University of CINCINNATI

# Department of Public Safety
# Police Division
# Policies and Procedures

| **Title** | **SOP Number** |
|---|---|
| **Missing Persons – Adults, Students & Children (Including High Risk / Endangered)** | **9.2.400** |
| **Approval Signature**  | |
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| **Reviewed/Revised by** | **Pages 8** |
| **Last Revision Date** <br> **July 28, 2026** | **Effective Date** <br> **May 6, 2015** |

**I. Purpose:** To establish clear, mandatory procedures for receiving, classifying, investigating, and resolving all reports of missing persons, including missing adults, high-risk missing adults, and missing children (to include runaways, abductees, and other endangered statuses)—and for activating public alert systems when statutory criteria are met. The goal is rapid, coordinated action that protects life and complies with applicable Ohio law and nationally recognized practices.

**Policy:** It is the policy of the UCPD that (1) all reports of missing persons be given full consideration and attention by members of this agency to include careful recording and investigation of factual circumstances surrounding the disappearance in accordance with this policy, and (2) that particular care and expediency be exercised in instances involving missing children, those who may be mentally or physical impaired or who are insufficiently prepared to take care of themselves, and those that may be the victim of a crime. In addition, it is the policy of the UCPD to meet the following standards.

No waiting period. UCPD will accept and act upon all missing person reports immediately, regardless of how long the individual has been missing.

Child-centered presumption of risk. All missing children will be treated as at risk unless credible information shows otherwise; initial information must be entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) immediately, consistent with statewide best practice guidance.

Alerts and interagency coordination. UCPD will activate statewide alert programs (e.g., AMBER Alert, Missing Adult Alert (often called “Silver Alert”)) when criteria and process requirements are met, and will coordinate with partner agencies to ensure timely dissemination and cancellation.

Jurisdiction and notification. UCPD will promptly notify the law enforcement agency with primary jurisdiction and coordinate investigative responsibilities, as soon as practical and within 24 hours at the latest, when the incident falls outside UCPD’s primary authority.

Compliance with entries/removals. Sworn personnel will ensure timely entry, updates, and cancellations in all applicable criminal justice information systems (e.g., LEADS/NCIC) under supervisory oversight.

**II. Definitions:**

**Acute Phase:** The initial, time-sensitive stage of a missing person investigation immediately following the report, during which urgent investigative, search, and information-gathering efforts are conducted to locate the missing person and assess potential risk.

**Missing Adult:** An individual **18 years old or older** whose whereabouts are unknown and unexplainable in a manner regarded by knowledgeable parties as unusual or suspicious in light of known behavior, plans, or routines.

**High-Risk / Endangered Missing Person:** A missing person who went missing under circumstances that suggest foul play, is believed to be suicidal, is unable to care for themselves, has emergency or time-sensitive medical or mental health concerns, has a cognitive impairment, or for whom a credible risk of harm exists (e.g., dangerous environment or event, victim of criminal activity).

**Missing Child:** A person **under 18 years old**, including runaways, abductees, and other children whose location is unknown to a parent/guardian/caregiver; NCIC entry must occur **immediately** upon taking the report.

**AMBER Alert:** Ohio's statewide emergency alert program for **abducted children** under 18 when statutory activation criteria are met (confirmed abduction, credible threat of serious bodily harm/death, not a runaway/custody dispute (unless the custody dispute poses a credible threat of danger or serious bodily harm) and sufficient descriptive information exists to believe activation will help locate the child.

**Endangered Missing Child Alert (EMCA):** State public notification pathway used when a child is **endangered** but **AMBER criteria are not met**, coordinated under statewide protocols.

**Endangered Missing Adult Alert:** Statewide emergency alert program for endangered missing adults who meet at least one of the following criteria: adults who are **65+**, have a **mental impairment**, those with **autism spectrum disorder or another developmental disability**, when a credible immediate danger exists, and sufficient descriptive information about the individual and the circumstances surrounding the disappearance that the alert activation will help locate the individual.

**Blue Alert:** Statewide notification to locate suspects who killed/seriously injured a law enforcement officer or to locate a **missing officer**; not for general missing persons.

**III. Scope & Authority:** This directive applies to all missing person cases involving UC property, students, faculty, staff, visitors, or when UCPD assistance is requested by another agency. It is guided by Ohio statutes governing statewide alert programs for **abducted children (AMBER)**, **endangered missing child alert, endangered missing adults**, and **blue alerts** (officer-related).

**IV. Roles and Responsibilities:**

**Emergency Communications Center (ECC) / Call Takers**

- Gather critical descriptors and risk indicators; broadcast BOLOs; enter information into RCIC/LEADS/NCIC; route to patrol and supervisor **immediately**; assist with statewide alert processing once approved.

**First Responders (Patrol)**

- Conduct preliminary investigation; secure last-seen locations; canvass; obtain witness statements; request resources (K-9, Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), Child Abduction Response Team (CART), Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) as appropriate; initiate exigent processes (e.g., emergency pings, exigent data preservation) consistent with law.

**Supervisors**

- Classify risk; direct searches; ensure **system entries/updates/cancellations**; make alert activation decisions; notify Command and Investigations; ensure interagency notifications and resource requests are made.

**Investigations**

- Assume the lead investigative role in high-risk cases by coordinating interviews; overseeing digital forensic examinations; collecting and analyzing closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage and license plate reader (LPR) data; obtaining financial and telecommunications records through appropriate legal process (e.g., search warrants, subpoenas, or court orders); coordinating with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), and the Ohio Attorney General's Office (AG); maintaining daily investigative action plans; and providing scheduled updates to the family or legal guardian during the acute phase of the investigation

**Public Information Officer (PIO)**

- Coordinate timely, accurate public messaging in concert with alert program requirements and the case strategy.

**Command Staff**

- Approve resource mobilization; ensure policy compliance; coordinate with UC leadership (Student Affairs, Provost, HR) as applicable

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## V. Procedure:

### A. All Cases (Adults & Children)

1. **No Waiting Period:** Accept and act on reports immediately.
2. **Initial Intake (minimum):**
    a. Full identifiers and recent photo; clothing; unique marks; devices/phone numbers.

   b. Last known location/time; companions; direction of travel; vehicle (make/model/plate/VIN).
   c. Risk indicators: medical/mental-health conditions/meds; suicidal statements; disability/cognitive impairment; DV/stalking; trafficking; substance dependence; threats; foul-play indicators.
   d. Routines/places of significance; prior missing episodes; custody context (children).
3. **Jurisdiction:** If extra-jurisdictional, the receiving UCPD member will assist the reporter, begin urgent actions as risk dictates, and notify the agency with primary jurisdiction **as soon as practical and within 24 hours at the latest**; coordinate immediate handoff where warranted.
4. **Internal Notifications:** Notify an on-duty supervisor **in all cases**; notify the Patrol Bureau Commander for high-risk/endangered cases.
5. **Dissemination:** The Emergency Communications Center (ECC) shall immediately broadcast a Be On the Lookout (BOLO) message over the radio when appropriate, transmit Regional Crime Information Center (RCIC) and Law Enforcement Automated Data System (LEADS) teletypes as applicable, and notify or coordinate with neighboring law enforcement agencies when the circumstances indicate the missing person may have traveled beyond the agency's jurisdiction.
6. **Entries/Removals:** ECC will complete all NCIC/LEADS entries, updates, and cancellations.

## B. Missing Adults (18+)

### (a) Information to Gather (minimum)

Identifiers; photo; clothing; Last known Location (LKL); medical/mental-health status/meds; suicidal ideation; disabilities/cognitive impairment; domestic/relationship risks; foul-play indicators; vehicles/devices/financials; routines/places; associates; prior episodes.

### (b) Information Dissemination

Immediate BOLO; RCIC/LEADS teletype; notify or coordinate with neighboring law enforcement agencies when the circumstances indicate the missing person may have traveled beyond the agency's jurisdiction; consider targeted campus/community messaging; coordinate public releases through PIO.

### (c) System Entries & Removals

- **NCIC/LEADS:** Enter promptly based on risk; attach photos, vehicles, and supplemental identifiers; **cancel immediately** upon recovery.
- **National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs):** The Investigations Unit shall assess each missing person case to determine whether entry into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) is

appropriate. Factors to consider include the length of time the person has been missing, the availability of investigative leads, the likelihood that the case would benefit from national information sharing, and any applicable NamUs entry criteria. Unresolved or long-term cases should be evaluated for NamUs entry as part of the ongoing investigative review. When entry is appropriate, the assigned investigator or other authorized NamUs professional user shall enter and maintain the case in NamUs or coordinate with the agency's designated NamUs representative to complete the entry.

- **Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP):** The Investigations Unit shall evaluate each missing person case to determine whether submission to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP) is appropriate. Consideration should be given to cases involving suspected abduction, sexual assault, homicide, unidentified offenders, serial or patterned criminal behavior, or other circumstances indicating the case may be linked to violent crimes investigated by other jurisdictions. When a case meets ViCAP submission criteria, the assigned investigator shall complete the ViCAP submission through the FBI's ViCAP system or coordinate with the agency's designated ViCAP liaison or the applicable FBI field office to ensure the case is entered.

**(d) Public Alert Criteria & Process (Adults)**

- **Endangered Missing Adult Alert:** May be activated when the individual meets at least one of the following criteria: **(1)** a person is confirmed missing; **(2) 65+**, has a **mental impairment**, or has **autism spectrum disorder/other developmental disability**; **(3)** credible **immediate danger** of serious bodily harm or death; and **(4)** sufficient descriptive information exists to help locate the person. When the investigating supervisor determines that the statutory criteria for an Ohio Endangered Missing Adult Alert are met, the agency shall request activation through the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI). The request shall document the facts supporting each activation criterion, including the basis for concluding that the disappearance poses a credible threat of immediate danger and that public dissemination is likely to assist in locating the missing person. When the statutory criteria are not met, but broader public notification is warranted, the supervisor may consider regional or local alerting procedures, as applicable. Upon direction from the investigating officer or supervisor, and following confirmation that the applicable alert criteria have been met, the Emergency Communications Center (ECC) shall enter the alert through the Law Enforcement Automated Data System (LEADS) and manage all subsequent updates and cancellations.
- **Blue Alert (limited use):** Only when officer-involved criteria are met (to aid suspect apprehension or locate a missing officer).

**(e) Follow-Up Contact (Adults)**

Provide an initial update to the reporting person within **24 hours**, then maintain a cadence appropriate to the case but **no less than every 7 days** while active; document all contacts.

**(f) Follow-Up Investigation & Search (Adults)**

- Expand the investigative canvass; conduct follow-up interviews and re-interviews as appropriate; obtain and review closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage and license plate reader (LPR) data; conduct hospital, coroner, workplace, and school checks; request the emergency preservation of digital evidence when authorized by law; and obtain device, account, subscriber, location, or other electronic records through the appropriate legal process (e.g., consent, subpoena, search warrant, court order, or other lawful authority). Consider engaging the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), or the Ohio Attorney General's Office when circumstances indicate interstate activity, human trafficking, organized criminal activity, or other factors warranting state or federal assistance.

**(g) Special Considerations (High-Risk Adults)**

- Prioritize for rapid alerts and intensive search when indicators include dementia/cognitive impairment; severe mental illness; autism/developmental disability; dependence on life-sustaining medication; DV/stalking; credible threats; or hazardous weather/terrain. Consider the **Missing Adult Alert** promptly when the criteria are met.

## C. Missing Children (<18)

**(a) Policy Statement (Children)**

Every missing child is treated as **endangered until proven otherwise**; the initial report must be taken, and an **NCIC entry must be made immediately**.

**(b) Immediate Supervisory Notification**

Supervisor notification is required in **all** child cases; notify Command immediately if abduction, foul play, or other credible risk of serious physical harm is indicated.

**(c) Inter- and Intra-Agency Coordination Information**

- • Upon receipt of a missing child report, the agency shall promptly make reasonable efforts to notify appropriate law enforcement agencies within the county and any other jurisdictions reasonably believed to have relevant information regarding the child’s disappearance or possible whereabouts. Notifications may be made through an all-county radio broadcast, as appropriate, in addition to direct agency-to-agency communication. Such notifications shall include all available identifying information, circumstances of

the disappearance, known risks, and any requests for assistance or interagency cooperation.

- Emergency Communications Center (ECC) personnel shall ensure timely entry and dissemination of the missing child information through applicable state and national systems, including RCIC/LEADS/NCIC. Investigative personnel shall coordinate with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children **(NCMEC)** for case support, resources, and poster distribution when appropriate. The Federal Bureau of Investigation **(FBI)** shall be notified in cases involving suspected stranger abduction, interstate movement, or exploitation concerns.
- Supervisors shall ensure appropriate interagency coordination is initiated and maintained when circumstances indicate that additional resources, specialized capabilities, or multi-jurisdictional assistance may assist in locating the child.

**(d) System Entries & Removals (Children)**

- **NCIC: Immediate** entry upon taking the report; update with photos, vehicles, Scars, marks, or tattoos; **cancel immediately** upon recovery. Consider the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (**NamUs)** for longer-term cases; coordinate with **NCMEC** for national distribution.

**(e) Public Alert Criteria & Process (Children)**

- **AMBER Alert (ORC § 5502.52):** Activate when **(1)** abduction is confirmed; **(2)** child is <18; **(3)** credible threat of immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death; **(4)** not a runaway/custody dispute (unless the custody dispute poses a credible threat of danger or serious bodily harm); and **(5)** sufficient descriptive information exists to believe activation will help. The supervisor shall ensure that the case is promptly evaluated for AMBER Alert criteria and that, when those criteria are met, the appropriate notification is made to the Ohio State Highway Patrol or the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation for activation. The supervisor shall also ensure that all required supporting information is compiled and provided to the Emergency Communications Center for dissemination. Upon confirmation, ECC enters the alert via **LEADS** and manages updates/cancellations as directed by investigators or supervisors.
- **Endangered Missing Child Advisory:** Endangered Missing Child Advisory: Initiated by the local investigating agency when a missing child is determined to be in danger, but the case does not meet AMBER Alert criteria. The agency shall request activation through the Ohio State Highway Patrol or the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation. Final approval and dissemination are conducted at the state level, with the local agency retaining responsibility for investigative updates and case management.

**(f) Duties by Role (Children)**

- **Call Takers:** Identify and document indicators of a possible abduction, suspect/vehicle descriptors, direction of travel, weapons/injuries, prior runaway

history, custody orders, and known risks; initiate **NCIC immediately** once directed by investigators or supervisors.

- **First Responders:** Secure last-seen area; canvass; obtain rapid witness accounts; request consent/warrants for time-sensitive digital/location data; preserve scenes and electronics; coordinate perimeter/search.
- **Supervisors:** Classify risk; direct search resources; make **alert activation** decisions; verify NCIC entry and interagency notifications; maintain real-time case oversight.
- **Investigators:** Lead sustained follow-up; engage **NCMEC** and **FBI** as needed; execute forensic review of devices/accounts; maintain daily guardian contact during the acute phase.

**(g) Follow-Up Responsibilities (Children)**

- Investigating personnel shall make reasonable efforts to obtain additional information regarding a missing child following the initial report and entry into applicable state and national databases. Any new or updated information shall be promptly documented and entered into appropriate records management and criminal justice information systems, including NCIC and LEADS, as applicable. When a missing child entry is made into NCIC, the investigating officer or communications personnel shall make reasonable efforts to promptly notify the child's parent, guardian, legal custodian, or other person responsible for the child's care that the entry has been completed. Investigating personnel shall also provide the reporting party, parent, guardian, or legal custodian with an initial case status update within **24 hours** of the report and, during the acute phase of the investigation, at least daily thereafter. Update frequency may be adjusted based on investigative circumstances following the acute phase but shall occur no less than every **72 hours** while the case remains active. All notifications and contacts shall be documented in the case record.

D. University Notifications (Students, Faculty, Staff)

**Students (On-Campus Housing):**

When a student residing in **on-campus housing** is determined to be missing, UCPD will ensure that, **within 24 hours,** the following are notified:

1. The **parent(s)/guardian(s)** if the student is **under 18 and not emancipated**.
2. The student's designated **Confidential Contact Person (CCP)** or emergency/missing person contact.
3. The **local law enforcement agency with primary jurisdiction** (if not UCPD).

These actions shall be performed consistently with UC Missing Residents Policy 4.1.2 and FERPA.

**Faculty/Staff:**

- **Faculty:** The Director of Public Safety (or designee) notifies the **Provost**.
- **Staff:** The Director of Public Safety (or designee) notifies **Human Resources**.

E. Recovery, Cancellations & Case Closure

- **Adults:** Competent adults cannot be compelled to return. Inform the recovered adult of the investigation, ensure medical assessment if needed, and ask whether UCPD may disclose their location to the reporting party; honor privacy unless criminal/safety exigencies apply.
- **Children:** Ensure medical assessment if needed; document whereabouts/activities while missing; evaluate for abuse/neglect indicators and file mandatory reports in accordance with Ohio Revised Code § 2151.421 when there is reasonable cause to suspect a child has been abused, neglected, or dependent.
- **System Cancellations:** ECC cancels **NCIC/LEADS** entries and **statewide alerts** immediately upon confirmation of recovery and updates all partner agencies/clearinghouses accordingly.
- **Death Notifications:** If the person is located deceased, follow the **Death, Serious Injury, Serious Illness Notifications** policy (13.3.400).
- **Charges:** File criminal charges in consultation with the prosecutor when indicated by facts.

F. Training

1. Sworn personnel shall receive training, at least annually, on the agency's missing persons policies.

References

UC Policy 4.1.2 Missing Residents in Campus Housing Facilities
UCPD Policy 11.2.800 Command Staff Situational Awareness Notification
UCPD Policy 13.1.100 Criminal Investigations
UCPD Policy 13.2.400 Death, Serious Injury, Serious Illness Notifications
UCPD Policy 14.1.100 Crime Scene Processing and Evidence Collection
AMBER Alert (Children) ORC § 5502.52 (Statewide Emergency Alert Program; activation criteria)
AMBER Alert Advisory Committee ORC § 5502.521 (program oversight)
Missing Adult Alert ("Silver Alert") ORC § 5502.522 (Statewide Emergency Alert Program
Blue Alert ORC § 5502.53 (officer injury/death or missing officer)
Ohio AG / OPOTC "Legal Mandates & Best Practices Protocol for Missing Persons Cases" (Jonathan's Law) — includes requirement to enter missing children into NCIC immediately, model guidance for adults & children
Ohio AG FAQ, Missing Persons FAQ
Ohio Alert Guide Book