

4.1.3 Missing Children – Amber Alert Plan

I. POLICY

It is the policy of the Johnstown Police Department to comply with this general order. Along with this general order, all personnel shall comply with section 2908 of Title 18, Missing Children; and the statewide Amber Alert Plan.

II. PURPOSE

To provide police personnel with an order to assist in the safe and timely return of missing children. This order will provide personnel with guidelines on law enforcement mandates in regards to missing children

III. RESPONSIBILITIES OF LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

A. Missing Children

The police department will complete the following duties with respect to missing children, persons under 18 years of age, Title 18 section 2908:

1. To investigate a report of a missing child immediately upon receipt of the report regardless of the age of the missing child or the circumstances surrounding the disappearance of the child. In no case, shall the department impose a mandatory waiting period prior to commencing the investigation of a missing child.
2. When conducting a missing child investigation, to record all information relevant to the missing child and the circumstances surrounding the disappearance of the missing child on the appropriate incident report.
3. To make an entry into the missing persons file through the Commonwealth Law Enforcement Assistance Network [CLEAN] in accordance with Pennsylvania State Police policy and procedures immediately upon receipt of sufficient identification information on the missing child.
4. To make an entry into the unidentified persons file through the CLEAN system in accordance with Pennsylvania State Police policy and procedures immediately upon:
 - a. Taking custody of an unidentified living child, such as an infant, or a physically or mentally disabled child.
 - b. Discovering an unidentified deceased child.
5. To insure timely cancellation of any entry made pursuant to this section, where the missing child has returned or is located.

4.1.3 continued

6. Officers responding to reports of missing children, should at the minimum:
 - a. Respond in a timely manner.
 - b. Gather essential information.
 - c. Identify those at scene and the legal guardian.
 - d. Make an at-risk assessment.
 - e. Advise the supervisor and other surrounding officers.
 - f. Commence a search if warranted such as a non-runaway. Include the residence and surrounding areas.
 - g. Update notifications.
 - h. If not located, enter child into CLEAN/NCIC
 - i. Complete required reports, such as missing person worksheet and incident report.
7. Supervisors responding to the scene of a missing child should at a minimum:
 - a. Assess the situation.
 - b. Update notifications.
 - c. Arrange logistics for search efforts and assist in the search.
 - d. If the child is not located, notify administration and request additional personnel if needed.
8. Detectives assigned to a missing child case, should at a minimum:
 - a. If needed, establish a command post.
 - b. If needed, document and control volunteer searches.
 - c. Assist in victim support.
 - d. Debrief first responders.
 - e. Interview witnesses.
 - f. Examine agency records relating to the child and family.
 - g. Obtain copies of all reports.
 - h. Use of missing child hotline.
 - i. If possible polygraph.
 - j. Prepare and distribute fliers.
 - k. Identify additional resources.
 - l. Document through proper reports.
 - m. Develop and utilize the media.
 - n. Continued investigation until case closeout.

4.1.3 continued

B. Unidentified Deceased Children

1. The Johnstown Police shall, with respect to unidentified deceased children, make an entry into the Unidentified Persons File through the CLEAN system in accordance with Pennsylvania State Police policy and procedures immediately upon observing or receiving any descriptive information on an unidentified deceased child.
2. All proper criminal investigative procedures apply.

C. Amber Alert Plan

The Amber Alert Plan refers to a system that uses emergency alerts by radio and television stations to notify the public about child abductions statewide.

1. Terms
 - a. Emergency Alert System [EAS] refers to a statewide emergency broadcast system.
 - b. Emergency Management Agency [EMA] refers to the agency that is mandated to transmit abduction information.
 - c. Pennsylvania State Police [PSP] is the law enforcement agency that activates the emergency alert system through the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.
2. Criteria: The following criteria has been implemented and will serve as strict guidelines when making a determination as to whether a child has been abducted by either a family member or a non-family member.
 - a. The Amber Alert Plan is limited to abducted children and therefore the abduction may be believed to have been committed by a non-family member or a family member.
 - b. The abducted child must be under the age of 16, or under the age of 18 and have a proven mental or physical disability.
 - c. The police officer must believe the abducted child is in danger of serious bodily harm or death.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Standards

Upon arrival to the scene, the responding officer, detective or supervisor will make the following determination:

4.1.3 continued

1. The abducted child conforms to the established guidelines of the Amber Alert Plan.
2. The investigating police officer must believe that the abducted child is in danger of serious bodily harm or death.
3. The investigating officer must confirm that the child is under the age of 16 or is under the age of 18 and has a proven physical or mental disability.
4. If all aspects of the criteria are met, the responding officer shall notify his/her supervisor and initiate a criminal investigation while preserving all evidence.

B. Notification

The supervisor or his/her designee will notify the dispatcher on duty to immediately:

1. Enter the abducted child into the CLEAN/NCIC system.
2. Simultaneously request Amber Alert Plan implementation by using the CLEAN missing persons involuntary entry screen, the dispatch center transmits the request for an Amber Alert to the Pennsylvania State Police.
 - a. PSP should alert the EMA system and post on their web page site, www.amber.state.pa.us.

C. Cancellation

As with missing children timely cancellation in CLEAN/NCIC is required when an abducted child is returned or located.

Effective Date:

Date: October 1, 2010

By Order Of:

Craig Foust
Chief Of Police