

River Bend Police Department
Missing Persons
General Order 73
Effective Date 05/01/2012

73.01 **Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures and guidelines for this agency's response to reports of missing persons and runaways.

73.02 **Policy:** It shall be the policy of this agency to thoroughly investigate all reports of missing children. In addition, this agency holds that every child reported as missing will be considered "at risk" until significant information to the contrary is confirmed.

73.03 **Definitions:** The following definitions of terms will apply throughout this general order.

Missing Child: A person who is: younger than eighteen (18) years of age, and whose whereabouts are unknown to a parent, guardian, legal custodian, or responsible party. See below for missing at risk youth or child under special circumstances.

Missing Adult: A person who is eighteen (18) years of age or older and whose whereabouts are unknown to a concerned person.

Missing at risk Adult: A person who is eighteen (18) years of age or older and lacks the mental or cognitive ability to function without supervision or to make proper and safe decisions. Or is on mental or health related medicine (diabetic, heart, blood pressure or other similar medications) that must be taken to maintain the ability to function in society.

Unusual Circumstances: refers to a missing child who is:

Thirteen (13) years of age or younger, or
Believed to be (one or more of the following):

Out of zone of safety for his or her age and developmental stage. The zone of safety will vary depending on the age of the child and his/her developmental stage. In the case of an infant, for example the zone of safety will include the immediate presence of an adult custodian, or the crib, stroller, or carriage in which the infant was placed. For a school age child, the zone of safety might be the immediate neighborhood or the route taken between home and school.

Mentally diminished.

Drug dependent, including prescription and illicit substances.

A potential victim of foul play or sexual exploitation.

In a life threatening situation.

Believed to be with adults who could endanger his or her welfare.

Is absent under circumstances inconsistent with established patterns of behavior, or

Whose disappearance involves circumstances that would cause a reasonable person to conclude that the child should be considered at risk.

73.03.01 Determination of unusual circumstances or at risk: If it is determined that unusual circumstances are involved in the report of a missing child or adult, the Officer will contact the Chief of Police. The Chief of Police will assign available officers who will assume the lead in the investigative process. All appropriate resources will be deployed to ensure that every effort is made to locate the missing child or adult.

73.04 **Officer's Responsibilities:** In any case of a missing child where foul play is suspected, or the Child/Adult has a mental or physical handicap or is younger than 13 years of age, the following investigative steps shall be completed as well as the requirements of G.O. 70 - Criminal Investigation Procedures:

- Notify either the Sergeant or Chief of Police.
- IF the Child/Adult is housed in a care facility (Howell or Riverstone). Officer responding must make contact with the Director or a person designated by the Director of the missing person as soon as possible.
- Upon consent of the person with standing, conduct a search to include **all** areas of the victim's residence and/or all areas of the location the responding officer was dispatched to, as well as any vehicle(s) parked at the scene. The search shall be conducted upon consent of the owner or person in custody/control of the property. **Whenever practical** before conducting a search of all applicable areas, the responding officer should request that the owner or person in control of the property to allow for the officers to search.
- IF the missing person/child/adult is not found
- Conduct a neighborhood canvass in an attempt to determine the whereabouts of the child.
- Conduct interviews with friends of the Child/Adult.
- Contact school authorities or place of employment.
- Contact area hospitals.
- Evaluate potential affects that the marital status of the parents may have on the case, i.e. custody disputes or parental kidnapping.
- Check locations the Child/Adult has been known to frequent.
- Check old addresses or neighborhoods.
- Investigate suspicious persons or vehicles seen in the area.

NOTE: Conduct search of nearby undeveloped areas, such as woods, water areas, construction sites, etc.

73.04.01 The investigating officer, upon receiving a report of a missing child, shall immediately contact the Communications Center, either via radio or telephone, with the information necessary for a BOLO entry or Amber Alert or Silver Alert as noted. Before the conclusion of the call the Officer shall physically go to the Communications Center and supply a copy of the preliminary report. The Telecommunicator will make the entry into DCI/NCIC. The name of the Telecommunicator will be documented in the report.

73.04.02 The necessary information must include, at a minimum, the following:

1. Full name,
2. Date of birth,
3. Height,
4. Weight,
5. Color of hair,
6. Color of eyes,
7. Clothing, and
8. Circumstances surrounding the case (suspicious, runaway, disabled, etc.).

73.04.03 **Missing/Walk Off of an Adult** deemed to be at risk.

73.05 **Lost or Abandoned Children:** An officer who locates a child who appears to be lost or abandoned shall attempt to contact the child's parents, family members, guardian, legal custodian, or other responsible adult who knows the child and return the child to the parents, guardian, or legal custodian. If the parents, guardian, or legal custodian cannot be located, the child shall be placed into the custody of the Department of Social Services. If it is determined the child was abandoned, an abuse/neglect investigation should be conducted in accordance with North Carolina Statutes 143B-499.7.

The investigating officer should contact the Communications Center to broadcast a "Be On the Look Out" (BOLO) describing the child in the event inquiries are made to other units concerning the located child. A complete description of the child, including clothing and identifying marks and scars, should be included in the officer's report, along with an account of the attempts made to locate the parents, guardian, or legal custodian.

73.05 **Runaway and Missing Children Reports:** It is the policy of the River Bend Police Department to immediately prepare a report and disseminate information regarding missing children utilizing the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) Division of Criminal Information (DCI) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) systems to other law enforcement agencies in the county. Notification will also be made to the North Carolina Center for Missing Persons. Accordingly, there is no "waiting period" for the investigation and documentation of runaway or missing children. If foul play, parental abduction, or other criminal activity is suspected, jurisdiction shall be determined by the location of the suspected abduction or crime.

73.06 **Procedure:** During the course of an investigation involving a runaway or missing child, the investigating officer shall obtain the following information:

- A. Complete description and pertinent information of the child - Name, A.K.A., DOB, SSN,

address, home or cellular phone, race/sex, height/weight, hair/eyes, scars/marks/tattoos, jobs, school and grade, clothing, mental condition, medical conditions, date last seen, etc. If no phone number is available obtain a contact number.

- B. Parent/complainant information - Name, address, phone number at home, cellular and work. If the reporting person is from a group home or other shelter, obtain the parents or guardian information from the reporting person.
- C. Reason for running away - Drugs, alcohol, fight with parents, family problems, school problems, boy/girlfriend problems, on probation, pending delinquency charges.
- D. Possible locations where child might go - Friends, relatives, hangouts, job, (also obtain phone numbers), ascertain if parents have checked these locations.
- E. Belongings - Suitcase, money, vehicle.
- F. Prior runaways - When, how long, where found, return on own, etc.
- G. Obtain photo.
- H. Are dental records available?
- I. Identifying scars, marks or tattoos.
- J. In some cases parents will provide instructions regarding what to do if the child is located. Document parental instructions but explain that what the parents want may not necessarily happen.

73.08

73.10

North Carolina Amber Alert System: The North Carolina Amber Alert System provides a valuable tool for law enforcement agencies in the on-going battle to protect children. The system is operated by the North Carolina Center for Missing Persons, which activates the alert and sets the process in motion by quickly disseminating the information to the participating agencies and organizations. In an effort to avoid inappropriate use of the AMBER System, the Center, in addition to the statutory criteria outlined below, adheres to very strict sequential notification guidelines and prompts.

73.10.01

§143B-499.7 of the North Carolina General Statutes requires that, in order to activate an AMBER Alert, ALL of the following conditions must apply:

1. Child is 17 years of age or younger;
2. Child is believed:
 - a. To have been abducted, OR
 - b. To be in danger of serious bodily injury or death;
3. Abduction is not known or suspected to be by a parent of the child, unless the child's life is suspected to be in danger;
4. Child is not believed to be a runaway or voluntarily missing; and
5. Abduction has been reported to and investigated by a law enforcement agency.

73.10.02 Notifications: Prior to notifying and requesting an AMBER Alert activation by the Center for Missing Persons, the Incident Commander or designee will:

1. Determine that the statutory criteria has been met;
2. Obtain approval from the Chief of Police or his designee to request activation of an AMBER Alert;
3. Ensure that the Communications Center enters the case into NCIC and format an Amber Alert through DCI;
4. Establish a 24 hour attended phone number;
5. Continue an ongoing investigation;
6. Compile for dissemination using the North Carolina AMBER Alert Form (NBPD Form #155) the identity and description of child and abductor (photos if available), time and location of abduction and direction of travel, description of vehicle and tag, if known, and other relevant data.

If a missing child report meets the criteria listed above, the Incident Commander shall authorize, as soon as practicable after receipt of the report, notification of the North Carolina Center for Missing Persons:

1. By telephone at 1-800-522-5437 or (919) 733-3914;
2. Transmit the completed fact form by telephonic facsimile to the North Carolina Center for Missing Persons at (919) 715-1682;
3. Transmit by Internet or, absent that capability, by telephonic facsimile or by personal delivery if time constraints are not prohibitive, a recent and true photographic image of the victim and, if possible, the abductor.

73.10.03 If the abduction of the child is known or suspected to be by a parent of the child, the Center, in its discretion, may disseminate information through the AMBER Alert System if the child is believed to be in danger of injury or death. It will also be the responsibility of the Center to determine whether there is sufficient identifying data to justify an AMBER Alert activation.

73.10.04 Participating media outlets either by individual discretionary policy or guidelines established by the North Carolina Association of Broadcasters agree to broadcast the AMBER Alert until cancelled. The Center for Missing Persons will fax more detailed data to participating outlets as the information develops. If available, television news services will receive photographic images as soon as practicable.

73.10.05 Cancellation: Upon determining that an AMBER Alert is no longer necessary, the Incident Commander, or designee, with approval of the Chief of Police or designee, will immediately notify the Center for Missing Persons. The Center will ensure that the Department of Transportation deactivates the Dynamic Message Signs (DMS) and that the various media outlets discontinue the AMBER Alert.

73.11 **Recovery/Case Closure:** the investigating officer who is assigned to the recovery or return of a missing child will be responsible to:

Verify that the returned child is, in fact, the reported missing child and return the child to the parents, guardians, legal custodian, runaway shelter or DSS.

In the case of a runaway, a "Post Return Interview" is required to determine if possible, the reason

the child ran away.

Write a supplement advising of the child's return, providing pertinent details.

Notify the Communications Center in writing to remove the missing child from NCIC via DCI and provide a copy of the report supplement to be attached to the DCI cancellation entry.

73.12

Missing Older Adults: Whenever an officer responds to a complaint of a missing adult, the officer will determine the status of the missing person and follow the procedures outlined below:

If the person reported missing is an adult, and is not considered at risk, i.e. is not disabled, is not endangered, and no foul play is suspected, the investigating officer will follow the procedures for a possible Silver Alert.

If the person reported missing is an adult and is considered at risk, i.e. is disabled, is endangered, or foul play is suspected, the investigating officer will follow the procedures outlined.

NOTE: **There is no required waiting period to file missing adult reports.**

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