


MONROE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

General Order

CHAPTER: 047-2		TITLE: Missing Children
EFFECTIVE DATE: December 15, 2008	NO. PAGES: 6	REVIEWED/REVISED: November 29, 2022
 Sheriff of Monroe County		

- I. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this order is to establish policy and procedures response to an investigation of missing children
- II. **POLICY:** It is the Sheriff's policy reports of missing children are immediately and properly responded to and thoroughly investigated according to professional standards. Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) reporting missing Children. In compliance with FSS 937 f; a child under the care or supervision of the DCF, or under the care or supervision of a DCF contract provider is reported missing by an employee of DCF or its contract provider the report will be accepted and the case investigated as per this policy.
- III. **DEFINITIONS:**
- A. Missing Child/Juvenile: A person younger than 18 years of age; whose temporary or permanent residence is in, or is believed to be, in Florida; whose location has not been determined; and has been reported as missing to a law enforcement agency.
- B. Disabled: A person of any age who is missing and under proven physical/mental disability or is senile, thereby subjecting himself/herself or others to personal and immediate danger.
- C. Endangered: A person of any age who is missing and in the company of another person under circumstances indicating that his/her physical safety is in danger.
- D. Missing Endangered Person: Means
- a. A missing child
 - b. A missing adult younger than 26 years of age;
 - c. A missing adult 26years of age or older who by a law enforcement agency of being endangered or the victim of criminal activity.
- E. Involuntary: A person of any age who is missing under circumstances indicating that the disappearance was not voluntary, i.e. abduction or kidnapping. A juvenile is entered as involuntary under circumstances indicating that the disappearance was not voluntary, such as a child in the company of a family member other than a parent or a non-family member such as a friend, and where the child does not appear endangered.
- F. Catastrophe Victim: A person of any age who is missing after a catastrophe.
- G. Missing Endangered Person Report: A report prepared on a form prescribed by FDLE for use by the public and law enforcement agencies in reporting information to the Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse about a missing endangered person. There are two different

report forms: one for missing endangered adults and one for a missing child.

IV. PROCEDURE: There is no waiting period for reporting a missing person. All reports of missing persons shall be accepted and documented.

A. Communications Responsibilities: Communications personnel receiving the report of a missing child shall:

1. Immediately dispatch a deputy to the scene of the report
2. Obtain sufficient information from the reporting party to broadcast a BOLO to other officers and appropriate agencies. The BOLO should contain the following information if available:
 - a. Missing person description
 - 1) Height
 - 2) Weight
 - 3) Eye and hair color
 - 4) Clothing last seen wearing
 - 5) Location last seen
 - 6) Person last seen with (if other than suspect)
 - 7) Any medical and/or disabilities
 - b. Suspect description
 - 1) Emphasis on vehicle used and direction of travel
 - 2) Time delay
3. A supervisor should be notified of every reported incident in which "unusual circumstances" are determined to exist.
4. Immediately inform all on duty law enforcement officers of the existence of the missing child report, communicate the report to every other law enforcement agency having jurisdiction in the county, and within two hours after receipt of the report enter the report for inclusion within the FCIS and NCIC databases.
5. Upon the filing of a credible report that a child is missing, within two hours after receipt of the report, transmit the report for inclusion within the FCIC and NCIC databases. Enter Missing Juvenile (EMJ) entry must indicate within the miscellaneous (MISC) field if guardianship status with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) is known. Examples of entries:
 - a. DCF maintains guardianship of missing juvenile
 - b. Status of guardianship for missing juvenile is unknown
6. Upon locating the missing child, immediately purge information about the case from the FCIC and NCIC databases and notify the Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse.

B. Patrol Responsibilities:

1. The patrol deputy will make immediate personal contact with the complainant and determine if:
 - a. The missing child is under age 18.
 - b. The missing child has not been the subject of a prior missing person (runaway) report.
 - c. Determine if unusual circumstances are involved.
 - d. The person filing the report of a missing child has a reason to believe that the missing child

may have been abducted either by a family member or non-family member.

- e. The missing child has had access to a computer and possibly met someone online.
2. Upon conclusion by the deputy that any of the above conditions exists, the deputy shall immediately:
 - a. Notify a supervisor. The supervisor is responsible for inter and intra-agency coordination.
 - b. Initiate appropriate intensive search procedures with the assistance of additional personnel. Search procedures shall include but not be limited to:
 - 1) Thorough check of the home, with consent of the appropriate party.
 - 2) Search of immediate area
 - 3) Check youth congregating locations
 - 4) Contact friends and/or relatives
 - c. Notify the duty Major Crimes detective. When the detective assumes responsibility for the case he/she also then assumes responsibility for inter and intra-agency coordination.
 - d. Enlist the aid of other law enforcement agencies, as determined by the supervisor.
3. The initial deputy should provide detailed descriptive information to Communications for broadcast updates as information becomes available regarding the missing child's physical appearance, circumstances of the case, or description of potential abductor.
4. The initial deputy should ensure that the other officers and agencies are provided with up-to-date facts via the Office Communications Division.
 - a. Advise the complainant that the case will be assigned to the Major Crimes, who is responsible for all case follow-ups.
 - b. Sheriff's Office Communications should be contacted if the child should return home before the detective contacts them.
 - c. Obtain a photograph of the child, if available.
 - d. Obtain a written statement from the parent, guardian, or responsible party and have them sign the Missing Child form.
 - e. Within two hours of receiving the report provide Communications NCIC computer information
 - f. Complete all reports and initiate appropriate Teletype for missing child believed to be in a specific location outside Monroe County.
 - g. If no unusual circumstances exist the deputy shall attempt to determine the circumstances surrounding the disappearance of the missing child and forward the case to the Major Crimes.

C. Detectives Responsibilities:

1. If requested, will respond to the scene to begin an immediate investigation as the circumstances dictate.
2. Normal investigation protocols will be followed in all other cases not requiring an immediate

response.

3. If NCIC entry criteria can be met by the detective subsequent to the investigation an entry shall be made.
4. Detectives are responsible for all case follow-ups.

D. Supervisor Responsibilities

1. Obtain a briefing from the first responder(s) and other agency personnel on the scene. This briefing allows the supervisor to determine the scope and complexity of the case and develop an appropriate response. The briefing should be conducted away from family, friends, or any other non-law enforcement individual who may be present.
2. Determine if additional personnel and resources are needed to assist in the search or investigation.
3. Notify the Major Crimes duty detective.
4. Consider activation of the Florida AMBER Alert System. If circumstances meet the Amber Plan criteria (see below), the supervisor should promptly implement such efforts.
5. Ensure that a copy, if not the original, signed Missing Endangered Person/Child form is promptly forwarded to the Records Section.

E. Records Responsibilities: The Missing Endangered Person/Child form will be forwarded to the Records Section who will mail a copy to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (address on back of form)

F. Unidentified Children Procedures

1. If a child is located and cannot be identified the child shall be taken into custody for their safety and well-being.
2. The responding deputy shall start an investigation to ascertain the identity of the child to properly return the child to a parent or guardian.
3. A Major Crimes detective shall be notified and may respond to assist or to assume the investigation.
4. Florida Department of Children and Families will be notified (1-800-96-ABUSE) and take custody of any unidentified child whose parent or guardian cannot be located.

G. NCIC/FCIC Databases

1. At a minimum, a monthly review of each case with a determination of whether the case should be maintained in the databases must be made by the detective.
2. An entry concerning a missing child or a missing adult MAY NOT be removed from the FCIC or NCIC database based solely on the age of the missing child or missing adult.
3. The lead investigator shall ensure that dental and DNA information is updated and current within F/NCIC.

H. Dental Records/DNA

1. The Major Crimes Investigator shall obtain or attempt to obtain dental records for the missing

child or missing adult within 30 days of the initial report and that information will be entered into F/NCIC.

2. If a missing child or adult is not located within 90 days after the missing child or missing adult report is filed, the Major Crimes shall attempt to obtain a biological specimen for DNA analysis or from appropriate family members in addition to obtaining necessary documentation.
3. This section does not preclude the detective from attempting to obtain information or approved biological specimens for DNA analysis before the expiration of the 90-day period. This information will be entered into F/NCIC.

I. AMBER ALERT

1. The Florida AMBER Alert plan will be set in motion Statewide by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement only upon the request made by law enforcement. It must be determined that the following criteria exist:
 - a. The child is under age 18.
 - b. There must be a clear indication of abduction.
 - c. The law enforcement agency's investigation must conclude that the child's life is in danger.
 - d. There must be a detailed description of child or abductor/vehicle to broadcast to the public (photo when available)
 - e. The activation must be recommended by the local law enforcement agency of jurisdiction.
2. Steps for Activation
 - a. The Amber Alert can only be activated by law enforcement.
 - b. Communications will call the FDLE Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse at 1-888-356-4774.
 - c. FDLE working in conjunction with the case officer to determine if information is to be broadcast on a regional or statewide basis.
 - d. FDLE working in conjunction with the case officer will prepare information (i.e., child, suspect and/or vehicle, contact information) for public distribution.
 - e. FDLE will ensure that the information is broadcast through the Emergency Alert System, Dynamic Message Signs, Lottery machines, <http://www.missingchildrenaler.com>, and other sources.
 - f. Investigating deputies should make use of ALL available resources, including but not limited to:
 - 1) Local media
 - 2) Local Crime Stoppers
 - 3) National Center for Missing and Exploited Children 1-800-843-5678 (Florida Branch 1-561-848-1900)
 - 4) Jimmy Rice Center for Victims of Predatory Violent Crime 1-800-634-4097
 - 5) Child Watch 1800-928-2445
 - 6) A Child is Missing, Inc. 1-800-875-2246
 - 7) FBI National Center for Analysis of Violent Crime 1-800-634-4097
 - g. Child abduction by non-custodial parent is not a case that would routinely meet Florida Amber plan criteria, unless the investigating agency can articulate a reasonable suspicion that the parent intends to physically harm the child.

- h. Upon confirmation of the above criteria, deputies should contact Communications and request that the Florida Amber Alert plan be activated.

J. Case Closure/Cancellation

1. The deputy closing the case will:
2. Verify the return and identity of the missing child. (If the missing child is found in another jurisdiction, the deputy can have the law enforcement agency in that jurisdiction make the verification.)
3. Write a supplement report including, but not limited to, the following:
 - a. Location where the child was found
 - b. Subject's physical and mental condition
 - c. How identity was verified.
 - d. Account of subject whereabouts during time unaccounted for.
 - e. Synopsis of any criminal charges contemplated
4. Cancel any teletypes, BOLOs or NCIS/FCIC entries.
5. Notify assigned detective.
6. Advise original complainant of the relevant details of the case and the child's location. Deputies are cautioned in this regard that every case presents different problems and that discretion will be exercised where appropriate in furnishing information.
7. If it develops that the missing child has been the subject of foul play or has been located either deceased or in severely deteriorated physical or mental condition, personal contact will be made with the complainant.
8. In all other cases phone contact will suffice.
9. Return any photographs in Sheriff's Office custody to the owner.
10. If a missing child returns home and no foul play is suspected, the missing child NCIC/FCIC entry can be canceled as stated above and only the appropriate supplemental report is required.
11. In the event the missing child is determined to be a runaway, the deputy recovering the runaway will write the appropriate supplement.