

	<b>FREDERICKSBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT DIRECTIVES</b>	
	<b>OPERATIONS</b>	
<b>361.00</b>	<b>APPROVED:</b> <i>Brian F. Layton, Chief of Police</i>	<b>Initiated:</b> 10/01/2007
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## MISSING ADULTS AND CHILDREN

**361.00 - DEFINITIONS** – The following definitions apply to this directive:

**Abducted child** - A child (i) whose whereabouts are unknown, (ii) who is believed to have been abducted, (iii) who is 17 years of age or younger or is currently enrolled in a secondary school in the Commonwealth, regardless of age, and (iv) whose disappearance poses a credible threat as determined by law enforcement to the safety and health of the child and under such other circumstances as deemed appropriate by the Virginia State Police.

**Critically missing adult** - An adult, including an adult who has a developmental disability, intellectual disability, or mental illness, 18 years of age or older whose whereabouts are unknown and whose disappearance poses a credible threat as determined by a law enforcement agency to the health and safety of the adult and under such other circumstances as deemed appropriate by the Virginia State Police.

**Missing child** - Any person who is under the age of 21 years, whose temporary or permanent residence is in Virginia, or is believed to be in Virginia, whose whereabouts are unknown to any parent, guardian, legal custodian, or other person standing in loco parentis of the child, and who has been reported as missing to a law enforcement agency within the Commonwealth.

**Missing senior adult** - An adult whose whereabouts are unknown and who is over 60 years of age and suffers a cognitive impairment to the extent that he is unable to provide care to himself without assistance from a caregiver, including a diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease or dementia, and whose disappearance poses a credible threat as determined by a law enforcement agency

to the health and safety of the adult and under such other circumstances as deemed appropriate by the Virginia State Police.

**Missing person with Autism** – Any person (i) whose whereabouts are unknown; (ii) who has been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder as defined in §38.2-3418.17; and (iii) whose disappearance poses a credible threat as determined by law enforcement to the safety and health of the person and under such other circumstances as deemed appropriate by the Virginia State Police.

**Virginia Critical Operation for a Disappeared Child Initiative (CODI)** - CODI Alert Program is an alert system designed to efficiently inform the public of information regarding a missing child whose disappearance poses a credible threat, as determined by a law enforcement investigation. The Virginia State Police has established standards and procedures by which a law-enforcement agency shall verify that a child is critically missing and submit an alert request.

**Law Enforcement Officer** – Any full-time or part-time employee of the Department of State Police, Police Department, or Sheriff's Office that is part of or administered by the Commonwealth or any political subdivision thereof who is responsible for the prevention and detection of crime and the enforcement of the penal, traffic, or highway laws of the Commonwealth.

**361.01 - Missing Persons Generally** - There is no waiting period for taking a missing person report. A person may be declared missing when his/her whereabouts are unknown and unexplainable for a period of time that is regarded by knowledgeable parties as highly unusual or suspicious in consideration of the subject's known behavior patterns, plans, or routines.

The dissemination of information relating to any missing person is critical to locating the individual. If the missing person meets the at-risk criteria, Watch Commanders shall call the on-call PIO within one hour and provide the missing person's full name, age, location last seen and photo. If the missing person does not meet the at-risk criteria, Watch Commanders shall email the PIO with the missing person's full name, age, location last seen, photo if available and the report number. Watch Commanders will also ensure the investigating officer/detective sends the missing person flyer to the PIO via e-mail once it's complete.

**361.02 - Missing Persons at Risk** - The determination that a missing person is At Risk will be based on the criticalness of the situation. A missing person may be considered **At Risk if any of the following circumstances** are met. The individual: [41.2.5, d, g]

1. Is an Abducted Child – **Consider Amber Alert**
2. Is a Missing Child and one or more of the following unusual circumstances exist:
  - a) The child is believed to be out of the zone of safety for age and developmental stage

- b) The child is mentally incapacitated
- c) The child is in a life-threatening situation
- d) The child is in the company of others who could endanger his/her welfare
- e) The child is absent under circumstances inconsistent with established patterns of behavior – **Consider CODI alert**
- 3. Is a Critically Missing Adult – **Consider Critically Missing Alert**
- 4. Is a Missing Senior Adult – **Consider Senior Alert**
- 5. Has diminished mental capacity
- 6. Has been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder – **Consider Missing Person with Autism Alert**
- 7. Suffers from a medical condition that is potentially life-threatening if left untreated
- 8. Suffers from a behavioral health condition that is potentially life-threatening if left untreated
- 9. Is at risk of suicide
- 10. Is likely to be left unprotected from current or impending weather conditions that may harm the missing person
- 11. Law Enforcement Officer in the line of duty – **Consider Blue Alert**

If it is determined that the missing person is considered **At Risk**, the Watch Commander will initiate the following actions:

- Ensure the Missing Person or Children Clearinghouse form is being followed to provide the appropriate response.
- Activate a command page.
- Notify the on-call detective to respond.
- Call the on-call PIO within one hour of the report or sooner and provide the missing person's full name, age, location last seen and photo.
- A public crime alert should be sent out when there is high probability that the public can assist with locating the individual. Time of day should be taken into consideration to gauge if the alert is necessary.
- Have available officers/deputies dispatched to the area surrounding the last known location of the missing subject.
  - Officers/deputies shall focus on secluded places where an offender might have quickly taken a victim or areas in which an individual may be trapped, injured, or lost. A request for search and rescue and other external support shall be made in the early hours of the investigation if the missing person is determined to be "at risk".

**361.03 – VSP Alert Program** – Virginia State Police has an alert program for AMBER, CODI, Missing Person with Autism, Critically Missing Adult, Senior and Blue Alerts. Activation criteria and information can be found in Guide 34 (Virginia State Police Missing Adult and Children Alert Guide).

**361.04 – Adult Missing Person Procedures** – The reporting and investigation of an adult missing person will occur according to the following provisions:

- An initial description of the missing person(s) and information will be obtained using The Missing Person Clearinghouse form; there is no waiting period prior to completing the report. [41.2.5, a]
- Collected information will be processed and made available electronically to the agency. A flyer will be constructed by the investigating Officer/Detective and disseminated to the appropriate jurisdictions. [41.2.5, b]
- The investigating officer or detective will ensure that all relevant information is entered into NCIC/VCIN. This will be performed at the earliest opportunity; no longer than 2 hours. (ex. an officer should not wait for the case to be assigned to a detective to make the entry) [41.2.5, c]
- A City-wide alert shall be issued to all patrol units and all neighboring law enforcement agencies.
- Virginia Code § 15.2-1718, 15.2-1718.1 and 15.2-1718.2 requires that missing seniors, critically missing adults and children are reported to the Clearinghouse within 2 hours of the call being received.

Every missing person report will be given appropriate investigative priority and assigned for follow-up investigation as needed by the Criminal Investigation Coordinator (CIC). Any such follow-up investigations, including contact with the individual who filed the report, will be assigned after the CIC has reviewed all relevant documentation.

Once the missing person has been located, he or she will be notified that a report of his or her disappearance was made. That person will also be notified of the identity of the complainant. It is important to note that there is no authority for detaining an adult who is safe and of sound mind, who has not committed a crime, and who presents no danger to him or herself or others.

After the missing person has been found, the complainant will be notified that the missing person has been located (as well as any other information deemed appropriate by the officer/supervisor) and the missing person's information will be cleared from NCIC and VCIN. The officer/detective should email the on-call PIO that the missing person was located. The PIO is responsible for updating any social media content. [41.2.5, e, f]

**361.05 – Missing Children Policy** – All cases involving missing children will be investigated. Missing children determined to be “at-risk” are particularly vulnerable and a heightened response will be initiated by the Watch Commander if a missing child is determined to be at-risk.

A runaway child in Virginia is considered a missing child.

If a child below the age of 18 years of age leaves home and does not meet the requirements of a missing child ie: goes to a friend's house and refuses to come home, the responding officer will complete an information report detailing the facts of the incident. If the officer determines the child to be in need of services or other intervention they will refer to Directive 363.00 Juvenile Operations for guidance.

NOTE: Significant weight and credibility must be given to the parent/caregiver in determining whether the behavior is truly unusual for the child. Each child is different, so it cannot be assumed what is typical for most children of a certain age range is also typical for the missing child.

It is the policy of this department that the appropriate missing child report will be taken for any child that meets the above definitions of a missing child and who is:

- A juvenile who is a resident of the City of Fredericksburg
- A non-resident juvenile who is reported missing from the City of Fredericksburg when the missing juvenile's home jurisdiction does not take the report
- Jurisdictional conflicts are to be avoided when a child is reported missing. If a child resides in the City of Fredericksburg but was last seen in another jurisdiction, and that jurisdiction declines to take a missing child report, this agency will assume reporting and investigative responsibility.

**361.06 – Missing Children Reporting and Notification** – A missing person's report for a child must be taken as soon as possible; there is no waiting period prior to completing such a report. The missing child's information will then be entered into NCIC, VCIN, and MCIC within two hours of the report having been received. [41.2.6, a]

In the event that a juvenile has been reported missing, Communications will be responsible for issuing a BOLO (be on the lookout) alert to all personnel containing a description of the child and any other pertinent information that was provided in the missing person's report. The investigating officer assigned to the case will be responsible for reporting requirements established under Sections § 15.2-1718 and Sections § 52-31 through § 52-34 of the Code of Virginia, which pertain to the Missing Children Information Clearinghouse. [41.2.6, b]

Information required for immediate notification of appropriate coordination includes the missing child's following information:

- Name
- Descriptors
- Last known location and possible destination
- Any endangerment factors
- Any special needs or considerations [41.2.6, c]

**361.07 – Responsibilities** – Call takers, first responders, supervisors, and detectives have distinct responsibilities related to missing children.

**Call takers** - A call taker who receives the report of a missing child must collect appropriate information to assist the responding officer. Call takers must also do the following:

- ☐ Prioritize the call based on the factors determining unusual circumstances and dispatch officers accordingly.
- ☐ Collect essential information from the caller.
- ☐ Transmit appropriate radio alerts providing descriptive information about the child, where the child was last seen, and any information concerning potential abductors and their means and direction of travel.
- ☐ Inform the parent or guardian that they should not disturb or tamper with any of the child's belongings or the home, school, or location where the child might have been.
- ☐ Search police agency records for information that may facilitate the search and investigation.
- ☐ Check the history of household abuse or domestic violence calls.
- ☐ Check runaway reports on the child or siblings.
- ☐ Issue a radio alert to all agency personnel and enter an alert on the statewide telecommunications system under unusual circumstances.
- ☐ Ask the parents or caretakers to stay in place until police personnel arrive.

**First responders** - The officer assigned as the first responder to the incident should prioritize and perform as appropriate the following tasks:

- ☐ Unless acting in direct response to the child's safety, respond directly and promptly to the individual who made the initial report.
- ☐ Verify that the child is missing by conducting a consensual search of the house and grounds to include places where a child could be hiding, trapped or asleep.
- ☐ Have supervisor respond to the scene.
- ☐ Conduct interviews with the person who made the initial report.
- ☐ Confirm the child's custody status.
- ☐ Secure and safeguard the incident scene or place last seen as a potential crime scene.
- ☐ Identify any areas of the incident scene or the home that have been disrupted since the child's disappearance.
- ☐ Based on available information, make an initial determination of the type of case and the need for additional resources.
- ☐ If the child was abducted, obtain a description of the abductors if available, the mode of travel, vehicle description, and related information and transmit to communications. If the abductor is a family member, obtain photographs of the suspect.
- ☐ Determine the correct NCIC Missing Person File category - disability, endangered, involuntary, juvenile, or catastrophe and request that communications or other

authorized personnel promptly enter this into the NCIC file. Family abductions are normally entered as involuntary, and non-family abductions are entered as “endangered.”

- ☐ Provide parents with any documentation that is required by the state missing children’s clearinghouse and tell them to include a photograph of the missing child.
- ☐ Prepare a chronological account of actions taken and complete information obtained.

**Supervisors** - Where a child is missing under unusual circumstances, a supervisor will ensure that the following measures are taken.

- ☐ Obtain a briefing from the first responder and other agency personnel at the scene sufficient to determine the scope and complexity of the case and develop an appropriate response. Conduct the briefing away from family, friends, and other involved individuals.
- ☐ Ensure that first responder responsibilities, as outlined in the foregoing section, have been fully and properly carried out.
- ☐ Determine if additional personnel and resources are needed to assist in the investigation to include activation of interagency response protocols. In situations where a missing child is considered “at-risk” due to unusual circumstances as defined in this policy, a detective shall be called out.
- ☐ If necessary, establish Incident Command and a command post to assist in field management of the search and investigation.
- ☐ Appoint a search operations coordinator to organize search efforts. Determine whether tracking dogs are available and if they are appropriate for use under the immediate circumstances.
- ☐ Contact the PIO to respond.
- ☐ Appoint a media liaison officer if not yet on hand to deal with media inquiries and, if deemed appropriate, solicit media assistance in locating the missing child.
- ☐ Ensure that all required notifications have been made to include, where appropriate, officers and investigative units of the agency, other law enforcement agencies, and available community resources.
- ☐ Establish a liaison with the family who can explain police efforts and work with the family to uncover any information useful to the investigation.
- ☐ Assess the need for additional services and contact the state clearinghouse to determine what services if any can be provided.
- ☐ If necessary turn the investigation and/or search over to a larger agency that can bring greater resources to bear on the investigation.

**Detectives** - Where a case involves unusual circumstances as defined in this policy, the assigned detective shall ensure that the following measures are taken:

- ☐ Obtain a briefing from agency personnel at the scene.

- Verify the accuracy of all descriptive information concerning the child.
- Conduct an investigation.
- Reassess the need for additional resources and specialized services.
- If the case is not resolved promptly, update descriptive records and those entered into state and federal missing person's databases.
- Keep the appropriate supervisor apprised of the situation and any developments. [41.2.6, e]

**361.08 – Follow-up Responsibilities** – An officer/detective assigned to the recovery or return of a missing child shall complete the following tasks, among his or her other responsibilities:

- Verify the identity of the returned child as the missing child while assessing the child's safety. NOTE: The officer/detective must visually observe the child to provide proper verification.
- Gather available information about possible predators.
- During the verification process, determine whether intervention services are needed to ensure that the child can safely remain in the home and ensure that arrangements are made for delivery of these services. These include but are not limited to mental health and/or physical health examinations and arrangements for family counseling.
- E-mail the on-call PIO that the missing child was located. The PIO is responsible for updating any social media content.
- Complete designated supplemental reports and cancel all outstanding notifications to include any NCIC Missing Person File entry and the state clearinghouse. Supplemental reports should describe the child's activities while missing and the circumstances of the recovery/return. [41.2.6, f]

**361.09 – Missing and Exploited Children Training Requirements** – All sworn department personnel and communications officers will receive training on Missing and Exploited children. [CS 6.2.14, d]