


Department of Public Safety
Police Division
Policies and Procedures

<u>Title</u> Missing Persons – Adults, Students & Children (Including High Risk / Endangered)	<u>SOP Number</u> 9.2.400
Approval Signature 	
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Missing Persons – Adults, Students & Children (Including High Risk / Endangered)

- 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 Police 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 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:

Missing Adult: An individual **18+** 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 whose circumstances suggest foul play, suicidal ideation, inability to self-care, medical/mental-health dependency, cognitive impairment, or other credible threats (including dangerous environment or event).

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Missing Child: A person **under 18**, including runaways, abductees, and other endangered 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 absent danger, and sufficient descriptive information).

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

Missing Adult Alert (“Silver Alert”): Statewide emergency alert program for endangered missing adults who are **65+**, have a **mental impairment**, and—effective **March 20, 2025**—also those with **autism spectrum disorder or another developmental disability**, when a credible immediate danger exists and sufficient descriptive information is available.

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)**, **advisory committee oversight**, **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; initiate RCIC/LEADS/NCIC actions; 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, UAS, CART/USAR) as appropriate; initiate exigent processes (e.g., emergency pings, exigent data preservation) consistent with law.

Supervisors

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

Investigations

- Assume lead in high-risk cases; manage interviews, digital forensics, CCTV/LPR, financial/telecom records (lawful process), NCMEC/FBI/HSI/AG liaison; sustain daily action plans; maintain scheduled family/guardian updates in the acute phase.

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

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 Field Operations Bureau Commander for high-risk/endangered cases.
5. **Dissemination:** ECC immediately broadcasts BOLOs; transmits RCIC/LEADS teletypes; and coordinates with neighboring agencies as travel is plausible.
6. **Entries/Removals:** ECC will complete all NCIC/LEADS entries, updates, and cancellations.

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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 adjacent jurisdictions if travel plausible; 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.
- **NamUs:** Add when appropriate, particularly for unresolved or long-term cases.
- **ViCAP:** Use when indicators suggest an abduction/sexual violence/homicide nexus or unknown offender patterns (Investigations to assess).

(d) Public Alert Criteria & Process (Adults)

- **Missing Adult Alert (Statewide):** May be activated when **(1)** person confirmed missing; **(2) 65+**, **mental impairment**, or **autism spectrum disorder/other developmental disability (effective Mar 20, 2025)**; **(3) credible immediate danger** of serious bodily harm or death; and **(4) sufficient descriptive information** exists to help locate the person. The on-duty supervisor consults the **Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSP) Duty Officer** to confirm criteria and coverage; upon confirmation, ECC enters the alert via **LEADS** and manages updates/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 canvass; re-interview; obtain CCTV/LPR; hospital/coroner checks; workplace/school checks; emergency preservation of digital data; lawful process for device/account/location records; consider FBI/HSI/AG engagement where interstate, trafficking, or organized crime indicators exist.

(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

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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 life-threatening risk is indicated.

(c) Inter- and Intra-Agency Coordination Information

- ECC transmits RCIC/LEADS/NCIC; Investigations coordinates with **NCMEC** for case support/posters; notify **FBI** for stranger abductions, interstate movement, or exploitation concerns.

(d) System Entries & Removals (Children)

- **NCIC: Immediate** entry upon taking the report; update with photos, vehicles, SM/T marks; **cancel immediately** upon recovery. Consider **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 danger exists; and **(5)** sufficient descriptive information exists to believe activation will help. Supervisor consults **OSP Duty Officer** to confirm criteria/coverage; upon confirmation, ECC enters via **LEADS** and manages updates/cancellation.
- **Endangered Missing Child Advisory**: If AMBER criteria are **not** met but the child is endangered, request issuance via state protocols to disseminate timely public information (regional/statewide as appropriate).

(f) Duties by Role (Children)

- **Call Takers**: Capture abduction indicators, suspect/vehicle descriptors, direction of travel, weapons/injuries, prior runaway history, custody orders, and known risks; initiate **NCIC immediately**.
- **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.

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- **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)

- Provide a first update to the reporting party/guardian **within 24 hours** and daily during the acute phase; adjust thereafter but not less than every **72 hours** while active. Document all contacts.

F. 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**.

G. Recovery, Cancellations & Case Closure

- **Adults:** Competent adults cannot be compelled to return. Inform the recovered adult of the investigation 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 as indicated.
- **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.

H. Training

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

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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; 2025 update adds autism/developmental disabilities)
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 Missing Adult Alert: process, contacts (OSP coordination, LEADS entry, cancellation)