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POLICY

It is the policy of the Douglas County Sheriff's Office (DCSO) to respond to and thoroughly investigate reports of all Adult Missing Persons and missing or unidentified children including runaways, abandoned children, abducted children, or children with another missing status. (41.2.6a) A Deputy responding to a missing person report will complete a Case Report in RMS, unless it is determined that the individual is not missing or is unidentified while obtaining the report.

PROCEDURE

I. Missing Person Response

- A. The DCSO will respond to and thoroughly investigate reports of all missing adults and children including runaways, unidentified children, abandoned children, abducted children, or children with another missing status. (41.2.6a)
- B. It is the responsibility of the 911 Dispatcher to obtain and relay initial dispatch information to responding Deputies so that they are able to begin a preliminary investigation. (41.2.6e)
- C. First Responder Responsibility (41.2.6e)
 - 1. When a person, regardless of age, is reported missing, the Deputy will complete a Case Report in RMS. Descriptive information will be obtained and included in the report including: (41.2.5a)
 - a. Height.
 - b. Weight.
 - c. Hair color.
 - d. Eye color.
 - e. Clothing description.
 - f. Recent photograph, when available.
 - 2. In the event a child is reported missing responding Deputies will contact their immediate Supervisor and a search may be initiated. (41.2.6b)
 - 3. Any person filing a formal runaway or missing person report (adult or juvenile) will be advised by the Deputy taking the initial report that an Investigator, if currently not at the call location, will be contacting them within 24 hours of receiving the report.
- D. Supervisor Responsibility (41.2.6e)

1. The duty Supervisor is responsible for:
 - a. Determining the need and requesting any assistance necessary to complete the search (e.g., police or medical helicopter, fire department personnel, etc.)
 - b. Coordinating search efforts until relieved.
 - c. Making the decision regarding the seriousness of the matter and contacting a CID Supervisor as necessary.
- E. Dissemination of Collected Information (41.2.5b)
 1. If there is reasonable suspicion, or evidence of a crime, or fear of endangerment, the duty supervisor will be notified immediately to determine what information is to be disseminated.
 2. Public notification via an alert system may be made as needed in accordance with the procedures in section II below (Activation of Alert System for Public Notification). (41.2.5d & 41.2.6d)
 3. In all instances where the missing person is 18 years of age or younger, an immediate Inter and Intra agency broadcast will be made over both the Douglas County Sheriff's and the Omaha Police Department's radio frequencies and an NCIC/NCIS entry will be made. (41.2.6c)
 4. If there is no reasonable suspicion, evidence of a crime or fear of endangerment, the report will be forwarded through normal channels, with a copy directed to CID for follow up. Computer entries and bulletins are not required under these circumstances.
- F. Outside Agency Missing Person
 1. Deputies who receive information regarding a missing person from a jurisdiction outside Douglas County will document any action taken as follows:
 - a. If no significant information or leads are found Deputies will update CAD documenting any action taken and contact the requesting agency to advise them accordingly.
 - b. If the Deputy's follow-up generates a significant lead (e.g., missing person was found, left the location, Deputy located vehicle, etc.) the follow-up will be documented in a Case Report and forwarded to the requesting agency by the investigator.
- G. Criminal Justice Information System (41.2.5c)
 1. Entry into NCIC/NCIS System
 - a. Upon delivering or faxing the Missing Person Case Report and the 911 Communications NCIC Entry/Clear Request Form to the 911 Communications Center, the information will be entered into NCIC, NCIS, and the Missing Person Case Report without delay.
 - b. If faxed, the Deputy will call 911 Communications Center to verify the entry information.

- c. A copy of the entry will be uploaded and attached in the Case Folder by CID or Records.
 - (1) The respective Case Report number will be written on the upper right hand portion of the printout.
- 2. Modification
 - a. If the NCIC entry needs to be modified or removed, a copy of the 911 Communications NCIC Entry/Clear Request Form will be submitted in person or by fax to the 911 Communications Center for modification or removal of the original entry.
 - b. A copy of the form will be uploaded and attached to the Case Folder by CID or Records.
- 3. The CID Supervisor will ensure that Missing Person Case Reports requiring entry into NCIC/NCIS contain an NCIC number and have been entered into the national database. Additionally, the CID Supervisor will ensure the NCIC/NCIS copy is attached to the Case Report/Folder.
- 4. Removal from System/Located Missing Person Cancellations
 - a. The Patrol Deputy or Investigator working the case will notify the 911 Communications Center when a missing person is located and can be removed from NCIC/NCIS.
 - (1) If the missing person is located during a call for service, 911 will remove the entry from NCIC upon notification from the Deputy that the person has been located.
 - (2) If the missing person is located by any other means (e.g., family member calls investigator to notify them that the missing person has returned home, etc.), the assigned investigator will send a copy of the 911 Communications NCIC Entry/Clear Request Form to the 911 Communications Center to have the original entry removed.
 - b. A copy of the cancellation, with the Case Report number on the upper right portion of the report, will be uploaded and attached to the Case Folder once the entry has been removed by CID or Records.
- H. Follow-Up Investigation and Search (41.2.5f & 41.2.6e & f)
 - 1. CID has primary responsibility for follow-up investigation on all missing person reports. (41.2.6e)
 - 2. The follow-up investigation will include: (41.2.5e)
 - a. Initiating/maintaining contact with the reporting party to receive and/or impart additional information.

- (1) Depending on the circumstances or nature of the missing person, the investigator may need to maintain more frequent contact, to include daily contact.
 - b. Collecting and preserving additional evidence.
 - c. Providing ongoing notifications to the public and other agencies as appropriate.
 - d. Making necessary record checks and contacting agencies or persons who could be helpful in locating the missing person.
 - e. Ensuring DCSO Communications modifies and/or removes data from NCIC/NCIS as it is received.
- 3. If not already conducted by the original responding Patrol Deputy, CID members will search or cause to be searched: (41.2.5e)
 - a. The entire house and curtilage where the missing person could possibly be found. The search should include other structures, vehicles, abandoned refrigerators, trucks, covered wells, or packing boxes on the property.
 - b. The location at which the missing person was last seen, if it is somewhere other than the residence.
 - c. Locations the missing person frequents.
- I. Special Considerations – Critically Missing or At-Risk Persons (41.2.5g)
 - 1. A missing person may be considered a critically missing or an At-Risk Missing Person because of age, health, mental or physical disability, environmental or weather conditions, the company of a potentially dangerous person, or some other factor that may put the person at risk of serious bodily injury or death.
 - a. A Patrol Supervisor will make the decision regarding the seriousness of the matter, determine what notifications should be made, and if the activation of an alert system for public notification will be made (see Section II below).
 - b. If there is no reasonable suspicion, evidence of a crime or fear of endangerment, the report will be forwarded through normal channels and CID will be assigned for follow-up. NCIC entries and bulletins are not required under these circumstances.
 - 2. 911 Broadcast (41.2.5b)
 - a. If the well-being of an At-Risk Missing Person is in question, the Deputy will forward the information to 911 for an immediate Inter and Intra agency broadcast to be made over both the Douglas County Sheriff's and the Omaha Police Department's radio frequencies.
- J. Non-Family Abductions
 - 1. When the DCSO is notified of a non-family child abduction, a minimum of two Deputies and a Supervisor will be dispatched.

- a. Deputies will go directly to the call location and begin gathering information and completing necessary reports as detailed above.
 - b. The Supervisor will set up a perimeter and direct other responding units to perimeter locations as needed.
2. Should a non-family child abduction occur at the Hall of Justice or Douglas County Justice Center, Deputies from the Courts Services Division will respond and conduct a preliminary investigation.
 - a. A Supervisor or Command Officer from the Court Services Bureau may request assistance from the Omaha Police Department.
 - b. Deputies responding to a non-family abduction that occurs at the Courthouse will follow the procedures outlined in the Patrol response above.

II. Activation of Alert System for Public Notification (41.2.6d)

A. Amber Alert

1. To ensure an abducted child's safe return, the DCSO has entered into a cooperative plan with Nebraska Broadcasters and other participating law enforcement agencies. The plan, known as America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response or AMBER plan, is a protocol for alerting the public of a child abduction by using the Nebraska Emergency Alert System (EAS) to broadcast pertinent information regarding the abduction.
2. The AMBER Alert is not activated in every case of child abduction. Before activating the alert, Deputies responding to a non-family abduction must establish all of the following requirements: (41.2.6d)
 - a. The child is 17 years of age or younger.
 - b. Deputies have reason to believe the child is in danger of serious bodily harm or death.
 - c. There is sufficient descriptive information available concerning the suspected abductor that the public can respond.
3. The AMBER plan is not intended for runaway or child custody situations.
4. In addition to the AMBER Alert criteria above, Deputies will try to gather the following information:
 - a. Victim (Child) Information:
 - (1) Complete name.
 - (2) Date of birth/age.
 - (3) Gender.
 - (4) Height in feet and inches.
 - (5) Weight in pounds.

- (6) Race.
- (7) Hair color and style.
- (8) Eye color.
- (9) Clothing description.
- (10) Photograph, if available.
- b. Abduction information:
 - (1) Date and time of abduction.
 - (2) Location of abduction.
 - (3) Direction of travel or destination.
- c. Suspect Information:
 - (1) Complete name.
 - (2) Date of birth/age.
 - (3) Gender.
 - (4) Height in feet and inches.
 - (5) Weight in pounds.
 - (6) Race.
 - (7) Hair color and style.
 - (8) Eye color.
 - (9) Clothing description.
 - (10) Possible relationship to the victim.
- d. Vehicle Information (if involved):
 - (1) Make.
 - (2) Model.
 - (3) Style.
 - (4) Color.
 - (5) Year.
 - (6) License Plate (Name & State).

5. If a Deputy determines the abduction meets the AMBER plan criteria, the Deputy will notify the on-duty Supervisor immediately.
 - a. Upon notification, the Supervisor will contact CID.
 - b. If there will be a substantial delay in CID's response, the on-scene Deputy will gather the required suspect and abducted child's information in order to activate the AMBER Alert.
6. Upon receiving notification of a potential AMBER Alert, the Criminal Investigations Bureau Captain, CID Lieutenant, or CID Sergeant will assign an investigator as the case officer to lead the investigation. At this time, CID will assume control of the investigation.
 - a. The CID case officer will respond to the scene and take over as the primary investigating Deputy.
 - b. If not already gathered, the CID case officer will gather the victim, suspect, vehicle, and abduction information listed above.
7. The AMBER Alert may not be activated without approval from a shift Supervisor (Sergeant), CID Supervisor, or Command Officer (Lieutenant or above). (41.2.6d)
 - a. If it is determined that the Plan's criteria is not met, an alert will not be activated.
 - b. An Endangered Missing Advisory (EMA) or A Child is Missing (ACIM) notification may be made if the criteria for those notifications is met (see procedures below). Otherwise, standard procedures for juvenile missing persons will be followed.
8. If the Amber Alert is approved, the requesting Deputy will complete the AMBER Alert Request form on the NSP website (<https://statepatrol.nebraska.gov>).
 - a. If available, a photograph of the child, abductor, and/or vehicle will be emailed to the NSP at amber.alert@nebraska.gov.
 - b. CID will also notify the NSP of a direct phone number allowing CID investigators to receive tips and information from the public and other police agencies.
9. After the form is submitted, the case officer will call (402) 479-4921 to confirm that the submission was received.
10. The case officer will also immediately notify the Douglas County Communications Center.
11. Upon receiving the AMBER Alert request, the Nebraska State Patrol (NSP) dispatch center will contact the NSP AMBER Alert Verification Officer to confirm the received information and authorize the alert.
 - a. After verification and authorization is complete, the NSP Verification Officer will contact the Nebraska Educational Telecommunications (NET) who will release the information over the EAS.
 - b. Upon receiving the information via the EAS system, participating radio and television stations will then broadcast the AMBER Alert over the airwaves.

- c. As more detailed information is received it will be relayed to the NSP and posted on a website located at www.statepatrol.nebraska.gov.
 - d. Information and updates will continue to be broadcast for three hours or until the child is recovered, whichever comes first.
 - e. Duplicate information may also be posted on the Douglas County Sheriff's website or social media sites.
- 12. CID will monitor and answer the designated phone line for a minimum of 24 hours after the alert is activated or until the alert is canceled.
 - a. CID may coordinate with other Divisions within the DCSO to staff the phone line as needed.
 - b. CID may coordinate with DotComm to add additional telephone lines, if necessary.
 - c. An approved 'tip sheet' will be utilized to document information received from the public.
- 13. When appropriate, the case officer will complete the cancellation form and email or fax it to the NSP. A follow-up telephone call (ensuring receipt of the cancellation) will also be made.
- 14. The case officer will ensure that copies of the reports are forwarded to the approving NSP officer (AMBER Alert Verification Officer) at NSP Headquarters Troop within 30 calendar days of AMBER Alert activation.
 - a. The NSP AMBER Alert Verification Officer will present the reports to the Nebraska AMBER Plan Committee for an after-action meeting.
 - b. A DCSO member may be invited to attend the meeting to discuss problems/resolve any issues, if any, in relation to the alert.

B. A Child is Missing (ACIM)

- 1. ACIM assists law enforcement in the early search and recovery of children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and college students. ACIM can also assist when a child is found prior to someone reporting the child missing. (41.2.6d)
- 2. The ACIM program enlists the assistance of the community by sending a personalized telephone alert to area homes and businesses asking for help in searching for a missing person. (41.2.6d)
- 3. Member(s) investigating missing person incidents will contact the on-duty supervisor immediately to determine if the ACIM program could help locate the missing person. (41.2.6d)
- 4. The on-duty supervisor will review the information and determine if the situation warrants activation of the ACIM program. Duty Sergeants, including Acting Sergeants have authority to initiate the ACIM program. (41.2.6d)

5. If ACIM is to be initiated, the on-duty Sergeant will make the following notifications:
(41.2.6d)
 - a. CID will be notified to accept incoming phone responses, including callout after regular duty hours as the situation dictates.
 - b. Upon activation of ACIM, the duty supervisor will notify 911.
6. Activation of ACIM (41.2.5d)
 - a. ACIM is available 24/7.
 - b. Activation of ACIM may be made by the on-duty supervisor between the hours of 0600 and 2200.
 - c. Activation between the hours of 2200 and 0600 requires prior command approval.
 - d. Upon approval, the supervisor will immediately call ACIM at (888) 875-2246 or (954) 763-1288 and relay the missing person information.
 - e. The following information will be included in the ACIM activation request:
 - (1) Reporting agency (DCSO).
 - (2) Name and contact number of the on-duty member in charge of the investigation.
 - (3) Case Report number.
 - (4) Name and description of missing person(s) to include:
 - (a) Age.
 - (b) Physical descriptors (race, sex, height, weight, hair color, and eye color).
 - (c) Scars, marks, tattoos, or other identifiable characteristics.
 - (d) Description of clothing worn when last seen.
 - (5) Location last seen including:
 - (a) Address last seen.
NOTE: It is important to give the proper spelling of the street name.
 - (b) Zip code.
 - (c) County.
 - (d) Search area.
 - (6) Time and date last seen.

- (7) Telephone number for the public to report information.
 - (8) Any additional information requested by the technician.
- f. In the case of an elderly, vulnerable, or disabled persons, the investigating member will also report whether or not the missing person has dementia, takes any medication, or drives a car. The investigating member will also provide information regarding the missing person's previous home addresses with zip codes.
- g. The investigating member should also consider providing other pertinent information such as:
 - (1) Water sources or wooded areas near the location last seen.
 - (2) Addresses with zip codes of the missing person's favorite places to go.
 - (3) Whether or not there is suspected foul play, and may include suspect information, as deemed appropriate.
 - (4) Medications the missing person is taking.
 - (5) Substance abuse problems the missing person may have.
 - (6) If the missing person is a child, sexual predators that are residing in the area the missing child was last seen.
 - (7) Vehicle information (if applicable).
 - (8) If there was a confrontation before the person's disappearance.
 - (9) If the missing child is a habitual missing.
 - (10) If there has been notification of family and friends.
- h. ACIM will prepare a recorded message that is automatically sent to the community asking citizens to help in the search by checking their premises.
 - (1) Assisted by satellite mapping, a target calling area is chosen based on where the person was last seen and a call database is selected from a data bank.
 - (2) The ACIM Technician will remain in contact with the investigating member until the case is resolved.
 - (3) The on-duty supervisor is responsible for notifying the on-coming duty supervisor of the ACIM activation until relieved by CID.
 - (4) The on-coming duty supervisor assumes responsibility to maintain liaison with the ACIM until relieved by CID.
- 7. Once activated, CID will assume responsibility for the follow-up missing person's investigation.

- a. CID will staff phones for incoming calls related to the ACIM activation, including responding after hours as needed. Pertinent information will be obtained and all calls received will be logged.
 - b. Information received from the public concerning the missing person or a possible sighting will be relayed to the duty supervisor or assigned CID member. The information will be evaluated for appropriate action.
 - c. 911 will relay any information they receive regarding the missing person to the duty supervisor or assigned CID member for follow-up.
 - d. If a sighting of the missing person is confirmed, the investigating member may want to consider using ACIM again using the most recent known location in the notification of residents. This is particularly important if the sighting is in a different zip code than the original report.
- 8. ACIM Cancellation
 - a. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that ACIM is notified in a timely manner when/if the missing person is located.
 - b. CID assumes this responsibility once they respond and assume the investigation.
 - c. Once notified, ACIM will send out a cancellation call.
- 9. Reporting Requirements
 - a. The activation and cancellation of the ACIM will be reported in the Case Folder.
 - b. An after-action summary will be completed on an Inter-Bureau Communication, detailing when ACIM was activated and cancelled, and the results of the activation. Recommendations and/or suggestions for improvement of the process will be included, and forwarded to the Sheriff via the chain-of-command.
- C. Endangered Missing Advisory (EMA) (41.2.5d)
 - 1. An Endangered Missing Advisory (EMA) is a protocol for alerting the public of an endangered missing child or adult to solicit information useful in the investigation and safe recovery of vulnerable persons who do not meet all elements of the AMBER Alert criteria but who are otherwise missing and at risk of serious bodily injury or death.
 - 2. If the following criteria are met, an Endangered Missing Advisory (EMA) can be issued by the NSP for missing adults or children: (41.2.6d)
 - a. The circumstances do not meet the criteria for an AMBER Alert.
 - b. The person is missing under unexplained, involuntary, or suspicious circumstances. EMA is not intended for cases of runaways or suicidal parties.
 - c. The person is believed to be in danger because of age, health, mental or physical disability, environmental or weather conditions, the company of a potentially dangerous person, or some other factor that may put the person at risk of serious bodily injury or death.

- d. There is enough descriptive information that could assist the public in the safe recovery of the endangered person.
- e. It is within 72 hours of when the person first went missing.
- 3. In order to request that an EMA be issued, members will complete the NSP Endangered Missing Advisory Request form on the NSP website (www.statepatrol.nebraska.gov).
- 4. The EMA can be distributed based on the geographic area in which the missing person was last seen, or is believed to be. The NSP will also alert the media in that specific region to help spread the advisory to more people.

III. Unidentified Juveniles (41.2.6a)

- A. If Deputies locate an unaccompanied vulnerable juvenile who is non-communicative or unable to fully identify themselves (e.g., juvenile is unable or refuses to identify themselves, where they live, or the name of their parent/guardian), Deputies will:
 - 1. Contact 911 Dispatch to see if there are any missing persons reports matching the description of the juvenile.
 - 2. Seek to identify the juvenile by utilizing available investigative means (e.g., searching the person/belongings of the juvenile for any identifying characteristics, knocking on doors, interviewing bystanders/witnesses, talking to nearby schools, etc.).
- B. If Deputies are able to identify the juvenile and/or the juvenile's parent/guardian, Deputies will conduct an investigation in accordance with the DCSO "Juvenile Operations" policy to determine if the juvenile has been neglected, harmed, or to be in danger of harm.
- C. If Deputies are unable to identify the juvenile or the juvenile's parent/guardian, they will notify the on-duty Supervisor.
 - 1. The juvenile will be transported to Project Harmony while the investigation continues.
 - a. Deputies will complete an Affidavit for Removal of Minor Child from Parental/Custodial Home (OSF-46) and the child will be identified as John/Jane Doe on the form.
 - 2. The on-duty Supervisor will determine the appropriate next steps including whether to issue an ACIM Alert or a media release asking for the public's help in identifying the juvenile.

REFERENCES

I. DCSO Orders

- A. Previous DCSO General Orders include: #80-2023, #110-2020, #20-2020, #6-2020, #31-2018, #12-2012 and #14-2009.

II. Accreditation Standards

- A. Applicable CALEA Accreditation standards include: 41.2.5 and 41.2.6.

III. Review Schedule

A. Quadrennial.