# Title

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<th>Approval Signature</th>
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<th>Last Revision Date</th>
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I. **Purpose:** Many missing person reports involve individuals who have voluntarily left home for personal reasons, while other reports are often unfounded or quickly resolved. However, there are many instances in which persons disappear for unexplained reasons and under circumstances where they may be considered at risk. The roles of the communications personnel and initial responding officer are critical in identifying the circumstances surrounding missing persons and in identifying those persons at risk. The purpose of this policy is to establish responsibilities and guidelines for University of Cincinnati Police Division (UCPD) officers, communications personnel and supervisors in the response to, and investigation of, reports of missing persons, including missing children.

II. **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.

III. **Definitions:**

   **AMBER Alert System:** The AMBER Alert System is a voluntary partnership involving law enforcement agencies, broadcasters, transportation, and other agencies to provide emergency broadcasts of descriptive information to the public in the event of a child abduction. Specific criteria must be met to activate the system.

   **AMBER Alert:** an urgent news bulletin regarding a child abduction that is broadcast over the airwaves, as well as on highway alert signs and through a variety of other notification systems to enlist the aid of the public in finding an abducted child and stopping a perpetrator.

   **Endangered Missing Child Alert System:** The Endangered Missing Child Alert was created for missing children cases, where the missing circumstances do not meet the AMBER Alert criteria, but the child’s life is still considered at risk of serious bodily harm or death if the child is not found quickly. The following criteria must be met to initiate the Endangered Missing Child Alert:
   1. Law enforcement confirms the child is under 18 years of age.
   2. Law enforcement confirms the child is missing, such as lost, non-witnessed/non-confirmed abduction or the child’s whereabouts are unknown.
   3. Law enforcement believes the missing circumstances pose a credible threat of serious bodily harm or death to the child.
   4. There is sufficient descriptive information about the child and the circumstances surrounding the disappearance that the alert activation will help locate the child.

   **Endangered Missing Adult Alert System:** also referred to as “Silver Alert,” the system enlists the help of the public to find a missing elderly (65 years old or older) or
mentally impaired adult, where the circumstances put the missing person’s life at risk of serious bodily harm or death if they are not located quickly. Specific criteria must be met to activate the system. Activation of a Missing Adult Alert will automatically cause state media outlets and law enforcement agencies to be notified of the individual's disappearance, as well as the following to occur: a) Activation of a toll-free telephone line for tips and information; b) Listing of information and photograph of the missing adult on The Missing Adult Alert website; c) The Missing Children’s Clearing House will be provided with information on the missing adult; d) Posting of information on Ohio’s highway signs by the Ohio Department of Transportation when appropriate.

**Foul Play:** Indications of foul play may include, but are not limited to “a person's car or home being in disarray; evidence of a struggle between the missing person and another individual; any other evidence the law enforcement agency determines to be foul play.” (ORC § 2901.42(D))

**Missing Adult:** A person who is 18 years of age or older whose 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 behavior patterns, plans or routines.

**Missing Child:** A person who is younger than 18 years of age, or as otherwise defined by state law, whose current location is unknown to his or her parents, guardian, or caregiver.

**Missing Child Alert:** system designed to notify the public using law enforcement and media outlets as well as other partners (e.g. Ohio Trucking Association) about a missing child whose circumstances do not meet the AMBER Alert criteria, but who is in danger of serious physical harm or death. A Missing Child Alert also activates a toll-free telephone line for tips and information.

**Special Needs Child:** A child who has a special needs condition that may be defined as, but not limited to, autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, intellectual disabilities, traumatic brain injury, or any other condition characterized by physical, social, or cognitive impairments, or communication challenges.

**IV. Information:**
Resources that are recommended by the Ohio Attorney General and promulgated by OPOTC that should be considered in the investigation of a missing person case include, but are not limited to:

A. Child Is Missing – (ACIM)
   1. [http://www.achildismissing.org](http://www.achildismissing.org)
   2. 888-875-2246
   3. Non-profit, community based program devoted to assisting law enforcement in the search and early safe recovery efforts of children, the elderly, disabled, and college students via a rapid-response neighborhood alert program

B. Child Abduction Response Team – (CART)
Missing Persons

2.  Ohio CART is a network of trained public safety and other individuals from various agencies, jurisdictions, and disciplines who are prepared to respond to missing, endangered, or abducted children
3.  May also be activated for missing adults

C.  Federal Bureau of Investigations – (FBI)
1. Local FBI office:  http://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field
   a. Ohio field offices in Cincinnati and Cleveland
   b. Investigative resources
2. National Crime Information Center – (NCIC)
   b. Contains files on missing persons who have been entered into the system by law enforcement
   c. Allows for offline searches of past information

D. Homeland Security Investigations (local offices) – (HSI)
2. Investigative support for foreign victims of sex and labor trafficking
3. Investigative support for domestic sex and labor trafficking

E. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children - (NCMEC)
2. Serves as the nation’s leading resource on the issues of missing and sexually exploited children
3. Provides information and resources to law enforcement, other professionals, parents, and children, including child victims

F. National Human Trafficking Resource Center – (NHTRC) (i.e., Polaris Project)
2. 1-888-373-7888 – hotline available to answer calls 24 hours a day

G. National Missing and Unidentified Persons System – (NamUs)
2. National centralized repository and resource center for missing persons and unidentified decedent records

H. Ohio Attorney General’s Office Missing Persons Unit
2. 1-800-325-5604
3. Investigative support for local law enforcement in the search and recovery of missing children and adults
4. Ohio Attorney General's Missing Children's Clearing House, 1-800-325-5604
5.  https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/MissingAdults

I. Ohio Department of Public Safety – Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force
2. Provides information on human trafficking laws and contact information for Ohio human trafficking coalitions and victim service providers
Missing Persons


J. Project Lifesaver
   1. http://www.projectlifesaver.org
   2. Provides timely response to adults and children who wander away due to Alzheimer’s disease, autism, and other conditions

K. Hamilton County Coroner, 513-946-8700

L. National Center for Missing Adults (NCMA) 1-800-690-FIND
   1. Contact the National Center for Missing Adults to have information regarding the missing person posted on the national registry they maintain.

V. Procedure:

A. Reporting/Classification of Missing Persons
   1. There is no waiting period for reporting a missing person. UCPD personnel shall promptly assist any person who reports a missing person, whether in-person or by telephone in conformance with the criteria of this policy and the criticality of the incident.
   2. A person may be declared “missing” when his/her whereabouts is 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 behavior patterns, plans or routines.
   3. An individual may be considered “endangered missing” who meets the foregoing criteria and who, among other possible circumstances:
      a. may be the subject of foul play (circumstances indicate disappearance was not voluntary),
      b. because of age (young or old), may be unable to properly safeguard or care for himself/herself,
      c. suffers from diminished mental capacity or medical conditions that are potentially life threatening if left untreated/unattended;
      d. is a patient of a mental institution and/or is considered potentially dangerous to himself or others;
      e. has demonstrated the potential for suicide; or
      f. may have been involved in a boating, swimming or other sporting accident or natural disaster.
   4. Reports of juveniles who have voluntarily left home as a runaway should be classified as such only after thorough investigation.
   5. A child who is missing shall be considered at risk until sufficient information to the contrary is confirmed.

B. Initial Report Taking
   1. The initial report taker (whether dispatcher or officer) must gather as much pertinent information as possible in order to properly classify a missing person report and initiate proper response. This includes the following information:
a. Name, age and physical description of the subject and relationship of the reporting party to the missing person.
b. Missing person’s place of residence and employment (if any).
c. Time and place of last known location and the identity of anyone accompanying the subject.
d. Whether there are any suspicious circumstances.
e. Missing person’s vehicle information and whether it is missing.
f. The extent of any search for the subject or information about where the missing person may be.
g. Whether the subject has been missing on prior occasions and the degree to which the absence departs from established behavior patterns, habits or plans.
h. Whether the individual has been involved recently in domestic incidents; suffered emotional trauma or life crises; demonstrated unusual, uncharacteristic or bizarre behavior; is dependent on drugs or alcohol or has a history of mental illness and/or could be a threat to self or others.
i. The current physical condition of the subject and whether the person is currently on prescription medication.

2. If the missing person is suspected to have been abducted, dispatchers should obtain as much information as possible related to:
   a. Location and time of suspected abduction
   b. Detailed suspect and vehicle description, as well as direction of travel if known
   c. Whether the suspect had a weapon or witness observed any harm to the missing person

3. If the missing person is a child, inquiry should also determine if the child
   a. is or may be with any adult who could cause him/her harm;
   b. may have been the subject of a parental abduction;
   c. has previously run away from home, has threatened to do so or has a history of explainable or unexplainable absences for extended periods of time.

C. Reports Involving Other Jurisdictions
   1. Personnel may accept a report of a missing person, regardless of jurisdiction, when it is appropriate to assist a person in this jurisdiction seeking to make a report.
   2. If UCPD identifies that it does not have jurisdiction based on the circumstances, they shall assist the reporting person(s) in making contact with the appropriate law enforcement jurisdiction or coordinate to directly forward the report to the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction.
   3. UCPD notification of the appropriate law enforcement agency with jurisdiction should be as soon as practical, but at minimum notification shall be made within 24 hours.
   4. If the circumstances of the missing person warrant immediate action, the employee accepting an extra-jurisdictional report should consult with a supervisor and determine the appropriate actions to be taken by the UCPD and
how to facilitate immediate transition of the investigation to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

5. If the missing person is a student living in on campus housing or the incident occurred on campus, UCPD retains primary jurisdiction. Otherwise, jurisdiction belongs to the law enforcement agency where the student resides or the incident occurred. The agency having jurisdiction over the missing person's residence normally will handle the investigation. However, UCPD employees shall assist other agencies, including federal agencies, in the investigation of any missing person when requested (see generally ORC § 2901.30(F) and ORC § 2901.31).

D. Preliminary Investigation

1. Patrol personnel should handle the initial missing person report. An officer responding to a report of a missing person shall complete an Information Report in the UCPD ARMS system.

2. The preliminary investigation is intended to gather additional information and to take those steps that will aid in the search for and location of a missing person. This includes gathering the following types of information and materials:
   a. Complete description of the subject and a recent photograph.
   b. Details of any physical or emotional problems identified.
   c. Identity of the last person(s) to have seen the subject as well as friends, relatives, coworkers or associates who were or may have been in contact with the subject prior to disappearance.
   d. Plans, habits, routines and personal interests of the subject including places frequented or locations of particular personal significance.
   e. Indications of missing personal belongings, particularly money and other valuables.
   f. Any suggestions of foul play or accident.

3. In the case of missing children, officers shall be particularly cognizant of information that may suggest the potential for parental abduction, the possibility of stranger abduction, or the likelihood that the child ran away, including but not limited to:
   a. the presence of behavioral problems;
   b. past instances of running away;
   c. signs of an abusive home environment or dysfunctional family situation;
   d. whether the child is believed to be with adults who may pose a danger; and
   e. the name and location of the school attended by the child and any persons who may be responsible for private transportation to and from the location.
   f. When possible, officers should gain permission to search a missing child’s home and school locker, as appropriate.

4. A supervisory officer shall be notified upon any missing person report. The supervisor shall notify the Field Operations Bureau Commander. In the case of a report of a missing person determined to be “endangered missing”, the Bureau Commander shall direct the Communications Center to send an initial and follow-up communication to the UCPD Command Staff in accordance with Command Staff Situational Notification policy.
5. In the case of persons designated as “endangered missing,” a supervisory officer may direct that:
   a. the dispatcher broadcast to all persons on duty all information necessary to identify the missing person;
   b. request that the Bureau Commander authorize mobilization of resources necessary for an area search, and
   c. the Criminal Investigations Supervisor be notified.

6. In the case of missing children, the officer shall determine whether the circumstances regarding the missing child meet the criteria for an AMBER Alert activation or a Missing Child Alert activation (if the circumstances about the missing child do not meet the AMBER Alert criteria):
   a. Amber Alert criteria:
      1) Confirmation that the child is under 18 years old
      2) Belief that the abduction poses a credible threat of immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death to the child
      3) Sufficient descriptive information about the child, the suspect, and/or the circumstances surrounding the abduction to believe that activation of the alert will help locate the child
   b. Endangered Missing Child Alert criteria
      1) Child is under 18 years old
      2) The missing child is lost or a non-witnessed/non-confirmed abduction
      3) The child’s whereabouts are unknown
      4) The disappearance of the child poses a credible threat of immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death to the child

7. In the case of a missing adult, the officer shall determine whether the circumstances regarding the missing person meet the criteria for an Endangered Missing Adult Alert activation:
   a. Endangered Missing Adult (Silver Alert) criteria:
      1) The person is confirmed to be missing
      2) The individual is 65 years of age or older or has a mental impairment
      3) The disappearance of the individual poses a credible threat of immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death to the individual
      4) There is sufficient descriptive information about the individual and the circumstances surrounding the individual’s disappearance to indicate that activation of the alert will help locate the individual

8. If it is determined that the missing child or adult meets the criteria for any of these alert systems, the on-duty supervisor shall make the determination whether to activate the appropriate alert system. Absent extenuating circumstances that indicate the Alert broadcast would further endanger a missing child or adult, the appropriate system should be activated as soon as possible after the report is made.
   a. Upon receiving and verifying a report of a missing child or adult that meets the criteria of one of the alert systems, the on-duty supervisor will contact the Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSP) Communications Center Amber Alert Duty Officer (614-466-9249) so that the Alert can be confirmed, and any other questions related to the alert can be answered.
b. The appropriate area of coverage for the activation should be determined. Activations may cover a county, region, state or multiple states.

c. Once confirmation of the Alert Criteria has been confirmed through OSP, the patrol supervisor will instruct UCPD Communication Center to enter the appropriate Alert into LEADS.

d. The on-duty supervisor shall be notified of all relevant updates regarding the case investigation that may require modification or termination of the Alert.

e. Any of these alerts may be terminated / canceled under any of the following criteria:
   1) Upon receipt of information from an official law enforcement authority that the abducted child, missing child or missing adult has been recovered.
   2) Credible information from an official law enforcement authority that the direction of travel of the missing person does not include the Greater Cincinnati/Tri-State region, and further broadcast of information would be counter-productive.
   3) A period of at least five (5) hours has elapsed since the first broadcast of the alert, and the initiating agency has no further update information.

f. The UCPD Communications Center will be notified immediately when a cancellation is desired and the on-duty supervisor will ensure that all entries and teletypes are canceled.

E. Notifications
   1. Upon verification of a missing person, the Emergency Communication Center shall complete appropriate entries in state and national information databases in order to notify other law enforcement agencies. These may include the Regional Crime Information Center (RCIC), Law Enforcement Automated Data System (LEADS), the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), and the Ohio Attorney General's Missing Persons Clearinghouse.
   2. If the missing person is a student, Student Affairs shall be notified by the on-duty supervisor.
   3. If the missing person is a faculty member, the Provost Office shall be notified by the Director of Public Safety or designee.
   4. If the missing person is an employee, the Director of Human Resources shall be notified by the Director of Public Safety or designee.
   5. The University Registrar maintains emergency contact info for the confidential contact person (CCP) identified by students living in any on-campus housing facility. In accordance with UC Missing Residents Policy 4.1.2 and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, in the event the student is determined to be missing, the information on a CCP shall be accessed only by authorized personnel and released to relevant law enforcement agencies only in furtherance of the missing person investigation.
**Missing Persons**

a. The missing student’s designated confidential contact person must be contacted within 24 hours by the UCPD.
b. If the student is an un-emancipated student under age 18, that student’s parent(s)/guardian also must be contacted within 24 hours by the UCPD.
c. Such notices may be made in cooperation with the responsible law enforcement jurisdiction, if applicable.
d. If the student is over 18 and the student’s provided CCP is not his/her parents, the student’s parents could be interviewed as part of the investigation.

F. Ongoing Investigation

1. In cases involving an endangered missing person, UCPD Investigations shall assume responsibility for the ongoing investigation after the initial report is taken by patrol personnel. UCPD Investigations may also assume responsibility for any missing person investigation in accordance with Criminal Investigations Policy 13.1.100.
2. Ongoing investigations of missing persons should include but should not be limited to the following actions and activities:
   a. Request release of dental records and any fingerprints available.
   b. Contact hospitals and the coroner’s office as appropriate for injured or deceased persons fitting the description of the missing person.
   c. Thoroughly check the location at which the missing person was last seen and conduct interviews as appropriate with persons who were with the individual or who may work in or frequent the area.
   d. Conduct interviews with any additional family, friends, work associates, schoolmates and teachers as well as school counselors and social case workers, as appropriate, to explore the potential for foul play, voluntary flight, or, in the case of juveniles, parental kidnapping or running away.
   e. Provide identification and related information to all elements of the UCPD, the state police missing persons’ authority, neighboring police agencies and, if parental or stranger-to-stranger abduction is suspected, the FBI.
   f. Decisions to use local media to help locate missing persons shall be made with the approval of the Chief of Police and the missing person’s family.
   g. The lead investigator shall maintain routine ongoing contact with the missing person’s closest relative concerning progress of the investigation. These and other relevant individuals shall be informed that they must notify the lead investigator as soon as any contact is made with the missing person.

G. Recovery of Missing Persons and Case Closure

1. Competent adults, having left home for personal reasons, cannot be forced to return home. Officers locating such individuals shall:
   a. advise them that they are the subject of a missing person investigation;
   b. ask if they desire the reporting party or next-of-kin to be notified of their whereabouts; and
   c. make provisions to transmit this information to the reporting party or next-of-kin if permitted by the missing person.
2. In all cases, reporting parties shall be informed of the well-being of located missing persons. Unless criminal matters necessitate other action, desires of missing persons not to reveal their whereabouts shall be honored.

3. Missing persons shall be interviewed to establish the circumstances surrounding their disappearance and whether criminal activity was involved.

4. In cases involving juveniles, officers shall ensure that:
   a. the juvenile receives medical attention in a timely manner if necessary;
   b. initial questioning of the youth identifies the circumstances surrounding the child’s disappearance, any individuals who may be criminally responsible and/or whether an abusive or negligent home environment was a contributory factor;
   c. parents, guardians and/or the person reporting the missing youth are notified in a timely manner;
   d. the case report includes a complete report on the whereabouts, actions and activities of children while missing.
   e. where indicated, follow-up action shall include filing of an abuse and neglect report with the state youth service agency by the Investigating Officer.

5. Upon confirmation that a missing person has been located, all agencies and information systems previously contacted for assistance will be notified or updated by the Emergency Communication Center as directed by the on-duty supervisor.
   a. In addition, the Emergency Communication Center shall complete appropriate removal of entries in state and national information databases. These may include the Regional Crime Information Center (RCIC), Law Enforcement Automated Data System (LEADS), the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), and the Ohio Attorney General's Missing Persons Clearinghouse.

6. If missing person is located and deceased, appropriate notifications shall be made in accordance with the Death, Serious Injury, Serious Illness Notifications policy 13.3.400.

7. Where indicated, criminal charges shall be filed with the prosecutor’s office.

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