



Alexandria Police Department

Directive 10.36



MISSING PERSONS

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10.36.01 PURPOSE AND POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to establish responsibilities and procedures for the Department's response to reports of missing adults and children.

It is the policy of this department to immediately and thoroughly investigate all reports of missing persons. This department considers every person reported missing as "at risk" until significant information to the contrary is confirmed. [41.2.6.a]

10.36.02 DEFINITIONS

AMBER Plan – America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response

The purpose of the AMBER Plan is for Law Enforcement Agencies to collaborate with local broadcasters in child abduction investigations for the safe and swift return of missing children.

Emergency Alert System (EAS) – a national civil emergency alert system designed to inform the public of immediate threats to national security, life and property. Employing warning tones, EAS utilizes the public radio/television and broadcast system to share information between public safety agencies and the media; who in turn, transmit emergency information to the public.

Missing child - a person who is:

1. Younger than twenty one (21) years of age, and
2. Whose whereabouts are unknown to his or her custodial parent, guardian, or responsible party (see § Virginia Code 52-32).

Risk factors - a missing person who fits any or all of the below categories:

1. Thirteen (13) years of age or younger. This age was established by the Federal Missing Children Assistance Act because children of this age group have not established independence from parental control, and most do not have the survival skills necessary to protect themselves from exploitation on the streets. Supervisors and commanders may use carefully considered discretion with cases of habitual runaways.
2. Believed to be experiencing one or more of the following circumstances:
 - a. Out of the zone of safety for his or her age and/or development stage. The zone of safety will vary depending on the age of the person and his/her developmental stage. In the case of an infant, for example, the zone of safety will include the immediate presence of an adult custodian, or the crib, stroller, or carriage in which the infant was placed. For a school age child, the zone of safety might be the immediate neighborhood or the route taken between home and school. For an adult, the places the person usually frequents should be checked.
 - b. Mentally diminished. If the person is developmentally disabled or emotionally/behaviorally disturbed, he or she may have difficulty communicating with others about needs, identity, or address. The disability places this person in danger of exploitation.
 - c. Drug dependent, including both prescription and illicit substances. Any drug dependency puts the missing person at risk. The diabetic or epileptic person requires regular medication or his/her condition may become critical. The illicit drug abuser, on the other hand, may resort to crime or become the victim of exploitation.
 - d. A potential victim of foul play or sexual exploitation. Significant risk to the person can be assumed if investigation reveals indications of 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 person 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, a high crime area at night for an unaccompanied adult, or an outdoor environment in inclement weather for a person of any age.
- f. Absent from home for more than twenty-four (24) hours before being reported to the police as missing. While some persons may incorrectly assume that twenty-four (24) hours must pass before police will accept a missing person case, a delay in reporting might also indicate the existence of neglect or abuse within the family.
- g. With persons who could endanger his or her welfare. For example, a missing person may be in danger of sexual exploitation or involvement in criminal activity such as burglary, shoplifting and robbery.
- h. Absent under circumstances inconsistent with established patterns of behavior. Most persons have an established routine that is reasonably predictable. Significant unexplained deviations from that routine increase the probability of risk to the person.
- i. Missing under circumstances that would cause a reasonable person to conclude that the person should be considered at risk.

10.36.03 MISSING PERSON PROCEDURES**[41.2.6.e]**

A. There is no waiting period before which a missing person (adult or child) report can be filed (see Virginia Code §15.2-1718 and US Code Title 42 §5780).

B. Determination of risk factors

If it is determined that risk factors are involved in the report of a missing person, a thorough investigation, including the use of all appropriate resources, will commence immediately. While all missing person incidents should be investigated thoroughly, those involving risk factors indicate a heightened likelihood of danger to the person and, therefore, require an intensive response.

C. Department of Emergency and Customer Communications(DECC) personnel, upon receiving a report of a missing person, are responsible to:

1. Determine if circumstances of the report meet the definition of a missing child or missing person, defined by of any of the risk factors as set forth in section **10.36.02.**
2. Immediately dispatch an officer to the scene. 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 NCIC Missing Person File. The Exploitation of Children Today Act of 2003 amended the National Child Search Assistance Act to extend the same NCIC reporting responsibility and other benefits to missing young adults 18, 19, and 20 years of age.

3. Notify a patrol supervisor in all cases. [41.2.6.b]
4. Transmit any appropriate radio alerts and other notifications. A critical responsibility of the call taker is to obtain sufficient information from the reporting party to broadcast a radio lookout that alerts other officers, and other agencies if necessary, about the circumstances of the person's disappearance. Basic information should include the person's height, weight, hair and eye color, and clothing, as well as the location where the person was last seen, and any information known about a possible abductor such as the description of the suspect and vehicle and the direction of travel. [41.2.6.c]
5. Safeguard all pertinent records. The call taker should also ensure that records of all communication related to this incident, such as telephone conversations with the reporting party, including written notes regarding the discussion, radio broadcasts, and all subsequent notifications, are safeguarded for future investigative reference.
6. Handle any radio requests by the patrol officer or supervisor assigned to the call.

D. The officer assigned to the report of a missing person is responsible to, as appropriate to the circumstances:

1. Respond promptly to the scene of the report. Do not delay your response to the reporting party by conducting a nearby search of parks or playgrounds. These activities can be handled by other patrol officers.
2. Interview parent(s) or person who is making the initial report.
 - a. Verify that the person is in fact missing.
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
 - b. For missing children, use of the Virginia Missing Children Information Clearinghouse Report, SP-183 (see Appendix A), to gather information that will assist the officer in promptly reaching an accurate risk assessment.
 - c. Obtain a description of the missing person and broadcast a radio lookout. Request the lookout be relayed to other jurisdictions, if appropriate.
 - d. **Obtain a recent photograph.** (If one is unavailable note this in the report.)

- e. Confirm the custody status of children, or guardian status, if any, of disabled adults. [REDACTED]
 - f. Identify a person's zone of safety for his or her age and developmental stage.
 - g. Determine an appropriate level of response based on the circumstances surrounding the person's disappearance.
3. Determine when, where, and who last saw the person. Interview the individual(s) who last had contact with the person. [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] Interview witnesses immediately; [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] All interviews should be conducted separately and privately.
4. Attempt to determine how far a person could have traveled from the location where last seen. This perimeter should, under many circumstances, define the first search zone.
5. Make an initial determination of the type of incident and the need for additional resources. Advise the responding supervisor.
6. Obtain a description of any suspected abductor(s) and other pertinent information. [REDACTED]
7. Conduct a neighborhood canvass. [REDACTED]
8. [REDACTED]
9. **Complete necessary reports and appropriate forms (see section 10.36.05).**

Provide updated radio lookouts and other information to DECC as appropriate. Ensure the updated information is provided to other agencies as appropriate.

10. Secure and safeguard any potential crime scene and request CSI to respond, if appropriate.

E. The scene supervisor is responsible to:

1. Respond to the scene and obtain a briefing from the officer(s) and other agency personnel at the scene, away from family, friends or any other individuals who may be present.
2. Consideration should be given to the use of roadblock(s), a helicopter, etc., to apprehend a fleeing abductor, when appropriate.
3. Determine if additional personnel (such as from COPS, Motors, PEOs and CIS) and resources are needed to assist in the investigation.
4. Initiate the ICS if appropriate.
5. Organize and coordinate search efforts. The supervisor may appoint a search operation coordinator who can oversee the search effort while the supervisor remains available to manage the overall investigation.
6. Notify the Watch Commander and PIO Office and ensure that any other appropriate notifications have been made (See also section 10.36.08).
7. Consider activating the Amber Alert system if appropriate.
8. Consider activating the Geocast Reverse 911 notification system through DECC.
9. Consider contacting the Electronic Surveillance Unit for assistance.
10. Establish a liaison with the missing person's family to explain the investigative actions being taken and what they can do to assist.
11. Ensure all agency policies and procedures are observed.

F. The detective assigned to the report of a missing child or adult is responsible to (at the time of the report or during later investigation, as appropriate):

[41.2.5.e]

1. Obtain a briefing from agency personnel at the scene, prior to interviews with family members of the missing person or witnesses.
2. Verify the accuracy of all information. The verification process should include all details developed during the preliminary investigation.

3.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

4. Resolve any conflicting information. When preliminary investigative steps have been taken, detectives should compare notes with the original reporting officer, other detectives, and other agency personnel to identify and work through conflicting information.
5. Implement effective case management. An information –management system is an essential part of the overall investigative process. Depending on the complexity of the investigation, it may be necessary to use a computerized system to record, index, cross-reference, and retrieve the facts amassed during an investigation. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) can provide computer software designed for effective case management.
6. Evaluate the need for additional resources and specialized services. The complexity of some missing person incidents may necessitate the use of resources and services both from within the agency and from other organizations as well. Information may be obtained from resources such as the FBI, NCIC, state missing children clearinghouses and NCMEC.

7. [REDACTED]

8. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

9. Provide the reporting party with a telephone number for further contact with the assigned detective.

10. Handle the follow-up contacts with the reporting party and any further follow-up investigation and searches. **[41.2.5.d-e; 41.2.6.f]**

11. Along with the appropriate CIS supervisor and commander, review all press releases prior to release to ensure that investigative objectives are not compromised.
12. Maintain close liaison with the NCMEC for the exchange of information and technical assistance regarding missing juveniles (US Code, Title 42, Section 5780).
13. No later than 60 days after the original entry of the record into NCIC, state, or local systems, verify and update such records with any additional information. The update should include, when available, medical and dental records, dental characteristics, scars, marks and tattoos, fingerprints, along with additional articles of clothing, jewelry, or unique possessions. (see US Code, Title 42, Section 5780).
14. Cancel all notifications, database entries, etc., when the case is closed.

10.36.04 UNIDENTIFIED PERSON PROCEDURES**A. An officer assigned to the report of an unidentified person, whether living or deceased, adult or child, will be responsible to:**

1. Obtain a complete description. The NCIC Unidentified Person File Worksheet may be used. This information should be gathered in cooperation with the Medical Examiner's Office.
2. Ensure the person's description is entered into the NCIC Unidentified Person File. This file is compared daily with the contents of the NCIC Missing Person File. Entries with common characteristics are flagged and both agencies are informed.
3. Use all available resources to aid in identification of the person. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, state missing children clearinghouses, and other organizations, such as state medical examiners' associations may be of assistance in the identification.
4. Cancel all notifications after identification is confirmed.

10.36.05 REPORTING**[41.2.6.c]****A. An incident report will be completed on all persons reported to be missing from Alexandria (regardless of the amount of time that the person has been missing) when:**

1. Any person (regardless of residence status) was last known to be in Alexandria.
 2. Any resident of Alexandria, regardless of the jurisdiction in which they were last known to be, or when it is unknown where they were last seen.
- B.** When this department is responsible for the report and investigation, and the missing person either is a resident of another jurisdiction or was last seen in another jurisdiction:
1. The officer taking the incident report is responsible for immediately providing relevant information to that jurisdiction, including immediate radio lookouts, if appropriate.
 2. CIS will also ensure that the pertinent information is furnished to the other jurisdiction, and will coordinate any investigative effort.
 3. If necessary, officers will assist the reporting party in contacting appropriate agencies.
- C.** An officer assigned to complete a report of a missing person will conduct a detailed interview as described in section 10.36.03.D. Information from this interview will be documented in the incident report.
1. *Choose the appropriate report title and offense ('Runaway' or 'Missing Person').*
 2. *Add the individual to the 'Missing Person' Section of your report.*
 - a. *Runaways no longer need to be added as Suspects.*
 - b. *Missing Persons do not need to be added as Victims.*
 - c. *If the individual has not returned, enter the Case Status as "OPEN."*
- D. The assigned officer will determine if the missing person qualifies for VCIN/NCIC** under any of the following missing person categories:
1. **Disability (mental or physical):** The missing person has proven physical or mental disability or is senile, thereby subjecting themselves or others to personal and immediate danger. *
 2. **Endangered:** The circumstances indicate that they are in danger. *
 3. **Involuntary:** Circumstances indicate that the disappearance was not voluntary. Family and non-family abductions fall under this category. *
 4. **Juvenile:** The missing person is under the age of 18 and none of the other categories apply. Runaways are usually entered in this category unless unusual circumstances exist.

5. **Missing Child:** Child between the age of 18 and less than 21 years who is missing and does not meet the criteria set forth in 1,2,or 3 above. Child will be entered as Missing Person Other.
6. **Catastrophe:** A person is missing after a catastrophe.
7. **Other:** *A person 21 or older, not meeting the criteria for entry in any other category, who is missing and for whom there is a reasonable concern for his/her safety.*

E. If the person qualifies for VCIN/NCIC entry, the reporting officer will:

1. Complete the proper form and ensure it is signed by an appropriate person. A signature by the investigating officer will suffice in the absence of a parent, legal guardian, next of kin, physician, or other authoritative source, including a friend or neighbor in unusual circumstances, or when such signature is not reasonably attainable (see Virginia State Police VCIN Operating Manual). This signature is required for VCIN/NCIC entry. For further information see Directive 10.8, Reporting Guide.
 - a. A Virginia Missing Person Information Clearinghouse Report (SP-67) is used for adult cases.
 - b. A Virginia Missing Children Information Clearinghouse report (SP-183) is used for missing child and juvenile cases.
2. **Ensure that missing children get entered into VCIN/NCIC within the two-hour limit required by law.** (See VA Code citation below.) **This can be accomplished by:**
 - a. **immediately hand delivering the completed form to ISS personnel.**

Code of VA § 15.2-1718 "Upon receipt of a missing child report by any police or sheriff's department, the department shall immediately, but **in all cases within two hours** of receiving the report, enter identifying and descriptive data about the child into the Virginia Criminal Information Network and the National Crime Information Center Systems, forward the report to the Missing Children Information Clearinghouse within the Department of State Police, notify all other law-enforcement agencies in the area, and initiate an investigation of the case."

F. The following areas will be addressed in each missing person report:

1. Full circumstances of the disappearance.
2. Complete description of the person and clothes worn at the time last seen.
3. The date and location of the last known contact with the person.
4. Past history of leaving home or threats to do so.
5. Names, addresses and telephone numbers of close friends that may be contacted.
6. Name and telephone number of business if missing person is employed.

7. Name and location of any school attended, if any.
8. Names, addresses and telephone numbers of relatives that may be contacted.
9. Possibility of suicide.
10. What was taken (clothes, money, weapons, etc.).
11. Access to vehicles.
12. Drug involvement.
13. Possible destinations and the reasons for them.
14. Any other information the officer deems necessary to aid in the investigation.
15. Photos of the missing person and suspect, if available, shall be submitted with the appropriate clearinghouse form (SP-67 or SP-183). Note in the report if no photo is available.

10.36.06 CASE CLOSURE

A. An officer assigned to the recovery or return of a missing person will be responsible to:

1. Personally verify that the returned person is, in fact, the reported missing person, in order to assess the person's safety, gain information about possible predators, and prevent future episodes.
2. Arrange for intervention service, if indicated. During the verification process, officers should be alert for evidence of abuse or neglect, or other indications that additional services may be needed before the person can safely remain with the family. These services may include mental and/or physical health examinations and arrangements for family counseling.
3. If the person is a juvenile runaway from Alexandria, from another jurisdiction or from out-of-state, who has been located; verify the existence of a NCIC missing persons hit or warrant. Place the child in custody and contact Juvenile Intake. Follow the directions of Juvenile Intake as to disposition of the child, which could involve the arrangement for the return of the child to his or her legal guardian, the placement of the child in an appropriate children's shelter, transport to the appropriate facility for admission, or some other disposition.
4. Complete the appropriate supplemental reports (using the case number assigned to the original missing person report), including a description of the person's activities while missing and the circumstances of the recovery/return.
5. For missing juveniles, the case will be closed by "*Terminated*" upon the initial report of the child's return. If a juvenile has been reported as a runaway in the City of Alexandria and returned home by himself/herself, or with the assistance of police or a family member, under Incident Based Reporting (IBR) guidelines, the report has to be closed by "*Terminated*" and the juvenile removed from VCIN/NCIC as soon as they return home. No 7B (Adult Arrest Form) or 7E (Juvenile Arrest Form) needs to be submitted on a returned runaway. The

original report should contain a person block listing the juvenile's information. If additional information is ascertained, add the information in this supplemental report.

6. Contact ISS personnel and request cancellation of all outstanding notifications, including the VCIN/NCIC missing person entries. The agency entering the data is the only one that can remove the information. **[41.2.6.f]**

- B.** A detective assigned to the recovery or return of a missing person will follow-up on the case for additional services as needed.

10.36.07	AMBER ALERT PLAN	[41.2.6.d]
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Realizing that time is of the essence in these cases, the Chiefs of the Law Enforcement agencies in the Washington Metropolitan area agree that the abduction of a child is of the highest priority for response and investigation. In furtherance of this type of investigation, a carefully planned and quick notification to the public by commercial broadcast methods, Virginia's "AMBER Alert" Plan, can be a valuable tool in the recovery of abducted children.

The purpose of the AMBER Plan is for Law Enforcement Agencies to collaborate with local broadcasters in child abduction investigations for the safe and swift return of missing children.

Virginia Amber Alert Plan Check Sheet

- A. Child reported Abducted – the decision to open a major case investigation has been made by the investigating agency.
- The missing child must be 17 years of age or younger, and the law enforcement agency believes the child has been abducted (unwillingly taken from their environment without permission from the child's parent or legal guardian.).
 - The agency believes the missing child is in imminent danger of serious bodily harm or death and not simply missing- eyewitness, physical evidence etc.
 - Sufficient information is available to disseminate to the public that could assist in locating the child, suspect, and/or the suspect's vehicle.
 - The child must be entered into the Virginia Criminal Information Network (VCIN) missing person files as soon as practical.
- B. Agency activates an alert.

The Patrol supervisor or his designee will:

1. Collect the information necessary for the NCIC, regional lookout, and *Virginia* AMBER Alert Plan.
2. Confer with the Virginia State Police at 1-800-VACHILD and provide information regarding the abducted child. The initial decision to make a “statewide” Amber Alert is by law (52-34.3) at their discretion.
3. Complete the pre-established Virginia Amber Alert Plan forms packet and FAX or e-mail to Virginia Missing Children Clearinghouse (Vamissing@vsp.virginia.gov).
4. Notify the P.I.O. of the above actions taken.

10.36.08 NOTIFICATION OF THE FBI

Under the Federal Kidnapping Statute, 18 USC § 1201(a), the FBI is mandated by Congress to immediately investigate the mysterious disappearance of any child of tender years. Tender years are defined as an age where a child is generally incapable of fending for themselves, usually considered being age 12 or younger. This is not a fixed age however.

A common misconception is that evidence must indicate the victim has been taken across state lines or that a ransom demand has been made before the FBI can initiate, or get involved in, an investigation. Neither is correct.

The FBI will respond and assist as soon as possible after notification of the mysterious disappearance of a child or a confirmed, non-custodial, abduction has taken place. It shall be the responsibility of the CIS supervisor involved in the investigation to notify the FBI in a timely manner.

By Authority Of:

Michael L. Brown
Chief of Police