




Clayton County Police Department PROCEDURES

Subject Missing Persons & Runaways (Adults & Children)		Procedure # D23	
Authorizing Signature 	Effective 05/05/2019	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amended (see below) <input type="checkbox"/> Rescinds	Total Pages 13

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and responsibilities regarding the agency's response to reports of missing persons.

II. POLICY

- A. It shall be the policy of this agency to thoroughly investigate all reports of missing persons. Additionally, this agency holds that every person reported as missing will be considered at risk until information to the contrary is confirmed. There are no time limits for reporting a person as missing.
- B. If a missing person either resides in, or was last seen in this jurisdiction, this agency will initiate the required reporting process. If the missing person (to include at-risk persons, children, and/or unidentified children) resides within this jurisdiction and was last seen in another jurisdiction, but that agency refuses to assume responsibility for initiating a report, then this agency will assume that responsibility.
- C. Since issues of custody may arise in missing children cases (including runaway, abandonment, and abducted persons), it shall be the policy of this agency to accept the report of a missing child, even if custody has not been formally established. Reporting parties will be encouraged to obtain legal custody as soon as possible; however, this will not delay the opening of a missing person case.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. Missing Person: Pursuant to the NCIC Operating Manual, Section 1.1, a missing person is defined by one of the following criteria/categories and are entered on NCIC/GCIC:
1. Disabled: A person of any age who is missing and under proven physical/mental disability or is senile, thereby subjecting him/herself or others to personal and immediate danger;
 2. Endangered: A person of any age who is missing under circumstances indicating that his/her physical safety may be in danger;
 3. Involuntary: A person of any age who is missing under circumstances indicating that the disappearance may not have been voluntary (i.e., abduction, kidnapping, etc.);
 4. Juvenile: A person who is missing and not declared emancipated as defined by the laws of his/her state of residence and does not meet any of the entry criteria set forth in 1, 2, 3, or 5.
 5. Catastrophe Victim: A person of any age who is missing after a catastrophe; and
 6. Other: A person not meeting the criteria for entry in any other category who is missing and (1) for whom there is a reasonable concern for his/her safety or (2) a person who is under age 21 and declared emancipated by the laws of his/her state of residence.
- B. At-Risk Missing Person: A missing person whose absence yields one or more unusual circumstances.
- C. Unusual Circumstances: A term which refers to one or more existing conditions that elevate the status of a missing person to being at-risk. The unusual circumstances are as follows:
1. Missing child is thirteen (13) years of age or younger;
 2. Missing persons who are out of the safety zone for their age, and/or physical or mental condition;
 3. Missing person with diminished mental health;
 4. Missing person is legally and medically dependent on prescription medication/drugs (e.g., diabetic needing insulin, etc.). This does not include adults who are addicted to controlled substances and/or illegal

narcotics. In the case of a juvenile, it means a missing person who is legally or illegally drug dependent;

5. Missing person is a potential victim of foul play or sexual exploitation;
 6. In a life-threatening situation;
 7. Absent from the home for more than 24 hours before being reported to law enforcement as missing;
 8. Believed to be with persons who could endanger the missing person's welfare; and
 9. Is absent under circumstances inconsistent with established patterns of behavior.
- D. Levi's Call: This is the State of Georgia's equivalent to an Amber Alert. It is an emergency alert for missing children, ages seventeen (17) and younger, whom law enforcement reasonably believes were abducted and are in imminent danger of receiving serious bodily injury or death. The missing child's name and other critical data elements, including the child abduction (CA) and Amber Alert (AA) flags, must be entered on the NCIC/GCIC system before the activation will take place.
- E. Mattie's Call: This is the State of Georgia's emergency alert for missing persons who are disabled or elderly and whom law enforcement believes are in immediate danger of receiving serious bodily injury or death. The missing person must be entered on the NCIC/GCIC system before the activation will take place. The reporting agency must issue a statewide broadcast to law enforcement/911 centers and contact local media regarding the missing person.
- F. Safety Zone: A defined area that a missing person commonly occupies, utilizes or frequents routinely, situationally and/or habitually. Depending upon the activity level of the missing person, a safety zone may be small or large in size and may encompass more than one geographic location.

IV. PROCEDURES (CALEA 41.2.5)

- A. Upon initial receipt of a telephone call, report and/or notification of a missing person of any type, all sworn personnel and E911/Communications personnel shall:
 1. **Determine the age of the missing person and if the missing person has any known disabilities;**

2. **Obtain a thorough and accurate description of the missing person** to include, but not limited to, name; age; date of birth; race; gender; skin complexion; hair color & style; eye color; clothing color & style and/or any unique or recognizable symbols & designs on clothing; and any distinguishing marks such as piercings and/or tattoos;
3. **Determine if there are one or more unusual circumstances** to the missing person's disappearance and if the subject is at-risk; and
4. **Then promptly dispatch a patrol officer to the scene and/or to meet the complainant** after obtaining the aforementioned information;

B. Additional Responsibilities of E911/Communications Personnel:

1. Notify the concerned, on-duty Uniform Division Shift and/or Unit Commander when unusual circumstances exist;
2. Transmit radio alerts and updates about the missing person to other County agency radio channels (e.g., Clayton County Sheriff's Office, Clayton County Fire Department, etc.) to assist with searching;
3. Notify any other concerned agencies or jurisdictions of all known missing person information; and
4. Utilizing Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD), conduct a check of all recent calls at the location related to suspicious persons and previous history.

C. General Responsibilities of Responding Officer(s) on Missing Person Calls.

1. **Respond without delay** to the scene.
2. **Interview the 911 caller and/or complainant;** determine the relationship of the 911 caller and/or complainant to the missing person; and interview the parent(s), custodial guardian(s), and/or responsible party(ies) of the missing person.
3. **Obtain a thorough and accurate description of the missing person** to include, but not limited to, correct full name (correct spelling of first, middle, & last names); nickname(s); age; date of birth; race; gender; current home address; name of current school or last school attended; skin complexion; hair color & style; eye color; clothing color & style and/or any unique or recognizable symbols & designs on clothing; and any distinguishing marks such as scars, piercings and/or tattoos.
4. **Transmit radio updates and description information** about the missing person.

5. **Determine if there are one or more unusual circumstances** to the subject's disappearance and if the subject is an at-risk missing person.

NOTE: If unusual circumstances exist, the responding officer(s) shall immediately notify a concerned, on-duty shift and/or unit supervisor, at which time the incident will require the departmental procedures for at-risk missing persons.

6. **Determine the exact time and place the missing person was last seen** by interviewing the last witness(es) to see the missing person.
7. **Obtain any current photographs of the missing person** (preferably digital images for use in B.O.L.O.'s and news media releases).
8. For juveniles, the reporting officer shall attempt to obtain any information on whether the missing juvenile has any dental and/or medical records. If so, the officer shall also attempt to obtain the name of the juvenile's dentist and/or doctor. Any information obtained will be included in the incident report. This information will be utilized at a later date to obtain dental and medical records so that they may be added to the case file and GCIC/NCIC entry by the assigned CID detective.
9. **Obtain information about the missing person's history**
 - a. Specifically determine if the missing person has disappeared on prior occasions, and the degree to which the missing person's current disappearance departs from established behavior patterns, habits, and/or plans.
 - b. Determine whether or not the individual has recently been involved in any domestic incidents; suffered emotional trauma and/or life crisis; demonstrated unusual, uncharacteristic, or bizarre behavior; made any threats to harm self or others, and/or commit suicide; is drug and/or alcohol dependent; and/or has a history of mental illness.
 - c. Determine the current physical and/or medical condition of the missing person; whether or not the person is currently on prescription medication; and, if so, exactly what prescription medication the subject is using.
10. Determine if and what social networking resources are utilized by the missing person;
11. **Determine the safety zone of the missing person** and the extent of any search or search area for the subject previously conducted or to be

conducted, and direct other responding officers to the appropriate area(s) or location(s).

NOTE: Begin any searches *inside* the location where the missing person was last seen. Search *inside* the residence of the missing person, regardless if the subject was last seen elsewhere. Children often hide inside their own houses and can fit in small, enclosed spaces.

12. Reporting & Documentation

- a. On all missing persons cases the primary reporting officer shall complete an Incident Report.

When reporting incidents of missing persons, **only one missing person may be reported per departmental case number**. This is due to NCIC/GCIC actions, specific to each missing person. Incidents involving two (2) or more missing persons being reported simultaneously shall be cross-referenced by departmental case numbers in the narratives of all corresponding Incident Reports. Missing person reports and case numbers will not be combined with other charges/criminal act accusations. If charges/accusations are made, a separate case number will be obtained and the charge/accusation reported under that case number. This is in addition to the requirement that a separate case number be obtained for **each** missing person. If separate case numbers are obtained, the corresponding case numbers will be notated in the narrative of each report.

- b. On all missing persons cases the reporting officer(s) shall obtain a written statement from the complainant. The statement should include detailed information about any unusual circumstances and/or the reasons why the missing person is considered at-risk, if applicable.

A written statement shall be obtained from any witness(es) who have information related to unusual circumstances and/or the reasons why the missing person is considered at-risk.

13. GCIC Entries

- a. If the subject meets the defined NCIC criteria to be considered a missing person, the reporting officer shall contact the departmental GCIC Terminal Operator to have the missing person entered on NCIC/GCIC. In addition to the aforementioned information sought, **all missing persons reports shall include the typed NCIC/GCIC NIC number**.

In the event that a person is currently listed on NCIC/GCIC as a missing person due to a prior reported incident, the previous NCIC/GCIC entry must be removed and/or canceled before the new entry can be attempted and/or completed.

- b. **Missing persons & runaways who are under 21 years of age must be entered on NCIC/GCIC within two (2) hours after substantial information has been collected by the reporting officer(s) to complete the entry.**
- c. Upon the missing person being entered on NCIC/GCIC, the entry information shall be verified in accordance with standard operating procedure D41: GCIC & Central Watch Office Procedures.

D. Investigating At-Risk Missing Persons Calls

Persons reported missing with unusual circumstances will be considered at-risk and an expanded investigation including the use of all appropriate resources will immediately commence.

Notify a supervisor to activate a Levi's Call or Mattie's Call, and obtain a current photograph of the victim for the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) and the news media.

1. Initial investigative procedures:

- a. Notify the Department of Family & Children Services (DFCS), if necessary.
- b. If the missing person is a child, determine if the child:
 - 1) May have been the subject of a parental abduction. Confirm the missing child's current legal custody status. This could provide information as to who took the child if an abduction is suspected.
 - 2) Is with any adult who could cause the missing child harm.
 - 3) Has previously run away from home, has threatened to do so, or has a history of explainable absences for extended periods of time.
 - 4) Maintains contact with any person(s) on a regular basis. Contact other family members and relatives that live in the area; contact those persons with whom the missing person may be in touch or typically maintains contact.

- c. Identify the missing person's safety zone; this is where the initial search will begin.
 - d. If an abduction has occurred, ensure supervisors are thoroughly briefed so a Levi's Call or Mattie's Call can be activated.
 - 1) Secure the last known location as a crime scene.
 - 2) Ensure everyone at the scene is interviewed and they provide written statements.
 - 3) CID will be contacted to assist with and may take over the investigation.
 - 4) If applicable, contact the missing person's current school administration to check the missing person's locker. Information regarding the missing person's whereabouts may be obtained.
 - e. If capable of doing so, check any social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.) utilized by the missing person. It is common for persons to document travel plans and companions on social networking media, and on occasion a specific location or destination may be established.
2. Supervisor on the Scene of an At-Risk Missing Person Call shall:
- a. Obtain a briefing from the first responding officer and relay the information through the chain of command. The briefing should be conducted away from family and friends of the missing person so that the officer may speak freely and the information cannot be misinterpreted.
 - b. Determine if additional personnel and resources (i.e., aerial support, tracking, etc.) are needed. Consider and determine the need for assistance from the Clayton County Fire Department, Clayton County Sheriff's Office, or any other public safety agency during the search.
 - c. Consult with the Shift and/or Unit Commander, or Sector Captain, to determine whether a Levi's Call or Mattie's Call activation should be made. If the determination is made to activate, the Shift and/or Unit Commander, or Sector Captain, will contact the GCIC terminal operator, in order to initiate inter-agency and intra-agency coordination and notifications.
 - d. Establish a command post, if needed. The Shift and/or Unit Commander, or Sector Captain, will determine the need for the

Clayton County Police Department Mobile Command and/or if it will be brought to the incident scene. If at all possible, do not utilize the missing person's residence as a command post.

- e. Ensure that the missing person's residence and/or the location where the missing person was last seen was/is thoroughly searched. The parameters or area of a search may broaden as time lapses or as additional manpower becomes available.
 - f. Ensure interviews were/are conducted with any person(s) who were last with the missing person; those who may work in or frequent the area; and the complainant(s). The interviews may include, but are not limited to, any additional family or relatives, friends, associates from work, classmates from school, and/or teachers, counselors and social workers. The interviews may only be exploratory in determining the potential for foul play, voluntary flight or running away in the case of a juvenile, or parental abduction.
 - g. Ensure all notifications have been made. Notifications will typically be conducted by the concerned Dispatcher and the Shift and/or Unit Commander. Provide identification and related information to all divisions and units of this Department and neighboring and assisting law enforcement agencies. Ensure periodic updates are entered on NCIC/GCIC. If evidence of kidnapping or parental abduction is present, notify CID personnel immediately.
 - h. Ensure a liaison was/is established with the missing person's family. The liaison shall be the family's point of contact when they need to provide new information and enables the case detective to have one contact to give updates during the overall operation and investigation.
 - i. Respond to media inquiries in accordance with procedure G2: Public Information & Media Relations.
 - j. Conduct and supervise searches for missing persons determined to be at risk. At-risk missing person cases typically require an expanded investigation and/or search.
 - k. Ensure missing person reports are forwarded to CID before the end of the shift.
3. CID Procedures for At-Risk Missing Persons Cases
- a. Obtain a briefing from either the on-scene supervisor and/or primary reporting officer.

- b. Verify and confirm the accuracy of all missing persons' descriptive information.
- c. Initiate and/or continue a neighborhood investigation, search and/or canvass. Special interest should be given to any registered sex offenders who reside in the area.
- d. Obtain a brief history of recent family dynamics. Follow up with family or relatives, friends, associates from work, classmates from school, and/or teachers, counselors and social workers, etc.
- d. Coordinate with CID and Uniform Division supervisors for increased resources. One additional resource to consider is the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's Adam Team.
- e. If the case will not be closed quickly, **update the necessary descriptive information as required by federal law (within 60 days) on NCIC;** jewelry; scars; marks; tattoos; and other characteristic fields. This applies to all missing persons age 20 and younger.

E. Investigative Follow-Up

1. Follow-up investigations of missing persons shall be the responsibility of CID. However, patrol officers who acquire additional information about any aspect of a missing person case should complete a Supplemental Report, using the original case number, and forward it to CID.
2. Contact hospitals, medical examiner's office, etc., to determine if any unidentified persons at those locations match the missing person's description.
3. Attempt to obtain dental/medical records within 60 days of a juvenile's entry onto GCIC/NCIC. This information will be added to the case file and the GCIC/NCIC record per NCIC operating procedures. This action may also be done immediately, in the case of an at risk adult/juvenile missing person case.
4. The case detective shall maintain contact with the complainant and/or designated family liaison to inform them of the following:
 - a. Name and contact number of the case detective;
 - b. Case number to be used for providing any new information;
 - c. Current status of the case and updates; and

- d. Any special instructions concerning the case to include consideration applicable to at-risk missing persons.
5. Upon locating or recovering a missing person, the case detective shall cancel any BOLO(s) regarding the missing person and verify that the NCIC/GCIC entry was removed.

F. NCIC/GCIC Terminal Operator Duties & Responsibilities

1. The NCIC/GCIC Terminal Operator shall, when appropriate, enter the missing person on NCIC/GCIC as soon as possible following NCIC/GCIC guidelines.
2. In cases of child abduction, the child abduction flag shall be entered.
3. Upon being directed by the Shift and/or Unit Commander, or Sector Captain, the GCIC Terminal Operator will contact the GBI radio room (404-244-2600) and request the activation of a Levi's Call or Mattie's Call.

G. CID Assignment of an Unidentified Person Case (living or dead)

1. Obtain a complete description and utilize the Unidentified Living Person (EUL) or Unidentified Body (EUD/EUV) entry screen on NCIC/GCIC.
2. Enter, or have entered, the unidentified person's description on NCIC/GCIC.
3. Utilize available resources which may assist with identifying unknown victims.
4. Cancel all notifications when identification of the unidentified person is confirmed.

H. Locate/Recovery of a Missing Person by Departmental Personnel

1. Verify the identity of the subject in person.
2. Verify the well-being of the subject in person and request emergency medical service (EMS) as needed.

If the missing person was the victim of an abduction or assault, the victim may require medical care and a mental health evaluation immediately upon locate/recovery. CID shall be contacted immediately to conduct any interviews.

3. Pursue information on where the subject was during the time period of disappearance.

Special interest shall be placed on the whereabouts of juveniles during the time period of disappearance. Exploitation is a major concern. Interview the juvenile as thoroughly as possible to identify the circumstances of the disappearance and any individuals that may be criminally responsible, and/or determine if abuse or neglect at home was a contributing factor.

4. If the missing person is an adult, inform the subject that a missing persons report was filed. If the subject wishes to remain hidden and current whereabouts confidential, and there are no unusual circumstances, that wish shall be respected.
5. Regarding adults, contact the original complainant and/or responsible party to inform them of the welfare of the missing person. If a missing adult permits, provide the complainant and/or responsible party with the current contact information of the missing person.

Regarding juveniles, contact the parent, guardian and/or responsible party and inform them of the locate/recovery and welfare of the missing person.

6. Return juvenile runaways to concerned parent(s), legal custodian(s) or guardian(s).

If a located/recovered juvenile runaway is from out of state, contact the Clayton County Juvenile Court Intake Officer for guidance. At the discretion of the Intake Officer, runaway(s) may be taken to a designated regional youth detention center (RYDC) or another temporary juvenile holding facility, depending on the circumstances, until parent(s), legal custodian(s) or guardian(s) can respond.

7. It is the responsibility of the reporting personnel who locates/recovers the missing person, to perform the following:
 - a. Have the NCIC/GCIC entry removed from the NCIC/GCIC system as soon as possible, but before the end of the shift of the reporting personnel; and
 - b. Complete an Incident Report and/or Supplemental Persons Report using the original departmental case number. **The report shall include the circumstances of the locate/recovery of the missing person and the typed NCIC/GCIC NIC number.**

Document the details regarding the missing person's whereabouts, actions, activities and associates during the disappearance. This is vital information to have in the event a subject disappears again.

The locate/recovery Incident Report and/or Supplemental Report shall be forwarded to CID before the end of the shift of the reporting personnel.

V. CANCELLATIONS

A. This procedure amends the following standard operating procedure:

D23: Missing Persons & Runaways (Adults & Children), dated September 1, 2017.