



## **CLEVELAND DIVISION OF POLICE**

### **MISSING PERSON INVESTIGATIVE CHECKLIST FOR FIRST RESPONDERS/INVESTIGATORS**

This following checklist created by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) has been edited and adapted to provide a framework of actions, considerations, and activities that may assist in performing competent, productive, and thorough missing/abducted adult investigations. It must be noted that this is a general checklist and not all actions may be applicable to the Cleveland Division of Police in all circumstances.

#### **First Responder**

- If circumstances warrant, consider activating patrol-vehicle-mounted video camera when approaching the scene to record vehicles, people, and anything else of note for later investigative review.
- Interview parent(s)/guardian(s)/person who made the initial report.
- Confirm the person is in fact missing.
- Verify the child/endangered adult's custodial status.
- Identify the circumstances of the disappearance.
- Determine when, where, and by whom the missing person was last seen.
- Interview the individuals who last had contact with the missing person.
- Identify the child's (or adult as applicable) zone of safety for his or her age and developmental stage.
- Based on the available information, make an initial determination if there is nonfamily abduction; family abduction; runaway; or lost, injured, or otherwise missing.
- Obtain a detailed description of the missing person, abductor, person last seen with and any vehicles mentioned.
- Secure photographs/video recordings of the missing person/abductor.
- Evaluate whether the circumstances of the disappearance meet AMBER or other alert program criteria. Follow directives for initiating such plan(s).
- Relay detailed descriptive information to the Communications Control Section (CCS) for broadcast updates.
- Determine need for additional personnel including investigative and supervisory staff.
- Brief and bring up-to-date all additional responding personnel.
- Identify and separately interview everyone at the scene. Make sure their interview and identifying information is properly recorded. To aid in this process, if possible, take pictures or record video images of everyone present. Video cameras affixed to patrol vehicles may be helpful with this task.
- Note name, address, home/business telephone numbers of each person interviewed.
- Determine each person's relationship to the missing person.
- Note information each person may have about the person's disappearance.
- Determine when/where each person last saw the missing person.
- Ask each one, "What do you think happened to the child/endangered adult?"
- Obtain names/addresses/telephone numbers of the missing person's friends/associates and other relatives and friends of the family.
- Continue to keep CCS apprised of all appropriate developing information for broadcast updates.
- Obtain and note permission to search home or building where incident took place.
- Conduct an immediate, thorough search of the missing child/endangered adult's home, even if the person was reported missing from a different location.
- Seal/protect scene and area of the child's home (including the child's personal articles such as hairbrush, diary, photographs, and items with the child's fingerprints/footprints/teeth impressions) so evidence is not destroyed during or after the initial search and to help ensure items which could help in the search for and/or to identify the child are preserved. Determine if any of the child's personal items are missing. If possible, photograph/videotape these areas.
- Evaluate the contents and appearance of the child/endangered adult's room/residence.
- Inquire if the child/endangered adult have access to the Internet and evaluate its role in the disappearance (i.e. social networking sites).
- Ascertain if the missing person has a cellular telephone or other electronic communication device.
- Extend search to surrounding areas including vehicles and other places of concealment.
- Treat areas of interest as potential crime scenes as applicable.
- Determine if surveillance or security cameras in the vicinity may have captured information about the child/endangered adult's disappearance.

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- Interview other family members, friends/associates of the child, and friends of the family to determine
  - (1) When each last saw the child.
  - (2) What they think happened to the child.
- Review sex-offender registries to determine if individuals designated as sexual predators live, work, or might otherwise be associated with the area of the child's disappearance.
- Ensure information regarding the missing person (as applicable) is entered into the National Crime Information Center's (NCIC) Missing Person File within two hours of report receipt and any information about a suspected abductor is entered into the NCIC Wanted Person File. (Carefully review NCIC categories before entering the case, and be sure to use the Child-Abduction flag whenever possible.)
- Prepare flier/bulletin/web posting with the child/abductor's photograph and descriptive information. Distribute in appropriate geographic regions.
- Prepare reports/make all required notifications.

### **Supervisory Officer**

- Obtain briefing and written reports from the first responding officer and other personnel at the scene.
- Decide if circumstances of the child/endangered adult's disappearance meet the protocol in place for activation of an AMBER or other alert program criteria.
- Determine if additional personnel are needed to assist in the investigation.
- Establish a command post away from the child/endangered adult's residence.
- Determine if additional assistance is necessary from:
  - State Police
  - Missing-Children Clearinghouse
  - FBI
  - Specialized Units
  - Victim-Witness Services
  - NCMEC's Project ALERT/Team Adam
- Confirm all the required resources, equipment, and assistance necessary to conduct an efficient investigation have been requested and expedite their availability.
- Ensure coordination/cooperation among all law-enforcement personnel involved in the investigation and search effort.
- Verify all required notifications are made.
- Ensure all agency policies and procedures are in compliance.
- Be available to make any decisions or determinations as they develop.
- Use media including radio, television, newspapers, and internet to assist in the search throughout the duration of the case.

### **Investigative Officer**

- Obtain briefing from the first responding officer and other on-scene personnel.
- Verify the accuracy of all descriptive information and other details developed during the preliminary investigation.
- Initiate a neighborhood canvass using a standardized questionnaire.
- Obtain a brief, recent history of family dynamics.
- Correct and investigate the reasons for conflicting information offered by witnesses and other individuals.
- Collect article(s) of the child/endangered adult's clothing for scent-tracking purposes.
- Review and evaluate all available information and evidence collected.
- Secure the child/endangered adult's latest medical and dental records.
- Contact waste collection management and request they segregate garbage and dumping containers from key investigative areas in cases where it is suspected there may be imminent danger to the missing child/endangered adult.
- Develop and execute an investigative plan.
- Interview the child/endangered adult's teacher, counselor (school or private), employer, or off-site caregiver (group home, child care provider).
- Conduct a criminal-history check on all principal suspects and persons of interest in the investigation.
- Determine what additional resources and specialized services are required.
- Ensure details of the case have been reported to NCMEC.
- Prepare and update bulletins for local law-enforcement agencies, missing-children clearinghouse(s), the FBI, and other appropriate agencies.
- Establish a telephone hotline for receipt of tips and leads.