



NORTH MIAMI POLICE DEPARTMENT

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES



MISSING PERSONS 300.23

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APPROVED: 
Chief of Police

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CFA: 15.12

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(Note: Blue Alert procedures listed under SOP 300.30)

I. PURPOSE

To establish guidelines regarding the reporting and investigating of missing children and adults.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the North Miami Police Department that all missing person reports of children and adults, where the person meets the reporting criteria established by the Missing and Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse, and cases involving unidentified adults and children, will be investigated. When applicable, prompt and systematic searches will be conducted with the

assistance of the resources listed in this policy.

III. SCOPE

This policy applies to all members of the Department.

IV. DEFINITIONS

A CHILD IS MISSING (ACIM): Offers free assistance to law enforcement to aid in the recovery of missing persons (including children, teens, and elderly). Provides immediate telephone alerts to the surrounding community. Local law enforcement will contact ACIM and a recorded message will be developed and sent to homes and businesses within the requested radius. 1-888-875-2246 or www.achildismissing.org

ABDUCTED ADULT/CHILD: A person who has been removed from their legal custodial environment against their will and/or consent, usually for the purpose of additional victimization.

ADULT: An adult is described as 18 years of age or older or a juvenile that has been adjudicated an adult by the court.

AMBER ALERT PROGRAM: A program designed to broadcast critical information of a missing/abducted child believed to be in danger or there is a clear indication of abduction.

CHILD: Any (un-emancipated) person under the age of 18.

CHILD ABDUCTION RESPONSE TEAM (CART): A team of qualified, experienced investigators coordinated through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE). CART activates an organized, rapid, and planned response in the event of a missing or abducted child. Miami Region: 1-800-226-3023.

CHILD ABDUCTION RAPID DEPLOYMENT (CARD): An FBI program that specializes in child abduction cases. Miami Region: 1-800-226-3023 (same as above, CART will transfer the call to CARD).

DISABLED: A person of any age who is missing and under proven physical/mental disability, to include a person suffering from Alzheimer's disease, dementia, physical or mental health impairments, or those incapable of identifying themselves, thereby subjecting him/herself or others to personal or immediate danger.

DISASTER VICTIM: A person of any age who is missing after a catastrophe.

ENDANGERED: Any disabled or abducted child or adult, or where any other

foul play is suspected.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ELDER AFFAIRS: Offers e-mail alert notification through the Aging Services Network, which includes area agencies on aging, community care lead agencies, providers and volunteers. 1-850-414-2000 or silveralert@elderaffairs.org

INVOLUNTARY: A person of any age who is missing under circumstances indicating that the disappearance was not voluntary, i.e., abduction or kidnapping.

MISSING ADULT: A person 18 years of age or older whose temporary or permanent residence is in, or is believed to be in, this state, whose location has not been determined, and who has been reported as missing to a law enforcement agency.

MISSING CHILD: A person younger than 18 years of age whose temporary or permanent residence is in, or is believed to be in, this state, whose location has not been determined, and who has been reported as missing to a law enforcement agency due to being a runaway, abandonment, abduction, or other missing status.

MISSING ENDANGERED PERSONS INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE (MEPIC): Formerly known as MISSING CHILDREN'S INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE (MCIC), is a central repository of information regarding missing persons and is managed by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) 1-888-356-4774.

MEPIC may accept missing person's cases that meet the following criteria:

- A. Any missing child who is 17 years of age or younger;
- B. Any missing adult between the ages of 18- 25 years of age; or
- C. A missing person 26 years of age or older who is suspected by law enforcement of being endangered or the victim of criminal activity

RUNAWAY: A person who is missing and un-emancipated (non-adult), who ran away voluntarily.

PARENTAL ABDUCTION: A juvenile who is missing and un-emancipated (non-adult) and who is in the company of a non-custodial parent.

PROJECT LIFESAVER: A plan aiding the victims and families suffering from Alzheimer's disease and related disorders.

PURPLE ALERT: Developed to broadcast information of a missing adult suffering from a mental or cognitive disability (not Alzheimer's disease or a dementia-related disorder), an intellectual disability or a developmental disability, a brain injury, or other physical, mental or emotional disabilities that are not related to substance abuse. Also, the disappearance poses a credible threat of immediate danger or serious bodily harm.

SAFE RETURN PROGRAM: A nationwide identification, support, and registration program created to reunite those diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, who become lost, with their loved ones. (1-800-272-3900).

SILVER ALERT PROGRAM: Developed to broadcast information of a missing elderly person who suffers from irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties (dementia) in a timely manner, to the general public.

SUZANNE'S LAW: The "Crime Control Act of 1990" was amended to include "Suzanne's Law" articulating law enforcement's requirement to accept missing persons reports on persons 18- 21 years of age.

LANGUAGE CLARIFICATION:

- Should: Indicates a general or expected action, absent a rational basis for failing to conform.
- Shall or Will: Indicates a mandatory action.

V. PROCEDURES

Officers shall conform to Florida State Statutes, relative to juveniles, in addition to the guidelines set forth below.

VI. FIRST RESPONDERS' INITIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of the responding officer to complete an Offense Report, a Missing Endangered Persons Report (child or adult), and any other paperwork required. Information to be gathered during the initial response for immediate notification of the appropriate inter- and intra- agency coordination includes the following: **CFA 15.12A, C**

- A. Verification of jurisdiction where the missing person was last seen.
- B. Obtain basic facts, and a detailed description of the missing person and/or abductor, if applicable.

- C. A photograph of the missing person if available.
- D. Physical and mental conditions and medications taken.
- E. Availability of dental records of the missing person.
- F. Reason(s) for leaving. Is foul play suspected?
- G. History of past absences and where the missing person was located.
- H. Other relevant information regarding the disappearance, and any information that would assist in the follow-up investigation. Refer to Attachment "A", Investigative Checklist for First Responders.
- I. Dissemination of Collected Information:

A Be On the Lookout (B.O.L.O.) will be issued via the police radio for all missing persons, and the reporting officer will document in the Offense Report that a B.O.L.O. was issued.

The Communications Unit, once notified of the missing/runaway person's information, will enter the information meeting the NCIC criteria into the FCIC/NCIC System as soon as possible after the case is assigned, but **not to exceed two hours** pursuant to Florida law (FSS 937.021).

The following procedures shall be followed by the listed personnel:

CFA 15.12B

- 1. The Communications Unit will notify the on-duty Uniform Patrol supervisor once a missing person call for service is assigned to a unit.
- 2. Once assigned, if immediate efforts to find the missing person are unsuccessful, the lead Uniform Patrol officer will make direct contact with the Communications Unit **within 30 minutes** of having been assigned the call to provide the missing person's information to them either by 1) verbally providing the information to the Communications Unit over the phone, or 2) notifying Communications that an "in progress" Mobile report has been initiated in the system where they can obtain the Victim and Subject (if applicable) information for entry into FCIC/NCIC.

J. Copies of any Teletype issued or received will be scanned to a copy of the Offense Report by the Communications Personnel and forwarded to the Records Unit. **CFA 15.12B**

- K. The responding officer will secure a current photograph of the missing person/runaway juvenile at the time of the initial report. Should the reporter not have such a photograph available at the time of the initial report, arrangements should be made to have one brought in to the Department as soon as possible. The photograph will be scanned to the report by Records or Investigations.
- L. In cases where foul play is suspected, or in cases of an endangered child or adult, or where the child is 12 years of age or younger, the scene will be secured for follow-up investigation and search. Door to door searches should be conducted in the immediate area. The officer will notify his/her immediate supervisor. The Uniform Patrol Section supervisor will then contact the Investigative Supervisor immediately. An investigator will be assigned, and the investigator(s) will respond to the scene. All resources necessary will be utilized, i.e. media, helicopter, bloodhounds, etc.
- M. Area searches should be initiated in those cases involving critically missing or at-risk persons, such as children 12 years of age or younger, and missing persons classified as endangered, abducted, disabled, or involuntary when the report is received contemporaneously with the subject's disappearance.
 - Call takers will notify the on-duty Uniform Patrol supervisor as soon as possible.

VII. AMBER ALERT SYSTEM

- A. The Uniform Patrol supervisor shall determine if the Florida Amber Alert System or CART is required. To activate the Amber Alert, the following five (5) criteria must be met: **CFA 15.12C**
 1. The child must be under 18 years of age.
 2. There must be a clear indication of abduction.
 3. The investigation must conclude the child's life is in danger.
 4. There must be a detailed description of the child and/or abductor/vehicle to broadcast.
 5. The activation must be recommended by the local law enforcement agency of jurisdiction.
- B. The Amber Alert Plan should be activated by the General Investigations Unit's lead investigator as soon as possible after it is determined that all of the above criteria have been met.

- C. If the criteria has been met, the lead investigator will contact the FDLE Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse at 1-888-356-4774. Advise the party answering that activation of the Amber Plan is requested and provide the following information:
 - 1. Description of child including clothing.
 - 2. Location last observed.
 - 3. Suspect and suspect vehicle descriptions.
 - 4. Direction of travel.
- D. In a child abduction case, the responding investigator shall determine if the CARD Team should be notified. The CARD Team is deployed in the following cases:
 - 1. Non-family child abduction.
 - 2. Ransom child abduction.
 - 3. Mysterious disappearance of a child.
- E. Deactivation:
 - 1. Once the child is located, the supervisor, or designee, will call the organization(s) initially notified, and the PIO, to cancel the Amber Alert.

VIII. SILVER ALERT CRITERIA

The Silver Alert System may be activated if all of the following criteria are met:

- A. The investigating officer has entered the missing person in FCIC/NCIC.
- B. The missing person is 60 years of age or older.
- C. There must be a clear indication that the individual has a diagnosed cognitive impairment, such as Dementia.
- D. Under extraordinary circumstances when a person age 18 to 59 has irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties and the General Investigations Unit Sergeant has determined the missing person lacks the capacity to consent, and the use of dynamic message signs may be the only possible way to rescue the missing person.
- E. The missing person is believed to be in danger.

F. A Silver Alert activation must be authorized by a supervisor.

IX. SILVER ALERT ACTIVATION PROCEDURES

The Silver Alert System should be activated as soon as possible, by the lead investigator, after it is determined that all of the above criteria have been met and when an immediate search of the area has failed to locate the individual.

CFA 15.12C

- A. Contact should be made with A Child is Missing to activate a neighborhood call alert at 1-888-875-2246.
- B. Notify the media, utilizing the PIO and forward flyers.
- C. Contact the FDLE Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse (MEPIC), at 1-888-356-4774.
- D. Advise that activation of the Silver Alert Plan is requested and provide the following information:
 1. Vehicle description to include verified vehicle description and tag number.
 2. Information that a statewide BOLO to other law enforcement/911 centers has been initiated.
 3. Information that a local media alert has been initiate.
- E. Deactivation:
 1. Once the person is located, the supervisor, or designee, will call the organization(s) initially notified, and the PIO, to cancel the Silver Alert.

X. PURPLE ALERT

- A. Purple Alert Criteria:
 1. The person is eighteen (18) years of age or older and does not qualify for a Silver Alert.
 2. The investigation has determined the missing person:
 - a. Has any combination of the following:

- 1). An intellectual or developmental disability,
- 2). Brain injury, or
- 3). Another physical, mental or emotional disability that is not related to substance abuse, and
- 4). Does not have Alzheimer's disease or a dementia-related disorder.

- b. The disappearance poses a credible threat of immediate danger or serious bodily harm to the missing person and they can only be returned to safety through law enforcement intervention.
- c. There is a detailed description of the missing person suitable for distribution.
- d. The missing person has been entered into the Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC).
- e. After review, a supervisor recommends activation.

B. Purple Alert Activation Steps:

The Purple Alert System must be activated as soon as possible, by the lead investigator, after it is determined that the above criteria have been met and when an immediate search of the area has failed to locate the individual. If activation is needed:

1. Contact the Department's PIO for notification to media outlets in the area and surrounding jurisdictions.
2. Contact the FDLE Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse (MEPIC), at **1-888-356-4774**, and provide the following information:
 - a. Description of person including clothing.
 - b. Location last observed.
 - c. Vehicle descriptions, if any involved.
 - d. Direction of travel.

E. Deactivation:

1. Once the person is located, the supervisor, or designee, will call the organization(s) initially notified, and the PIO, to cancel the Purple Alert.

XI. PARENTAL ABDUCTION

- A. Any officer assigned to handle any juvenile custody matter should be familiar with FSS 787.03, Interference with Custody, and 787.04, Felony to Remove Minors from State or to Conceal Minors Contrary to State Agency Order or Court Order. Because of the sensitive nature and sometimes exigent circumstances regarding parental abduction cases, the assigned officer should contact his/her supervisor, an investigator, and/or the SAO for guidance on the proper handling of these cases.
- B. The same information requested and recorded in any other missing person report will be requested and recorded in a Parental Abduction and/or Child Custody Report.
- C. The assigned officer should obtain thorough and pertinent information on the abducting parent.
- D. The reporting officer should personally review documents pertaining to the custody issue and verify that authentic and valid custody papers are in the possession of the reporting parent.
- E. If the custody papers are not certified or registered in Miami-Dade County, the reporting parent should be referred to his/her attorney to set up an emergency hearing before a Circuit Court Judge, Civil Division, Family Court, and/or contact the SAO for any legal questions.
- F. Any officer having any legal questions on any matter relating to parental abductions should contact the SAO. If the incident occurs after hours, the on-duty State Attorney can be contacted.
- G. The officer should attempt to contact the abducting parent to ascertain if the juvenile is in their custody, or if the abducting parent has knowledge of the juvenile's whereabouts.
- H. If the reporting officer has information to believe that the juvenile is in danger, the officer will immediately contact his/her supervisor, who will then contact the Investigative Section supervisor. The Abuse Registry should be notified through its hotline, 1-866-532-2873 (1-866-LE ABUSE), for an investigation to be initiated.

NOTE: Any officer coming into contact with a juvenile whom the officer believes to be in imminent danger, has the lawful authority to take the juvenile into

custody until such time that the Investigative Section is notified. The supervisor will then instruct personnel to notify The Department of Children and Families.

CFA 15.12C, D

- I. Once the necessary legal documents are obtained, (i.e., court order, custody papers), the officer shall:
 1. Make copies of the documents for the report.
 2. Have the juvenile's name entered into FCIC/NCIC immediately, regardless of circumstances.
 3. Have the abducting parent's name listed in the remarks field of the entry.
- J. The reporting parent should be referred to his/her attorney for civil action if criminal prosecution is not desired. The juvenile's name may still be entered into FCIC/NCIC, even if criminal prosecution is not desired.
- K. The prosecutor may request an Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution Warrant and FBI assistance if the abductor parent has left the state.
- L. The Investigative Section will be responsible for the following:
 1. Contacting the reporting person(s).
 2. Filing the case with the SAO if criminal prosecution is desired by the reporting parent.
 3. Assuring that the missing juvenile is properly entered into the FCIC/NCIC systems.
 4. When additional assistance is requested from Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), submitting the Missing Child Reporting Form (MCIC) with a copy of the custody papers and a recent photo (if available).
 5. Assure that, after issuance of a warrant for the abductor parent, the warrant is entered into the FCIC/NCIC systems properly.

XII. ESCAPEE FROM A JUVENILE FACILITY

- A. A juvenile can only be classified as an escapee when he/she leaves a Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facility to which he/she has been committed.

- B. The reporting officer/investigator will document and record the same information as in any other missing person report. The officer/investigator will classify the report as a Runaway/Escapee.
- C. When located, the runaway/escapee should be taken to a juvenile detention center.

XIII. FOLLOW-UP INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

The Records Unit will forward a copy of the Offense Report, a copy of the Missing Endangered Person Report, a copy of the Teletype, and a photograph to the Investigative Section.

- A. Contact and Investigation: The assigned Investigator will follow-up on all active leads. Investigators will maintain contact with the reporter for the purpose of obtaining new leads or information, as well as keeping the reporter apprised of the investigation. The Investigator will contact the family or next of kin no less than every thirty (30) days on active cases to advise case progress and obtain any new information. The Investigator will maintain a current file and will document all investigative efforts in a supplemental report. **CFA 15.12C, D, E**
 - The Victim Advocate will respond and assist the Investigators with the family and provide follow-up services, should they be required.
- B. Dental Report Form: If the person is not found within thirty (30) days of the original report date, in accordance with F.S.S. 937.031, the investigator shall request written consent from the family, next of kin, or other representative to obtain the missing person's dental records. Upon receiving the completed dental report form, the Investigator shall provide the information to Communications Personnel and ensure the entry is updated into the computer system.
- C. DNA Sample Reference Form: If the person is not found within ninety (90) days of the original report, in accordance with F.S.S. 937.021, the Investigator shall try to obtain a biological specimen for DNA analysis from the missing person or from appropriate family members. Refer to DNA Sample Reference Form. **CFA 15.12F**

The assigned investigator will submit these items to the President's DNA Initiative National Missing Persons Program.

XIV. RECOVERY PROCEDURES

Based on post recovery interviews with victims, additional investigative efforts could lead to the discovery of further serious offenses committed.

- A. Following their recovery, when closing adult and juvenile cases Officers/investigators will complete either a Supplemental or Offense Report documenting the recovery. **CFA 15.12C**
 1. Officers/investigators will advise Communications Personnel to cancel the FCIC/NCIC entry. The Communications Personnel will attach the Teletype to a copy of the Supplemental or Offense Report and forward it to the Records Unit, who will then forward a copy of the report to the Investigative Section. **CFA 15.12D**
 2. For recovered juveniles, Officers/investigators will contact the responsible adult party for the recovered missing/runaway juvenile and arrange for the juvenile to be picked up, unless the child has reached the date of emancipation or has been adjudicated an adult.
 - a. If the officer/investigator is unable to locate a parent, guardian, or responsible adult relative, the officer/investigator will contact the listed runaway shelter. If space is available, the juvenile must be transported to the facility and the Department of Children and Families intake office will be contacted, at 1-866-LE-ABUSE. If no space is available, DCF will take custody of the juvenile.

Miami Bridge- Central
2810 NW South River Dr.
Miami, FL 33125
(305) 635-8953

Miami Bridge- Homestead/South Dade
326 NW 3rd Avenue
Homestead, FL 33030
(305) 246-8956

Should Communication Personnel receive a Teletype of a recovered Missing Person, they will complete the above steps and ensure the message be cancelled in the FCIC/NCIC system.

This checklist is meant to provide a framework of actions, considerations, and activities that can assist in performing competent, productive, and successful missing/abducted-children investigations.

First Responder

- Interview parent(s)/person who made the initial report.
- Confirm that the child is in fact missing.
- Verify the child's custody status.
- Identify the circumstances of the disappearance.
- Determine when, where, and by whom the missing child was last seen.
- Interview the individuals who last had contact with the child.
- Identify the child's zone of safety for his or her age and developmental stage.
- Based on the available information, make an **initial** determination of the type of incident whether nonfamily abduction; family abduction; endangered runaway; or lost, injured, or otherwise missing.
- Obtain a **detailed** description of the missing child, abductor, and any vehicles used.
- Secure photographs/videotapes of the missing child/abductor.
- Evaluate whether circumstance of child's disappearance meets **AMBER Alert** and/or other immediate community notification protocol. Discuss plan activation with supervisor.
- Relay detailed descriptive information to communications unit for broadcast updates.
- Determine need for additional personnel including investigative and supervisory staff.
- Brief and bring up-to-date all additional responding personnel.
- Identify and separately interview everyone at the scene. Make sure that their interview and identifying information is properly recorded. To aid in this process, if possible, take pictures or record video images of everyone present.
- Note name, address, home/business telephone numbers of each person.
- Determine each person's relationship to the missing child.
- Note information that each person may have about the child's disappearance.
- Determine when/where each person last saw the child.
- Ask each one, "What do you think happened to the child?"
- Obtain names/addresses/telephone numbers of child's friends/associates and other relatives and friends of the family.
- Continue to keep communications unit apprised of all appropriate developing information for broadcast updates.
- Obtain and note permission to search home or building where incident took place.
- Conduct an immediate, thorough search of the missing child's home, **even if the child was reported missing from a different location.**
- Seal/protect scene and area of the child's home (including child's personal articles such as hairbrush, diary, photographs, and items with the child's fingerprints/footprints/teeth impressions) so that evidence is not destroyed during or after the initial search and to help ensure that items which could help in the search for and/or to identify the child are preserved. Determine if any of the child's personal items are missing. If possible, photograph/videotape these areas.
- Evaluate the contents and appearance of the child's room/residence.
- Inquire if child has access to the Internet and evaluate its role in the disappearance.
- Ascertain if child has a cellular telephone or other electronic communication device.
- Extend search to surrounding areas including vehicles and other places of concealment.
- Treat areas of interest as potential crime scenes.
- Determine if surveillance or security cameras in the vicinity may have captured information about the child's disappearance.
- Interview other family members, friends/associates of the child, and friends of the family to determine when each last saw the child.
- What they think happened to the child.

INVESTIGATIVE CHECKLIST FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

- [] Review sex-offender registries to determine if individuals designated as sexual predators live, work, or might otherwise be associated with area of child's disappearance.
- [] Ensure that information regarding the missing child is immediately entered into the National Crime Information Center's (NCIC) Missing Person File and any information about a suspected abductor is entered into the NCIC Wanted Person File. (Carefully review NCIC categories before entering the case, and be sure to use the Child Abduction flag whenever possible.)
- [] Prepare flier/bulletin with the child/abductor's photograph and descriptive information. Distribute in appropriate geographic regions.
- [] Prepare reports/make all required notifications.

Supervisory Officer

- [] Obtain briefing and written reports from the first responding officer and other personnel at the scene.
- [] Decide if circumstances of child's disappearance meet the protocol in place for activation of an **AMBER Alert** and/or other immediate community notification.
- [] Determine if additional personnel are needed to assist in the investigation.
- [] Establish a command post away from the child's residence.
- [] Determine if additional assistance is necessary from
 - [] State Police.
 - [] State Missing Children's Clearinghouse.
 - [] FBI.
 - [] Specialized Units.
 - [] Victim-Witness Services.
 - [] NCMEC's Project ALERT/Team Adam.
- [] Ensure that all the required resources, equipment, and assistance necessary to conduct an efficient investigation have been requested and expedite their availability.
- [] Ensure coordination/cooperation among all law-enforcement personnel involved in the investigation and search effort.
- [] Ensure that all required notifications are made.
- [] Ensure that all agency policies and procedures are in compliance.
- [] Be available to make any decisions or determinations as they develop.
- [] Use media including radio, television, and newspapers to assist in the search for the missing child and maintain media relations, per established protocols, throughout the duration of the case.

Investigative Officer

- [] Obtain briefing from the first responding officer and other on-scene personnel.
- [] Verify the accuracy of all descriptive information and other details developed during the preliminary investigation.
- [] Initiate a neighborhood canvass using a standardized questionnaire.
- [] Obtain a brief, recent history of family dynamics.
- [] Correct and investigate the reasons for conflicting information offered by witnesses and other individuals.
- [] Review and evaluate all available information and evidence collected.
- [] Contact landfill management and request that they segregate garbage and dumping containers from key investigative areas in cases where it is suspected that there may be imminent danger to the missing child.
- [] Develop and execute an investigative plan.
- [] Conduct a criminal-history check on all principal suspects and participants in the investigation.
- [] Determine what additional resources and specialized services are required.

- [] Ensure that details of the case have been reported to NCMEC.
- [] Prepare and update bulletins for local law-enforcement agencies, state missing children's clearinghouse, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and other appropriate agencies.
- [] Secure the child's latest medical and dental records.
- [] Establish a telephone hotline for receipt of tips and leads.
- [] Establish a leads-management system to prioritize leads and help ensure that each one is reviewed and followed up on.

This “pocket guide” is adapted from and to be used as a supplement to *Missing and Abducted Children: A Law-Enforcement Guide to Case Investigation and Program Management*. That guide contains additional investigative checklists and materials.

To request a free copy or technical assistance on specific cases, please call the **National Center for Missing & Exploited Children at 1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678)**.