that the person's disappearance is or is not due to foul play, mental impairment, or some other life threatening circumstance.).
  4. Contact the Communications Section as soon a possible and give a complete description of the missing person for radio broadcast by the dispatcher.
  5. Brief the field supervisor and determine if any critical factors exist that would require immediate follow-up.
  6. Complete the two page SOMMPR, along with a supplemental narrative (NOTE: The reporting officer must obtain the signature of the reporting person on the SOMMPR. National Crime Information Center (NCIC) regulations mandate that the signature be obtained to aid in the protection of the missing person's right to privacy. If the signature is not available because the reporting person made the report by phone or other electronic means, this should be noted in the narrative and the reporting person must complete the SOMMPR as soon as practical.
  7. Notify Teletype for entry into the Maryland Interagency Law Enforcement System (MILES) and NCIC; and fax a copy of the report to Teletype (410-987-9046) and the Missing Persons Squad (410-222-3464).
  8. Instruct the complainant to contact the Department if the missing person returns.
  9. Submit the SOMMPR and the supplemental narrative to the field supervisor for review prior to going off duty.
- B. Officers from on-coming shifts will be assigned to conduct follow-up investigations at least once per shift during the first (48) hours after the initial report, with discretion being used during the midnight shift. If the initial forty-eight (48) hour period ends on a weekend or holiday, the follow-up investigations will continue past the initial forty-eight (48) hour time period until the next regular non-weekend or non-holiday workday. Each officer conducting a follow-up investigation will submit a separate supplement report detailing his/her investigative efforts. All supplement reports will be submitted prior to the end of the officer's tour of duty.
- C. If the case is the responsibility of another jurisdiction as referenced in Section IV, advise the reporting person to contact the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction. If the case involves a critical missing person, the officer will personally notify the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction of the circumstances. In either case, complete a "Police Information Report" to include the following information:
1. Name and address of the person who is the alleged missing person.
  2. Name and address of the complainant who was advised to contact the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction.
  3. If the report is about a critical missing person, the name of the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction, and the name and title of the person contacted, along with the date and time of the notification.
- Note: In the interest of public safety, if the agency having jurisdiction and responsibility refuses to take the missing persons report, and the missing person would otherwise go unreported, the officer will notify the field supervisor and will then take the missing person report as if the person was last seen in Anne Arundel County. The details surrounding the person's disappearance and the circumstances surrounding the requests made to the agency having responsibility and jurisdiction will be fully documented in the supplemental narrative.
- D. If the facts of the case do not meet the criteria for a missing person, as defined in Section III of this Index Code, the investigating officer will complete a "Police Information" report that documents the following:
1. Name and address of reporting person.
  2. Name and address of the person who is the alleged missing person.
  3. Reason why the case did not fit the criteria for a missing person.

**VI. FIELD SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. The field supervisor will monitor all reports of missing persons, and if necessary will make contact with the officer at the scene and/or respond to the scene in order to obtain the relevant facts concerning the case.
- B. The field supervisor will confirm the classification of all reports of missing persons as “critical” or “non-critical,” evaluating the following factors: age, physical and/or mental health, repeated prior instances of absence, and unusual circumstances surrounding the absence of the missing person.
- C. The field supervisor will follow the procedures outlined in Section VIII for all missing children.
- D. The field supervisor will follow the procedures outlined in Section IX for all critical missing persons.
- E. Field supervisors of oncoming platoons will assign all open missing person cases to an officer for follow-up investigation. Each oncoming platoon is responsible for conducting at least one follow-up investigation during the initial 48 hours after the initial report is taken, with discretion being used during the midnight shift. If the initial forty-eight (48) hour period ends on a weekend or holiday, the follow-up investigations will continue past the forty-eight (48) hour time period until the next regular non-weekend or non-holiday workday. A separate supplement report will be submitted by each officer assigned to do a follow-up investigation detailing the investigative efforts made.
- F. Field supervisors will review all SOMMPRs and all related supplement reports submitted by the investigating officers. If no corrections are necessary, the field supervisor will submit the original white and yellow copies of all approved SOMMPRs and related supplement reports to the Central Records Section prior to the end of their tour of duty. Field supervisors will provide the pink copy of the SOMMPR and the pink copy of any supplement reports to the on-coming platoon supervisor for continued follow-up investigations during the district level follow-up period.

**VII. PLATOON COMMANDER RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. The platoon commander will ensure that open missing person cases are being properly investigated, and that the required follow-up investigations are being conducted during the initial forty-eight (48) hours after the report is taken.
- B. In cases of missing children, the platoon commander will ensure the procedures outlined in Section VIII are being followed.
- C. In cases of critical missing persons, the platoon commander will ensure the procedures outlined in Section IX are being followed.

**VIII. MISSING CHILDREN - ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. The investigating officer taking the initial report of a missing child will determine if any of the following critical factors exist:
  - 1. Has the missing child been the subject of a prior missing persons report?
  - 2. Does the missing child suffer from a mental or physical impairment or serious illness?
  - 3. Is the disappearance of the missing child suspicious or dangerous in nature?
  - 4. Does the complainant have reason to believe the missing child has been abducted?
  - 5. Has the missing child previously been the victim/witness in any criminal investigation?
  - 6. Is the missing child under the age of fourteen (14) years?
  - 7. Has the missing child been missing more than 12 hours?

If any of the above critical factor(s) exist, the investigating officer will follow the procedures outlined in Section IX [Family Law Article 9-402(a) & (b)].

- B. The field supervisor will monitor all cases of reported missing children, and if any critical factor(s) exist, will follow the procedures outlined in Section IX.

- C. The platoon commander will determine if a missing child originally classified as having no critical factors has been located within twelve (12) hours from the time the initial missing person report was made. Under Maryland law, a missing child who is not located within twelve (12) hours from the time the initial missing person report was made is to be reclassified as a critical missing child. If the child has not been located within twelve (12) hours, the platoon commander will ensure that the procedures outlined in Section IX are implemented [Family Law Article 9-402(c)].
- D. The platoon commander will determine if a missing child has not been located within twenty-four (24) hours from the time the initial missing person report was made, and if there is reason to believe that the missing child may be located in a jurisdiction other than Anne Arundel County. Under Maryland law, notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, if a missing child has not been located within twenty-four (24) hours from the time the initial missing person report was made, and either the local enforcement agency or the Department of State Police have reason to believe that the missing child may be located in a jurisdiction other than the jurisdiction where the missing person report was filed, the Department of State Police shall enter the investigation and, in cooperation with the appropriate local law enforcement agencies, assist State and national efforts to locate the missing child [Family Law Article 9-402 (d)].
- E. Cases of parental kidnapping are the responsibility of the Patrol Services Bureau. Follow-up investigations of parental kidnapping are the responsibility of the appropriate District Detective Unit. Refer to Index Code 1704, Section VI.

**IX. CRITICALLY MISSING PERSONS - ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. When a missing person investigation is upgraded to a “Critical Missing Person,” the investigating officer will immediately notify the field supervisor.
- B. **Field Supervisor’s Responsibilities**
  - 1. Critical missing person cases require the response of a field supervisor.
  - 2. Ensure that the investigating officer immediately provides the necessary information to teletype so that the missing person can be entered into the Maryland Interagency Law Enforcement System (MILES) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC).
  - 3. Institute an intensive, well-planned search in the area of the place the missing person was last seen (if known), including a thorough check of the missing person’s home and outside surroundings, including vehicles on or near the property, keeping in mind these locations could be crime scenes.
  - 4. Ensure that the Communications Section is notified so that an immediate broadcast is made on all district channels, as well as surrounding jurisdictions.
  - 5. If the critical missing person is a child, contact the Department of Social Services, and to the extent possible, obtain information that may be relevant in locating the missing child.
  - 6. Determine the necessary support to aid in the investigation, and if necessary, request additional manpower and equipment from other districts, specialized components, and other agencies, including the Maryland State Police.
  - 7. Secure the place where the missing person was last scene, and limit access to the area to prevent contamination that could hinder the effectiveness of canine resources or destroy physical evidence.
  - 8. Institute a neighborhood canvas in the area where the person was last seen.
  - 9. Ensure that friends and relatives are contacted for leads and information, making requests for other law enforcement agencies to check locations in their jurisdiction, if necessary.
  - 10. Consider utilization of the “A Child Is Missing” rapid-response telephone notification system that can be used for critical missing children and adults (see Section X).
  - 11. If the critical missing person is a child, consider the activation of an AMBER Alert (see Section XI).
  - 12. *If the missing person is an adult suffering from a cognitive impairment (a problem with thought processes such as Alzheimer’s Disease or Dementia) and information exists that the victim is travelling in a vehicle, consider implementing a Silver Alert (Section XII for further information).*
  - 13. Request the assistance of the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) if necessary; and notify CID in all cases involving suspicious or unusual circumstances; or if foul play is suspected.
  - 14. In cases involving suspicious or unusual circumstances, or if foul play is suspected, request the Evidence Collection Unit to process the scene and collect evidence, after notifying CID and after any potential search warrant issues have been resolved.

15. Notify the Platoon Commander.
16. In an expanded incident, establish an incident command post and advise the dispatcher of the location (Note: The command post should not be the missing person's residence or the place the missing person was last seen as these areas could be crime scenes and should be preserved).
17. Request the assistance of the Public Information Officer, if necessary.

**C. Platoon Commander's Responsibilities**

1. Ensure that that appropriate investigative and search procedures are being followed.
2. Determine if additional resources are needed, such as:
  - a. Air scent and/or tracking canine resources.
  - b. Ground search and rescue resources.
  - c. Man tracking resources.
  - d. Equestrian search and rescue resources.
  - e. Search managers.
  - f. Aviation support.
  - g. Marine support.
  - h. District Detectives and/or Criminal Investigation Division personnel.
  - i. Support from the Maryland State Police and/or Federal Bureau of Investigation.
3. On expanded incidents involving large scale searches or the use of specialized resources, assume the role of Incident Commander until relieved.
4. Continually assess the situation to determine if searches need to be expanded or can be terminated; or if additional investigative resources are needed.
5. Provide updates through the chain of command.

**X. "A CHILD IS MISSING" RAPID-RESPONSE TELEPHONE NOTIFICATION SYSTEM**

- A. The Department has an agreement with the Florida based non-profit organization called, "A Child Is Missing" (ACIM). ACIM's primary assistance to law enforcement is a high-tech rapid-response telephone notification system, supported by an extensive telephone database, geo-mapping system, and satellite imagery system. When a child or adult has been identified as a "critical missing person," law enforcement personnel can call ACIM, provide pertinent information about the missing person and the location where the missing person was last seen. The ACIM technician will then record a personalized alert message that is phoned out to the area where the person was last seen at a rate of about 1,000 calls per minute. The alert message asks residents to check their property for the missing person and to call the Department should they have any information. In addition, ACIM technicians can utilize computer mapping systems and satellite imagery to assist the Department in identifying any locations that may harbor the missing child or attract a "wandering" adult. ACIM technicians are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year; however, messages are not normally sent between the hours of 2200 and 0600 hours. Any requests received during that time period will be activated at 0601 hours.

**B. ACIM Procedures**

1. The field supervisor will contact ACIM and make the request for activation of the ACIM rapid-response telephone notification system.
  - a. 1-888-875-2246 (Main ACIM toll-free number)
  - b. 1-954-763-1288 (Alternate ACIM number)
  - c. 1-954-492-4778 (ACIM pager number)
2. The field supervisor will be asked to provide to the following information:
  - a. Reporting agency (Anne Arundel County Police Department)
  - b. The Department's main contact during the course of the investigation.
  - c. The case number.
  - d. The name and description of the missing person.

- e. The location the missing person was last seen (zip code, county, and search area).
  - f. The police department phone number for citizens to call to report possible sightings (The recommended number would be “911”.)
3. Since ACIM potentially reaches thousands of residences and businesses in the area, considerable public interest may be generated in the investigation. Therefore, the field supervisor will also ensure that the Communication Section, PIO, CID Missing Persons Squad, and the appropriate District Commander or Night Commander are notified that there has been a ACIM activation.
  4. The use of ACIM will be documented in the missing person report supplemental narrative.

## **XI. AMBER ALERTS**

In 1996, Amber Hagerman, a nine-year-old from Arlington, Texas, was abducted in front of witnesses while innocently riding her bicycle. Her body was found four days later. In response to community concerns following the tragedy, a system called the AMBER Plan (America’s Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response) was developed. The Maryland State Police enacted the Maryland AMBER Plan, which is designed to use technology and the broadcast media to quickly disseminate information about abducted children to the public. Under the plan, radio and television stations immediately interrupt programming to broadcast information and lookouts in reference to child abductions. The State Highway Administration will also put the information on their highway message boards.

### **A. AMBER Alert Criteria**

1. The police agency has received and confirmed a reported child abduction; and
2. The child is 14 years of age or younger (consideration will be given to activation of the plan for a witnessed abduction of a 15 to 17 year old. However, particular consideration must be given when a child between the ages of 15 and 17 is reported missing as to their own behavior or mental capacity that in some way contributed to the criminal activity. A child under 14 cannot legally give consent for any action, and therefore that age group should be considered more at risk. When in doubt concerning this issue, consult with the Maryland Center for Missing Children.); and
3. Evidence exists to further believe the child is missing against their will and not simply missing (eyewitness, physical evidence, etc.); and
4. Evidence suggests a threat to the child’s safety; and
5. The child is likely to be within the Maryland broadcasting area; and
6. There is a victim/suspect description, direction of travel, vehicle information, or something that can be described to the public to be on the lookout for.

### **B. AMBER Alert Procedures**

1. If the investigating officer believes a critical missing child case meets the criteria for activating the plan, they will immediately notify the field supervisor.
2. The field supervisor will confirm that the Amber Alert Criteria has been met and contact the Maryland Center for Missing Children, or the Maryland State Police Headquarters Duty officer. For verification purposes, the field supervisor will be prepared to follow-up the verbal request with a written request made via fax.
  - a. 1-410-290-0050 (M-F 0830 to 1630 hours)
  - b. 1-800-MDS-KIDS (M-F 0830 to 1630 hours)
  - c. 1-410-290-1831 (Fax M-F 0830 to 1630)
  - d. 1-800-525-5555 (after hours MSP Headquarters Duty Officer)
  - e. 410-486-3101 (after hours MSP Headquarters Duty Officer)
  - f. 410-653-4269 (after hours MSP Headquarters Duty Officer fax)
3. If an AMBER Alert is warranted, the notification must be made as soon as possible to assist in the recovery of the child and apprehension of the suspect.

## **XII. SILVER ALERTS**

On October 1, 2009, Title 3 Section 604 of the Annotated Code of Maryland was established, creating a Silver Alert Program for the state of Maryland. This law applies to anyone who has a cognitive impairment to the extent that he/she requires assistance from a caregiver. Cognitive impairments include, but are not limited to, Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia. Persons of all ages can suffer from a cognitive impairment.

The intent of the program is to promptly alert public safety agencies and the general public when a person with a cognitive impairment is reported missing. The Silver Alert will disseminate information on the missing person quickly and to as many people as possible, in an effort to locate and safely return the individual.

### **A. Silver Alert Criteria**

1. Only law enforcement agencies may request the issuance of a Silver Alert.
2. The missing person must suffer from a cognitive impairment, such as a diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease or of Dementia, AND
3. The missing person's disappearance poses a credible threat to the health and safety of the individual, AND
4. The missing person is traveling in a vehicle and there is enough descriptive information about the missing person and vehicle for law enforcement to issue an Alert, AND
5. The investigating agency has already activated a local or regional alert (press release completed) by contacting media outlets in their jurisdiction, AND
6. The missing person has been entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC).

### **B. Procedures for Activating a Silver Alert**

Upon confirmation that the above criteria exist, the investigating officer will contact the Maryland State Police Duty Officer at 410-486-3101 or 1-800 525-5555 (in-state only).

The investigating officer will provide the MSP Duty Officer with call back information for the Silver Alert Coordinator to call for verification.

The Silver Alert Coordinator will contact the investigating officer to discuss the specifics of the investigation and determine whether a Silver Alert will be issued.

## **XIII. TELETYPE RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. Upon receipt of necessary information from the investigating officer, the teletype operator will enter all necessary and available information into the Maryland Interagency Law Enforcement System (MILES) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File.
- B. The teletype operator will initiate a hot sheet entry when appropriate.
- C. The teletype operator will update MILES and NCIC Missing Person records as necessary.
- D. When closing/canceling a case, the teletype operator will complete a "Missing Persons Format Sheet" and will cancel all teletypes, and MILES and NCIC entries.
- E. The teletype operator will forward a copy of the "Missing Person Format Sheet" to Central Records and the Missing Persons Squad.

## **XIV. CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DIVISION RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. The Criminal Investigation Division (CID) will be notified in all cases involving suspicious or unusual circumstances; or if foul play is suspected. For example:
  1. Possible homicide cases.
  2. Cases involving possible sexual abuse.
  3. Possible kidnapping cases.
  4. Child stranger abduction cases.

5. Any case involving an AMBER Alert.
- B. The CID Missing Persons Squad is responsible for the continued follow-up investigation of all missing persons cases after the initial forty-eight (48) hour district level investigation has been completed. A Missing Persons Squad detective will contact the original complainant, make formal introductions, and ascertain if there are any new developments in the case. The assigned detective will investigate the circumstances surrounding the disappearance and will follow up on all leads developed during the investigation. All investigative efforts made will be documented in a Supplement or Investigative Report that will be submitted to their immediate supervisor for review.
- C. Within thirty (30) days of the initial missing persons report being made, the Missing Persons Squad detective will assist the original reporting person and/or the missing person's family with completion of the NCIC "Missing Person File Data Collection Entry Guide." Any additional information obtained as a result of this data collection guide, such as additional personal descriptors, dental records, or medical records, will be provided to Teletype so that the missing person's MILES and NCIC record can be updated. This is not required if the missing person is located within thirty (30) days of the initial report.
- D. A Missing Persons Squad detective will be assigned to serve as the liaison with the Maryland State Police and any other law enforcement agency when a joint investigation is required as outlined in the Family Law Article. Any detective or officer conducting a joint investigation mandated by law, or through a memorandum of understanding or mutual aid agreement will follow all Departmental rules, regulations, and policies.

#### **XV. CENTRAL RECORDS RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. Enter data in the local computer file.
- B. Forward copies of the SOMMPR and all related supplement reports to Teletype, the Criminal Investigation Division, and the State Clearing House for Missing Children.
- C. Delete information from local files upon notification by Teletype of a closure/cancellation.

#### **XVI. CLOSURE/CANCELLATION**

Upon receiving information that a missing person has been located, the officer or investigator closing the case will:

- A. Verify the return and identity of the missing person. (If the missing person is found in another jurisdiction, the officer can have the police department in the jurisdiction make the verification.) Complete a supplement report before the end of his/her tour of duty and fax a copy to Teletype (410-987-9046) and the Missing Persons Squad (410-222-3464).
- B. In missing child cases, officers will debrief the child to ascertain the reason for their disappearance. This contact should be made in person, not over the phone. The child must be interviewed to ascertain if the child left as a result of abuse or family problems related to domestic violence. The information obtained will be part of the narrative in the supplemental report.
- C. Contact Teletype by telephone with the following information so that the missing person can be removed from the MILES and NCIC Missing Person File:
  1. Nature of closure;
  2. Condition of the person;
  3. Location where found;
  4. Reason for disappearance; and
  5. Suspect information, if applicable.
- D. Advise the original complainant of the relevant details of the case and the subject's location. If information is developed that the missing person has been the subject of foul play or has been located either deceased or is in severely deteriorated physical or mental condition, personal contact will be made with the complainant. In other cases, telephone contact will suffice.
- E. If requested, return any photograph and/or, dental and fingerprint records in police possession to the owner.

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**XVII. PROPONENT UNIT:** Criminal Investigations Division.

**XVIII. CANCELLATION:** This directive cancels Index Code 1808, dated 08-29-11.