



**AMBER
ALERT**

SPECIALIZED UNITS IN MISSING CHILD CASES

Roles and Responsibilities

This resource provides a concise overview of the roles and responsibilities of specialized law enforcement units and programs and when they are to be utilized during a missing child case. These units include the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Child Abduction Response Teams (CARTs), Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program, Team Adam, and Missing Children's Clearinghouses. Read more to learn about each of their functions:



Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

Believe it or not, there are a few common misconceptions about when the FBI can get involved in a missing child investigation: That there has to be evidence a victim has been taken across state lines, a ransom demand has to be made, or that 24 hours must pass since the child was reported missing.

Whether the case ends up being investigated and prosecuted at the local level or at the federal level, the Bureau will always leverage investigative resources and technical assets to work hand in hand with state and local law enforcement agencies on cases involving the mysterious disappearance of a child. Their role is to help investigate the disappearance, recover the child, and apprehend the person or persons responsible. That role begins as soon as they are notified. For more information on how the FBI can assist, please visit [FBI.gov](https://www.fbi.gov).

National Crime Information Center (NCIC)

The FBI's [National Crime Information Center](https://www.fbi.gov/national-crime-information-center), or NCIC, is an electronic clearinghouse of crime data that can be tapped into by virtually every criminal justice agency nationwide, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It helps criminal justice professionals apprehend fugitives, locate missing persons, recover stolen property, and identify terrorists. It also assists law enforcement officers in performing their duties more safely and provides information necessary to protect the public.

Criminal justice agencies enter records into NCIC that are accessible to law enforcement agencies nationwide. The system responds instantly. NCIC policy requires the inquiring agency to make contact with the entering agency to verify the information is accurate and up-to-date. Once the record is confirmed, the inquiring agency may take action to arrest a fugitive and/or return a missing person.

Child Abduction Response Team (CART)

The U.S. Department of Justice launched an initiative in 2006 to train Child Abduction Response Teams (CART) nationwide, which are designed to assist local law enforcement agencies when they respond to incidents of missing and abducted children. The teams include regional law enforcement investigators, forensic experts, AMBER Alert coordinators, search and rescue professionals, policy makers, crime intelligence analysts, victim service providers and other interagency resources.



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AMBER Alerts are issued when a child abduction meets the specific AMBER Alert criteria, however CARTs can be used for all missing children's cases. To date, there are 99 Operational Ready teams and 3,799 team members trained representing 45 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Bahamas, and Canada.

Like AMBER Alerts, a CART represents a critical tool to provide law enforcement with an effective and efficient response to a missing child incident in which a child is believed to be endangered or abducted. As a result of the initial success and acceptance of the CART initiative by law enforcement professionals, the program has now evolved into an integral part of a community's enhanced comprehensive child recovery strategy.

Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC)

The **Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program** (ICAC program) helps state and local law enforcement agencies develop an effective response to technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and Internet crimes against children. This encompasses forensic and investigative components, training and technical assistance, victim services, and community education.

The program was developed in response to the increasing number of children and teenagers using the Internet, the proliferation of child sexual abuse images available electronically, and heightened online activity by predators seeking unsupervised contact with potential underage victims.

The ICAC program is a national network of 61 coordinated task forces representing over 4,500 federal, state, and local law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies. These agencies are engaged in both proactive and reactive investigations, forensic investigations, and criminal prosecutions. By helping state and local agencies to develop effective, sustainable responses to online child victimization, including responses to the online sharing of child sexual abuse images, OJJDP has increased the capacity of thousands of communities across the country to combat Internet crimes against children.

NCMEC Project ALERT[®]

NCMEC's **Project ALERT[®]** is a team of retired local, state and federal law enforcement professionals located across the country, who donate their time and experience to the law enforcement community. Members are no longer sworn investigators, but they all share their abilities, knowledge and experience through the program. Project ALERT[®] representatives provide technical assistance to law enforcement agencies regarding missing children investigations. They specialize in long term missing children cases and perform a wide range of functions including:

- Case review
- Organization and analysis
- Recommendation of investigative strategies
- Coordination of meetings with law enforcement personnel to discuss additional resources

Project ALERT[®] representatives integrate NCMEC resources such as age progression, facial reconstruction, poster distribution, DNA protocol, search specialists and database searches into investigations. They also collect biometric information about missing children and unidentified remains in an effort to help supply critical data to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System, also known as NamUs, and National Crime Information Center databases.



Project ALERT® helps law enforcement to access the most current forensic methods to help increase the likelihood of identifying missing children. Representatives meet directly with law enforcement investigators, coroners/medical examiners and family members to obtain critical descriptive information for NamUs and NCIC. Project ALERT® also provides outreach to law enforcement and the community by representing NCMEC at law enforcement conferences, providing law enforcement training and addressing community awareness initiatives.

NCMEC Team Adam

Team Adam, a program of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children®, provides rapid, on-site assistance to law enforcement agencies and families in serious cases of missing children. Team Adam consultants are retired law enforcement professionals with years of investigative experience at the federal, state and local levels.

Consultants from Team Adam rapidly deploy to sites where these cases are unfolding. They provide on-the-ground technical assistance and connect local law enforcement to a national network of resources. The program's unique access to NCMEC's resources, coupled with years of law enforcement experience, often provides departments with the added tools needed to better address complex, media intensive cases.

Missing Child Clearinghouses

Missing child clearinghouses are organizations providing resources for missing children, their families and the professionals who serve them. Each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Canada and the Netherlands has a missing child clearinghouse.

Missing child clearinghouses provide diverse services due to the range of their authorities and the variety of agencies in which they exist. The primary services provided by missing child clearinghouses are networking, information dissemination, training development and delivery, data collection and provision of technical assistance in cases of missing and sexually exploited children.

Sources

- AMBER Alert, Office of Justice Programs, www.amberalert.gov/faqs.htm
- Federal Bureau of Investigations, www.fbi.gov
- "National Crime Information Center." Federal Bureau of Investigations, www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/ncic
- "Child Abduction Response Team (CART) Certification Manual: A Guide for Agencies and CART Programs Pursuing Certification." *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention*, <https://ncjtc-static.fvtc.edu/Resources/RS00002437.pdf>
- Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program, <https://www.icactaskforce.org>
- "Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program." *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention*, <https://www.ojjdp.gov/programs/progsummary.asp?pi=3>
- "Team Adam." *National Center for Missing & Exploited Children*, <http://www.missingkids.com/ourwork/teamadam>
- "Project ALERT." *National Center for Missing & Exploited Children*, www.missingkids.com/ourwork/projectalert
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