



INVESTIGATIVE CHECKLIST

for Supervisory Officers

The Supervisory Officer Checklist below guides oversight and decision-making to promote adequate information collection and immediate implementation of investigative resources in response to reports of endangered missing or abducted children. Effective supervisory officer response is critical to the success of the investigation, as this officer is the catalyst to enable guidance and overall investigative coordination and oversight. Supervisory officers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with this checklist prior to any reports of endangered missing or abducted children.

- 1. Obtain a briefing from the first responding officer(s) and any investigative personnel involved at this juncture. Verify the accuracy of all descriptive information and other details developed so far during the preliminary investigation.**

Ensure the first responder(s) has taken the following actions. Note: Do not obtain the briefing in the presence of family, friends, and/or witnesses.

- Secured the scene
- Searched the home
- Gathered descriptive information and photos on the missing child and suspect(s) if known
- Worked with communications to enter all pertinent information into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) within no more than two hours from the time of the initial call/report. Note: The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), and/or your state Missing Persons Clearinghouse can assist you with NCIC readiness and entry. Call NCMEC toll-free at 1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678)

NOTES:

DATE COMPLETED: _____ TIME COMPLETED: _____



2. If not already activated, decide if circumstances meet the protocol for activation of an AMBER Alert and/or other immediate public alerting systems.

The U.S. Department of Justice recommends the following criteria for AMBER Alert programs:

- There is reasonable belief by law enforcement that an abduction has occurred.
- The law enforcement agency believes that the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death.
- There is enough descriptive information about the victim and the abduction for law enforcement to issue an AMBER Alert to assist in the recovery of the child.
- The abduction is of a child aged 17 years or younger.
- The child's name and other critical data elements, including the Child Abduction flag, have been entered into the NCIC system.

Activation of an AMBER Alert can be a critically important tool in engaging the public in efforts to locate an abducted child. Be aware of your state's AMBER Alert plan's criteria for issuing an alert.

If an AMBER Alert is issued, confirm that telecommunications personnel update the missing child record with the AA (AMBER Alert Flag). This will trigger automatic notifications to NCMEC and the FBI to support your agency with any assistance needed as the investigation progresses.

[Find your state's AMBER Alert Contact Information](#)

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DATE COMPLETED: _____ TIME COMPLETED: _____

3. Determine if additional agency personnel are needed to assist in the investigation.

If an AMBER Alert is activated or further investigation is needed, you will very likely need to recruit additional agency personnel to assist in information intake, management and coordination of investigative resources as the case unfolds.

Consider implementing perimeter patrol to intensify efforts aimed at locating a missing child or obtaining information about events surrounding the case. Perimeter patrol is the act of saturating the area where the child was last seen to ask residents, shopkeepers, workers, and passersby if they know, saw, or heard anything that might be associated with the incident. This technique works well when there is a known suspect vehicle.

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DATE COMPLETED: _____ *TIME COMPLETED:* _____

4. Establish a command post away from the missing child's residence.

You should establish a command post if any of the following situations exist.

- The number of people at a scene exceeds the capability of the on-site supervisor to establish and maintain safety and control of the situation
- Multiple units are being directed by various supervisors
- Multiple activities are taking place at one time
- An extraordinary incident, such as a child abduction or child homicide, has occurred, creating anxiety/fear of endangerment and/or hazard to the community

Also consider the following actions.

- You will need to establish a dedicated hotline for the public to use for reporting information. The individual(s) handling hotline/tip line calls should be based at your command post.
- The command post should be established at a centralized location with respect to the areas of interest such as the child's home, the location where the abduction occurred, etc.
- Ensure the command post is situated at a sustainable location for long term use during the investigation.

NOTES:

DATE COMPLETED: _____ *TIME COMPLETED:* _____



5. Determine if additional assistance is necessary from other agencies and organizations with specialized personnel, expertise and resources for critical incidents.

- **Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)** – If you believe the child is in fact missing/abducted, especially if it warrants the activation of an AMBER Alert, the FBI should be contacted as they can provide significant investigative resources. Note: When the Child Abduction (CA) or AMBER Alert (AA) flags are applied to the missing child NCIC record, automatic notifications are made to the FBI and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).
- **State/Local Police or Sheriff** – To ensure you can respond fully to any activity occurring outside of (or has moved across) state and/or tribal boundaries, you need to include law enforcement from those jurisdictions and likely surrounding areas depending on suspected direction of travel, vehicle(s) and persons involved, etc.
- **State Missing Children Clearinghouse** – For assistance with case registration, records/intelligence analysis, photo dissemination, and logistical needs such as transportation of recovered children, etc.
- **Specialized Units** – Including the following
 - **Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Forces**
 - **Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS)**
 - **National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC)** – requested through the FBI
 - **S. Marshalls Service**
- **Victim-Witness Services** – Contact local crime victim services or tribal crisis support. If you need assistance in working with the family of the missing child, you can include NCMEC’s Family Advocacy Division and/or Exploited Children Division for first response social services support in providing updates and resources to the family as the investigation progresses. Call NCMEC toll-free at 1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678)
- **NCMEC’s Project ALERT®/Team Adam** – Investigative support for rapid response (Team Adam), and for longer-term and/or cold cases (Project ALERT®).
- **Child Abduction Response Teams (CART)** – A multi-disciplinary (and often multi-jurisdictional) team to provide a wide base of investigative, specialized and volunteer management support. CARTs are a major force multiplier in critical missing and child abduction cases. Work proactively to identify the CART(s) serving your area and build relationships and agreements to promote effective call out and communications when minutes matter when cases occur.

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DATE COMPLETED: _____ TIME COMPLETED: _____



6. Confirm all required resources, equipment, and assistance to conduct an efficient investigation have been requested and take action to expedite their availability if needed.

Proactively work to identify the location and control of resources (both personnel and equipment/technologies) which are likely to be needed; establish agreements and procedures which outline how to request, timelines for response, and other important elements of operations around these resources. This will promote swift and coordinated response, and avoid unnecessary delays, when minutes matter in a missing child incident. The following factors should be considered.

- Command post and necessary resources have been established (if this has not happened, see “Establish a command post away from the child’s residence” above).
- Assistance from other law enforcement agencies and organizations has already been requested (if this has not happened, see “Determine if additional assistance is necessary” above).
- Confirm the missing child has been entered into NCIC and the record is being updated with all descriptive, suspect, vehicle and persons with information data obtained as the investigation progresses.
- Confirm your telecommunications center is assisting you with the NCIC record entry and management.
- Confirm all investigative officers and first responders are taking the required steps to proceed with the investigation.

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DATE COMPLETED: _____ *TIME COMPLETED:* _____

7. Take action to ensure coordination/cooperation among all law enforcement personnel involved in the investigation and search effort.

Before and after the command post is established, ensure responsibilities are clearly outlined for all parties involved, including outside law enforcement and other organization personnel (i.e., who will conduct searches and where, who will monitor the hotline for tips, who will enter the data into the NCIC database, etc.). This includes ensuring reports are completed by all personnel involved, as well as maintaining a chronological log of all administrative and investigative efforts.

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8. Ensure all actions, including notifications, are conducted in accordance with agency policy and procedures.

Each agency should have a specific protocol for missing child incidents that identifies those persons or other agencies to be notified and/or coordinated with throughout these critical incidents. If time allows, monitor operations to assess/verify whether all actions comply with agency policy and procedure (important for after-action/debrief learning). This includes your agency as well as any other agencies and organizations assisting in the investigation.

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9. Remain available to make any decisions or determinations as needs develop.

Have multiple forms of communication available (phone, 2-way radio, email, etc.) and establish a hierarchy for the use/triaging of communication methods (e.g., attempt the 2-way radio first, then elevate to phone calls and/or directed messages, etc.).

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10. Use media including television and radio broadcasts, websites, social media, and print media to assist in the search throughout the case, no matter long it is open. These notifications/updates, public calls to action to help locate the child, and images of the child, suspect, and/or vehicles involved are absolutely essential in keeping the public engaged in efforts to spot/locate and report tips/leads.

If an AMBER Alert is issued, this step becomes extremely important. Media must be notified and updated regularly with tip line and web/social tips/leads information, updates in the case, and additional images of the child, and any suspects and/or vehicles involved. Remember from above, dedicated and trained tip line/call intake staff must be in place and ready to handle the influx of calls and tips that will come in once the media begins broadcasting/publishing on the case.

In rural areas, including Tribal communities, posting flyers in public places such as schools, shops, and Tribal government buildings may be more effective depending on TV and radio reception and internet/cellular service availability. The overarching goal is to use any and all credible media sources/tools can reach the largest number of people possible, and which can be effectively managed for timely updates, removal of erroneous information/posts, and in protecting the integrity of the case and safety of the missing child and his/her family.

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11. Ensure support services are provided to the family in a timely manner and maintained throughout (and following closure of) the investigation.

If Victim-Witness Services or any other specialized units meant to work with the family have not already been deployed or connected with the missing child's family, ensure this is accomplished swiftly and fully. NCMEC's Family Advocacy Division is highly recommended for this step. Call NCMEC toll-free at 1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678)

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