Tennessee Department of Children's Services

Protocol: Amber Alert/Endangered Child Alert (ECA) Procedures

Supplemental to: DCS Policy 31.2 Responsibilities Regarding Runaways and Escapees

1. When a child is missing or has absconded, a report is promptly made to Law Enforcement (LE) in the jurisdiction where the child has been reported missing. LE has two (2) hours to enter the child into NCIC according to state law and the Adam Walsh Act.

2. If the child is in danger, specific details are reported to law enforcement immediately. **Do not wait to report**. If LE does not respond timely, contact the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI).

3. An Amber Alert may be issued if the child is in imminent danger of bodily injury or situations which includes the following:

    - The child is believed to be out of the zone of safety for his/her age and developmental stage.
    - The child has a mental, physical, or developmental disability.
    - The child has a life-threatening drug dependency.
    - The child is in a life-threatening situation.
    - The child is in the company of adults who could endanger his/her welfare such as a known perpetrator.

4. An Endangered Child Alert may be issued in these instances:
    - A runaway child has a special need due to age or medical condition.
    - A child is out of their zone of safety.

5. The determination of whether an **AMBER Alert or Endangered Child Alert (ECA)** is issued is decided by Law Enforcement and the TBI after receiving the request for activation from LE.

6. If LE does not contact the TBI to issue an ECA or Amber Alert, as applicable, contact the TBI at **1-800-TBI-FIND**. Ask for assistance in issuing the alert and ask that they contact the LE agency so a determination can be made. Provide the TBI with a 24-hour contact telephone number. TBI will contact the LE agency to verify the information and offer assistance.

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7. If the AMBER/ECA is issued, provide the TBI with:

    - A release form (provided by TBI), signed by the requester (usually CM, TL, or TC).
    - A color photograph sent electronically.
    - Other pertinent documentation and information.

8. TBI makes the determination with LE if the case qualifies for an AMBER/ECA. If approved, TBI will then activate the appropriate alert according to their policy. Notify regional leadership and the Absconder Unit of the decision.