



# CHILD PROTECTION FAQ AND GUIDE FOR TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

## Knowing the Expectations

If your child has gone missing, you may be unsure of what law enforcement professionals will expect of you, and vice-versa. Knowing what the expectations are will help you to understand the role of investigators, the steps they are required to take during an initial response, and why being prepared before an emergency is critical. **Remember, the initial response to a missing or abducted child will directly impact the outcome of a case.** Thus, the more you know about the process, the higher the likelihood of a successful recovery. Below are just a few of the first steps investigators are required to take during an initial response, and what you should be prepared for.



## Steps for Initial Response

### Immediate Response: Interview with parent(s)/guardian(s) and family

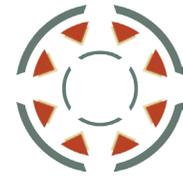
- **Be prepared to fully disclose all recent activities and conversations with your child.**  
What may seem insignificant to you may be important to investigators.
- **Be prepared for difficult, repetitive questions.**  
Investigators must ask sensitive questions in order to do their jobs effectively.
- **Be mindful that the abduction may have been carried out by someone you know.**  
Be open to all possibilities, and be accepting that you and your own family will be considered suspects in the investigation until cleared.
- **Have all proper legal/court documentation on file including custody agreements, protection orders, and visitation rights.**  
This can mean the difference between a simple report being taken, or a statewide alert being issued. In some cases, National alerts can be done if necessary.

### Verify information: Gathering basic facts, descriptions and details about the missing child

- **If you have one, be prepared to provide the investigator with your Child-ID Kit.**  
If you do not have one, provide the investigator with all of your child's personal information, last known location/sighting, personal/family issues occurring in the child's life, social media profiles, habits, contact info of child's friends, distinguishing characteristics, medical information, and photos as quickly as possible.

### Preliminary investigation: Performing quick searches

- **Be prepared for constant law enforcement presence in your home moving forward.**  
Even if you reported your child missing from a different location, a thorough search of your home and the surrounding area will be conducted. For the protection of you and your family, an officer may even be assigned to your home on a 24-hour basis.



## Unique Challenges

### Jurisdictional complexities

Criminal jurisdiction in Indian Country depends on several factors, including where a crime was committed, who committed the crime, nature of the crime committed and against whom. **Any number of law enforcement agencies may have jurisdiction to arrest offenders or conduct investigations dependent on those factors.**

In the case of a child missing from a reservation, time plays an even more critical role, as it must quickly be determined who has jurisdiction over the case. If your child is missing, be patient with law enforcement professionals, keeping in mind that they are doing the best they can with the resources available to them. Although you may be feeling lost, confused, or afraid, it is important that you have information on your child readily available. The less you have to equip investigators with during an initial response, the slower the process will be, and the more complex it could become to determine jurisdiction.

### No centralized source of reporting

Data on crime in Indian Country suffers from under-reporting to tribal authorities and thus under-reporting to federal authorities. There is no Federal or Native American agency/organization that systematically collects the information of missing Native children. Not having an established protocol for when a child is reported missing will directly affect a case during initial response. Therefore, knowing exactly what steps you can take to be prepared as a parent, guardian, or community member is the best way to address this challenge until protocols are developed.

Work with tribal leaders and law enforcement to encourage the development of an AMBER Alert Plan in your community that works with the state and regional plan in your area. Encourage leaders to develop a Community Child Abduction Response Team (CART) to provide additional resources and personnel in the aftermath of an abduction.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How many missing Native children are there across the U.S.?

- Unfortunately, exact numbers are unknown.
- You can help by alerting authorities when your child goes missing, even if you believe they are a runaway.
- Runaway youth are at increased risk of assault, exploitation and abuse.

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### How can I be prepared in the event my child becomes missing?

- Create a Child ID-Kit that includes all of your child's personal information (full name, nickname, address, date of birth), distinguishing characteristics, medical and dental information/records, fingerprints, all emergency contacts, and an up-to-date, high-resolution, color head-to-shoulders photo of your child.
- Have a list of your local community resources and contacts. This should include your local law-enforcement agencies (Tribal, County, and State), local non-profits, emergency contacts, and contact information of your child's friends, acquaintances, coaches, teachers, and family members who frequent your home (including family members and homes your child frequents). Purchase a flash drive to keep all of these records together in one place. **Update it regularly.** In the event of an emergency you can hand this drive directly to investigators.



**AMBER  
ALERT**

- For more tips and information on how you can be prepared, please refer to the *First 3 Hours Guide for Parents and Youth Workers*.

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## What should I do if my child is missing or ran away?

- **Immediately** call or go to your local law enforcement agency and file a missing-person report. When you call, provide your child's name, date of birth, height, weight, and descriptions of unique identifiers, what he or she was wearing, and when you noticed you child was missing.
- Request law enforcement to enter information about your child into the FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC). If you have any difficulties getting law enforcement to take a report or enter information about your child into this database see the federal laws listed in the [Legal Resources for Runaway Children](#) section. Also contact the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) at **1-800-THE-LOST** (1-800-843-5678) and/or your [missing child clearinghouse](#).

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## What are the considerations for children missing with special needs?

- The behaviors and actions of a missing child with special needs will often be much different than those of a missing non-affected child. While specific behaviors will differ depending on the child, missing children with special needs may:
  - Wander away, run away or bolt from a safe environment
  - Exhibit a diminished sense of fear causing them to engage in high-risk behavior such as seeking water or active roadways.
  - Elude or hide from search teams.
  - Seek small or tightly enclosed spaces concealing themselves from search teams.
  - Be unable to respond to rescuers.

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## How can I help find missing children?

- If you think you have seen a missing child, call NCMEC on their 24-hour hotline **1-800-THE-LOST** (1-800-843-5678).
- One of the best ways you can help is to look at [photos of missing children](#) and report any information you may have regarding the whereabouts of those children to NCMEC.

## Sources

- Office of Justice Programs. "When Your Child Is Missing: A Family Survival Guide" (May, 2010).
- National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. "Missing and Abducted Children: A Law-Enforcement Guide to Case Investigation and Program Management" (2011).
- Hagen, Leslie A. "Criminal Jurisdiction in Indian Country." (6 June 2012) [www.niwrc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Resources/criminal\\_jurisdiction\\_in\\_indian\\_country.pdf](http://www.niwrc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Resources/criminal_jurisdiction_in_indian_country.pdf)