

Greenbelt Police Department – General Order

	Title: Missing Juveniles		Order #: 609	
	Effective Date: September 28, 2007	Review Date: July 18, 2007		
	Original Issue: February 9, 2005			
<input type="radio"/> New <input checked="" type="radio"/> Amends <input type="radio"/> Rescinds				
Approved by: Chief James Craze				CALEA 5 th Edition
CALEA Standard: 41.2.6				Pages: 7

01 POLICY:

- A. It is the policy of the Greenbelt Police Department to actively investigate missing juvenile incidents, unidentified juvenile incidents, juveniles with physical or mental problems and incidents involving circumstances including when foul play may be involved. (CALEA 41.2.7.a)

- B. Questions concerning parental custody occasionally arise in relation to missing-child(ren) reports. It shall be the policy of the Greenbelt Police Department to accept the report of a missing child even if custody has not been formally established. Reporting parties shall be encouraged to obtain legal custody as soon as possible; however, since the safety of the missing child(ren) is paramount, officers of this agency will open a case when it can be shown that the child(ren) has been removed, without explanation from his/her usual place of residence.

02 DEFINITIONS:

- A. Family Abduction: A non-custodial family member flees with a child, usually in direct violation of a court ordered custody arrangement.

- B. Lost or Otherwise Missing: A child who becomes separated from parents or caretakers under circumstances not indicating the likelihood of an abduction or voluntary absences.

- C. Missing Children includes a person who is:
 - 1. Younger than eighteen (18) years of age; and,
 - 2. Whose whereabouts are unknown to his/her parents, guardian, or responsible party.

- D. Non-Family Abduction: A child is taken by an unknown individual, through force or persuasion, usually in furtherance of additional victimization.

- E. Runaway: Most often a teenager, who leaves home voluntarily for a variety of reasons.

- F. Throwaway: A child whose caretaker makes no effort to recover the child who has runaway, or who has been abandoned or deserted.

- G. Unusual Circumstances:
 - 1. A missing child thirteen (13) years of age or younger. The Federal Missing Children Assistance Act established this age because children of this age group have not established independence from parental control and do not have the survival skills necessary to protect themselves from exploitation on the streets.

 - 2. A child who is missing and believed to be one or more of the items noted below.
 - a. Out of the zone of safety for his/her age and physical and mental condition. The zone of safety will vary depending on age. In the case of an infant, for example, the zone of safety will include immediate presence of an adult custodian or the crib, stroller, or carriage in which the infant was placed. For a school-aged child the zone of safety might be the immediate neighborhood or route taken between home and school.

- b. Mentally diminished. If the juvenile is developmentally disabled or emotionally disturbed, or the victim of disease, he/she may have difficulty communicating with others about needs, identity or address. The disability places the person in danger of exploitation or other harm.
- c. Drug dependent. In the case of a child, the term “drug dependent” shall refer to dependence on either prescription or illicit substance, since any drug dependency puts a child at substantially increased risk.
- d. A potential victim of foul play or sexual exploitation. Significant risk to the person can be assumed if investigation indicates a possible abduction, violence at the scene of an abduction, or signs of sexual abuse.
- e. In a life-threatening situation. The environment in which the juvenile is missing may be particularly hazardous. Examples of a dangerous environment could be a busy highway for a toddler, an all night truck stop for a teenager, or simply an outdoor environment in inclement weather for a child.
- f. Absent from home for more than twenty-four (24) hours before being reported to law enforcement as missing. While some persons may incorrectly assume that twenty-four (24) hours must pass before law enforcement will accept a missing persons case, a delay in reporting might also indicate the existence of neglect or abuse within the family.
- g. Believed to be with persons who could endanger his/her welfare. A missing child in such circumstances is in danger not only of sexual exploitation, but of involvement in other criminal activity.
- h. Is absent under circumstances inconsistent with established patterns of behavior. Most children to some degree have established routines that are reasonably predicted. Significant, unexplained deviations from those routines increase the probability that the child may be at risk. A child whose disappearance involves circumstances that would cause a reasonable person to conclude that the missing child should be considered at risk.

03 COMMUNICATIONS PERSONNEL PROCEDURES: Communications personnel receiving the report of a missing child shall be responsible for: (CALEA 41.2.7.e)

- A. Determining the circumstances of the report meet the definition of a missing child as set forth in Section 02 of this Order. By questioning the caller about the circumstances of the report, the on-duty Communications Specialist can make a preliminary assessment about the level of risk of the missing child.
- B. Dispatching, in an immediate manner, an officer to the scene of the report. Officers shall immediately respond to the report of a missing child or juvenile. (CALEA 41.2.7.e)

NOTE: The National Child Search Assistance Act of 1990 mandates law enforcement’s immediate response to reports of missing children and the prompt entry of descriptive information into the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) National Crime

Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File.

- C. The on-duty Shift Supervisor should be notified of every reported incident in which a child thirteen (13) years or younger or an older child fourteen (14) and above with “unusual circumstances” are determined to exist. (CALEA 41.2.7.e)

- D. A critical response of the Communications Specialist is to obtain sufficient information from the reporting party to broadcast a radio message that alerts officers about the circumstances of the person’s disappearance. Information should include the person’s height, weight, hair and eye color, and clothing, as well as the location where last seen. The radio broadcast should contain any information known about a possible abductor with special emphasis on the description of the suspect and vehicle used as well as direction of travel. Allied agencies shall be notified via phone calls and teletypes.

NOTE: There is no required waiting period for reporting a missing child. A child may be declared “missing” when his/her whereabouts are unknown and unexplainable for a period of time that is regarded by knowledgeable persons as highly unusual or suspicious in consideration of the subject’s behavior patterns, plans or routines.

04 INVESTIGATION PHASES:

- A. Phase I: Normally involves patrol officers being dispatched to a location to investigate a report of a missing person. If the person is not immediately located, and if exigent circumstances or the possibility of foul play exists, the on-duty Shift Supervisor will respond to the scene and direct the initial investigation and/or search.
- B. Phase II: Involves the participation of the Criminal Investigations Unit (CIU) to assist patrol with any necessary investigation of the incident.

- C. Phase III: Involves CIU assuming responsibility for the incident due to indications of foul play or criminal activity. The CIU Sergeant, or his/her designee, will assume investigative command and direct all participating personnel.

- D. Phase IV: Involves extended follow-up investigation by CIU.

E. Phase I:

1. The first responding officer on the scene will: (CALEA 41.2.7.e)
 - a. Interview the reporting party, family, parents, friends, witnesses, neighbors, etc., to obtain an initial description and gather all pertinent information;
 - b. Determine the circumstances surrounding the disappearance and advise a supervisor if assistance is required;
 - c. Gather and disseminate as much information as is immediately available, including photographs.
 - d. Depending on the circumstances, an immediate search may need to be initiated, commencing with the location the person was last known to be, the residence or possible route of travel.
 - e. Brief other assisting units of a possible reason for the disappearance, possible areas to search and request broadcast of information, if indicated.
2. The on-duty Shift Supervisor will: (CALEA 41.2.7.e)
 - a. Assume overall command of the incident.
 - b. Evaluate the circumstances and investigation thus far.

- c. Determine if the Maryland Amber Alert System needs to be set in motion. See SOD SOP 03-Maryland Amber Alert Plan. (CALEA 41.2.7.d)
 - Support, Search and Rescue, etc.). (CALEA 41.2.7.c)
 - 1. Ensure required notifications are made.
- d. Determine if a Child is Missing Alert should be set in motion. See SOD SOP 11-A Child is Missing. (CALEA 41.2.7.d)
 - m. Request the involvement of CIU and the initiation of Phase II, if necessary.
- e. Review the circumstances of the disappearance to determine if the child or juvenile is lost or possibly the victim of criminal activity.
- f. Coordinate the activities of participating personnel, to include allied agencies and the Prince George’s County Fire Department (PGFD), if appropriate. Searches should include searches within specific grids. Door to door searches will be conducted, if applicable (i.e., in a residential neighborhood). (CALEA 41.2.7.c)
- g. Ensure that an accurate log or record is kept of areas searched, persons contacted, actions taken and personnel involved.
- h. Ensure all necessary information (updates) regarding the missing person is broadcast or conveyed to other concerned agencies or jurisdictions. (CALEA 41.2.7.c)
- i. Continue to direct supervision of line personnel and request assistance, if necessary.
- j. Evaluate the use of personnel and/or resource requirements and adjust as necessary.
- k. Evaluate the need for special assistance (Canine, Air
 - F. Phase II:** Upon request of the on-duty Shift Supervisor, CIU will respond to the scene. The CIU Sergeant, or his/her designee, and CIU detectives responding will report to the on-duty Shift Supervisor and assist with the investigative aspect of the incident. Actions normally taken include: (CALEA 41.2.7.d)
 - 1. Establish a temporary command post.
 - 2. Notify the Special Operations Division Commander during normal business hours or the on-call Commander during non-business hours.
 - 3. The on-duty Shift Supervisor shall remain in command to oversee the overall operation until relieved by CIU personnel. Although a Command officer may be in-charge of the overall tactical coordination, CIU personnel will remain in-charge of the investigative leads and follow-up.
 - 4. Interview the reporting party, family, parents, friends, witnesses, neighbors, etc. (CALEA 41.2.6.d)
 - 5. Conduct a thorough background check of the missing person, reporting parties, and other investigative leads.
 - 6. Assist the on-duty Shift Supervisor in making required notifications, coordinating with other agencies and appropriate NCIC entries.
 - 7. Recommend initiation of Phase III if the investigation or search becomes complex or extended,

and/or additional resources are required.

- G.** Phase III: If the missing child or juvenile is not found within a reasonable period of time (depending upon age, weather, and/or circumstances, within 1 to 2 hours), then the on-duty Shift Supervisor may request that Phase III be initiated. However, if abduction is suspect or probable Phase III may begin immediately.
1. During normal business hours, the Special Operations Division Commander, or his/her designee, or during non-business hours the on-call Commander will respond to the scene and assume overall command.
 2. A task force of officers may be assigned initially under the direction of the CIU Sergeant and overseen by the above Commander.
 3. The command post will be relocated if possible in a suitable nearby facility where telephone and radio communications will be established.
 4. The PIO will be called to the command post to coordinate information, news releases, media inquiries, and establish a media site away from the command post. (CALEA 41.2.7.c)
 5. Actions taken in Phase III will involve, at a minimum, evaluation of the search and investigation to date, expanding the scope as indicated, door to door contacts, including requests for additional resources, and notification of other agencies such as the Prince George's County Police Department (PGPD), United States Park Police (USPD), Maryland State Police (MSP), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). A task force may be organized for a sustained operation on a twenty-four (24) hour basis, if warranted.

Personnel resources will be assigned to maximize the search and investigative effort. (CALEA 41.2.7.c)

6. Logs, reports, and related paperwork will be organized and promptly processed by a CIU detective to facilitate direction and continuity of the investigation. The Department Command Staff will be briefed in a timely manner.
- H.** Phase IV: If the missing person is not found during Phase III, the Special Operations Division Commander or his/her designee will recommend scaling down the effort at a point in the investigation when all viable leads have been exhausted and all possible locations have been searched. The decision to disband the task force and command post will be made by the Special Operations Division Commander after consultation with the on-duty Shift Supervisor, CIU Sergeant, and approval of the Chief of Police.
1. Phase IV will involve continued follow-up by CIU of any new information, viable leads and additional media publicity.
 2. The case will remain in an open status and assigned to a detective until such time that the missing person is located or the case is solved.
- I.** Missing Children and Juveniles:
1. Reports: Reports on missing child(ren) and juveniles will be written on the State of Maryland Missing Persons Report Form (MSP Form 79), and details of the incident will be reported on a Departmental Supplement. These reports shall be made in person whenever possible. There are no time limits (waiting a period of time prior to taking a report) on reporting a missing child or juvenile.

2. When responding to a missing child or juvenile call, the officer will obtain as much initial information as possible for the report. A separate incident report number will be assigned to each missing person. If two (2) or more persons are missing from the same family at the same time under similar circumstances, a separate MSP Form 79 with an incident report number and a Department Supplement will be generated for each missing person.
 - a. In addition to the general information obtained, the Missing Persons Report should contain the following information:
 - i. The missing person will be listed as the “victim”;
 - ii. Clothing and jewelry description;
 - iii. Previous medical condition;
 - iv. Current medical condition;
 - v. Drugs (therapeutic and abusive);
 - vi. Vehicle information associated with the disappearance; and,
 - vii. Dental records information, if available.
3. Photographs: The most recent photograph of the missing child or juvenile shall be obtained from the reporting person. On the reverse side of the photograph the officer will write the incident report number, the date or approximate age of the photograph, victim’s name, title of the report and the officer’s initials. The photo will be attached to the original Missing Persons report and submitted to the Records Unit. The Records Unit will forward the photo with a copy of the Missing Persons report to the Special Operations Division Commander for dissemination to CIU investigators.
4. The Missing Persons report shall be completed expeditiously and prior to the end of the officer’s shift. The reporting officer shall prepare a supplement to document all relevant information and forward a hard copy to the on-duty Communications Specialist.
5. The officer taking the missing person report will:
 - a. Request the on-duty Communications Specialist broadcast the missing person information when appropriate.
 - b. Request that Communications send out an area wide teletype, when appropriate.
6. NCIC: The on-duty Communications Specialist shall then input this information into the NCIC system, if applicable. For the purpose of NCIC, entries of missing persons are divided into four categories and must meet the criteria of one of the categories in order to be entered into NCIC as a missing person.
 - a. A person of any age who is missing and who is under proven physical or mental disability or is senile, thereby subjecting themselves or others to personal and immediate danger.
 - b. A person of any age who is missing under circumstances indicating that the disappearance was not voluntary.
 - c. A person of any age who is in the company of another person under circumstances indicating that his/her physical safety is in danger.

- d. A person who is declared unemancipated (under the age of 18 years) as defined by the laws of their state of residence and does not meet any of the criteria set forth in a, b, or c above.
- J. Investigative Follow Up On Missing Child or Juvenile: (CALEA 41.2.7.f)**
1. If the child or juvenile is still missing ten (10) days after last being seen, the assigned investigator will give the parent, guardian, reporting party, etc. an NCIC Missing Person File Data Collection Guide. Prior to giving it to the parent, guardian, reporting party, etc., the investigator will complete certain information in the Missing Person Packet inside of the guide, such as the missing person's name, date of birth, investigating agency, investigator's name, and agency case number (this latter item is to also be completed on the front cover of the Data Collection Guide).
 2. The investigator will explain the Missing Person Packet to the parent, guardian, reporting party, etc. and request that it be completed and returned to him/her no later than 30 days after the person was reported missing. The investigator will explain the importance of having information in the Packet, particularly the Missing Person Dental Report, completed as thoroughly and expeditiously as possible.
 3. When the assigned investigator receives the completed Missing Person Packet, he/she will have as much additional information added to the missing person's NCIC record as possible. The completed Packet will then be maintained in the missing person's investigative case folder, and a copy forwarded with a supplemental report for filing in the Records Unit.
 4. If the investigator cannot have all of the information requested in the Packet added to the missing person's NCIC record thirty (30) days after the person was reported missing, he/she will specify the reason in a supplemental report (e.g. the parent, guardian, reporting party, etc. did not have the Missing Persons Packet completed; claims to have completed it but failed to return it; completed all but the dental report; didn't complete all of the personal descriptors, etc.).