

Policy: 1115.15, Lost or Missing Persons

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I. PURPOSE

This policy establishes procedures for managing child, juvenile, or adult lost or missing person cases.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Orlando Police Department to make every effort to report, investigate, and locate lost or missing persons. Officers shall follow up on all investigative leads that may result in the immediate location of a missing person.

III. DEFINITIONS

Adult: An adult is described as 18 years of age or older. The adult is considered missing if the disappearance is unexplained and his or her whereabouts are unknown.

A Child is Missing: A reverse-911 calling system that notifies local businesses and residences within a one-mile or more radius of a missing child or endangered adult. Activation requires CID supervisor or watch commander approval. This may also be used when a small child is found who does not possess the verbal skills to identify where he or she lives. An alert may be sent out to nearby homes stating that a lost child has been found and providing the Communications non-emergency number to call back. Please hold back identifying information on the child if using this service for this purpose.

C.A.R.T. (Child Abduction Response Team): Comprised of specially-trained personnel from local law enforcement agencies. They will respond as a team to child abduction cases when requested. Activation requires CID supervisor approval.

Child: For this policy, a child is described as 12 years of age or less. The child is considered lost or missing if his or her whereabouts are unknown and the disappearance is out of character. Note: The State of Florida considers a child to be any person younger than 18 years of age.

Juvenile: A juvenile is described as 13 through 17 years of age. The juvenile is considered missing or a runaway if his or her disappearance is unexplained and the whereabouts are unknown.

A juvenile runaway who possesses mental deficiencies or medical complications, and is over 12 years of age, may fall under the provisions of a lost or missing child. The watch commander shall make this determination.

Missing Endangered Person:

- a. A missing child (a child is defined by the State of Florida as a person younger than 18 years of age);
- b. A missing adult younger than 26 years of age; or
- c. A missing adult 26 years of age or older who is suspected by a law enforcement agency of being endangered or the victim of criminal activity.

IV. PROCEDURES

1. REPORT REQUIRED

Missing person reports shall be taken when the subject is last seen within the city limits or Orlando regardless of the subject's place of residency.

A report may also be taken as a courtesy when, at the time of the investigation, the last seen location cannot be determined, or, the last seen jurisdiction is refusing to take a report. The Homicide Unit Supervisor will follow-up to attempt to determine appropriate investigative jurisdiction.

A missing person traveling to Orlando, whose arrival is not confirmed, shall be reported to the jurisdiction in which the subject was last seen.

There are no time restrictions for reporting a person missing, but the individual making the report must sign an OPD Missing Person Affidavit.

The responding officer or investigator shall ensure the following are checked when a person is reported Lost or Missing, including but not limited to local jails and hospitals. This can be done by requesting that dispatch complete these tasks. If completed by communications center personnel, they shall document in the narrative on CAD. If the responding officer/investigator chooses, these tasks may be done directly by them or by assisting officers/investigators. These tasks shall be documented, including the time checked and by what means they were checked, as well as the person who completed these tasks. Checking jail websites can be completed via the following links for jails, and hospitals can be done by calling the two contact numbers for the following hospitals, which will check all hospital locations within their systems:

Orange County Jail – Inmates – OCFL

Seminole County Jail – Search for Inmates (seminolesheriff.org)

Osceola County Jail – Current Inmate Database & Daily Arrests (Osceola.org)

Lake County Jail – Lake County Sheriff's Office (lcsso.org)

The Hospitals can be located in CAD under the Contact Cards. In emergency situations, or a Lost or Missing Person call has a designated emergency channel, the officers can request that these be checked by the dispatcher/operator on that channel.

2. LOST OR MISSING CHILD

2.1 COMMUNICATIONS RESPONSIBILITIES

The Communications Division shall dispatch two units to the scene: a primary unit and a backup unit to assist.

2.2 PRIMARY OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The primary officer shall meet with the reporter and complete an Incident Offense Report and an OPD Missing Person Affidavit/OPD Missing Child/Juvenile Checklist (Attachment A). The primary officer shall broadcast a local lookout, and a message shall be sent to all stations via Teletype when the child is not immediately located. The officer shall consider the following information when making a local lookout or entry into NCIC/FCIC during search operations:

- a. Age – the younger the child, the more concern.
- b. The mental and physical condition of the child.
- c. Dangers in the area such as lakes, culverts, drainage wells, etc.
- d. History of the child's behavior (history of runaway, etc.).

The primary officer shall also obtain the following information:

- a. A complete description of the child.
- b. Names of the child's associates – playmates and addresses, if possible.
- c. A recent photograph.
- d. Enter into Teletype immediately and, in any event, no later than two hours of receipt of the report by this Agency, as required by state law.

To assist the primary officer with conducting a thorough preliminary investigation, please refer to (Attachment C).

The primary officer shall begin a preliminary search of the immediate area to verify disappearance, especially places where a child may hide and nearby bodies of water. The primary officer needs to identify the exact place the victim was last seen and secure the scene until it can be searched and examined for possible evidence.

2.3 BACKUP OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The backup officer shall proceed to the scene and aid in the search and interviewing of possible witnesses.

2.4 SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

If the child is not located within 30 minutes of the arrival of the primary officer, the officer's supervisor and the CID supervisor shall be notified. The Patrol supervisor shall respond to the scene to assume command of the operation. The CID supervisor will determine if a detective will respond and assist.

The sector supervisor assuming command shall coordinate the searching parties, secure additional units and, if needed, establish a command post.

The supervisor should complete the Missing Persons/Code 10 Information Sheet (Attachment E).

If the missing child is not located within one hour of the arrival of the primary officer, the sector supervisor will notify the watch commander.

2.5 WATCH COMMANDER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The watch commander shall:

- a. Request assistance from other agencies and individuals (media, fire department, neighbors, "A Child is Missing," etc.)
- b. Determine if a juvenile who possesses mental deficiencies or medical complications, and is over 12 years of age, falls under the provisions of a lost or missing child.
- c. Determine whether to conduct an extensive search for a lost child if the child is an extreme habitual runaway who has always been previously found in a safe condition.
- d. Coordinate search units, assign additional on-duty units, and if necessary, establish a command center (see Section 7, General Area Search, for additional information).
- e. Authorize the termination of a search for a lost or missing child by uniform patrol. The Special Victims Unit shall continue the investigation as outlined in Section 2.8.

2.6 SPECIAL VICTIMS' UNIT SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. The CID supervisor or watch commander will determine if a detective will respond to the scene to assist.
 - b. Provide "A Child is Missing's" phone number (888.875.2246) to the on-scene officer and have him or her call immediately. The CID supervisor or detective must notify Communications immediately once "A Child is Missing" is activated. The CID supervisor or detective must also notify "A Child is Missing" and Communications once the child has been located.
 - c. Child Alert Systems: The Special Victims Unit supervisor shall evaluate every missing child investigation to determine whether activation of a local or statewide child alert system is appropriate. The responsibility for evaluating the facts of the investigation and determining whether to request activation of an alert rests with the Special Victims Unit supervisor or designee. Based upon the circumstances of the investigation, the Special Victims Unit supervisor shall facilitate activation through the appropriate agency or agencies. Alert activation may be upgraded as additional investigative information becomes available.
1. Florida AMBER Alert: If the criteria are met, the Special Victims Unit supervisor shall request activation of the Florida AMBER Alert. Criteria: Child under 18; clear indication of abduction; investigation concludes danger of death or serious bodily injury; detailed description of child, suspect and/or vehicle; local law enforcement agency recommends activation.
 2. Enhanced Missing Child Alert: May be requested when imminent danger exists but all AMBER criteria are not met. Criteria include child under 18, well-founded belief of imminent danger, detailed description or photograph, and agency recommendation.
 3. Missing Child Alert: May be requested when AMBER criteria are not met but law enforcement has a well-founded belief the child is in danger of death or serious bodily injury. Criteria include child under 18, well-founded belief, detailed description or photograph, and agency recommendation.
 4. Spectrum Alert: The Florida Spectrum Alert facilitates the rapid recovery of missing children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The Special Victims Unit supervisor should evaluate activation whenever a missing child with ASD is believed endangered because of wandering or elopement behavior.
 5. Activation Process: When the Special Victims Unit supervisor determines activation is appropriate, the supervisor or assigned detective shall facilitate activation through the appropriate agency. For FDLE-administered alerts, contact FDLE MEPIC at 1.888.356.4774. Upon recovery, notify the appropriate agencies so the alert may be canceled.

The criteria are:

- a. The child must be under 18 years of age, and
- b. There must be a clear indication of abduction, and
- c. The law enforcement agency's investigation must conclude the child's life is in danger, and
- d. There must be a detailed description of the child and/or abductor/vehicle to broadcast to the public, and
- e. The activation must be recommended by the local law enforcement agency of jurisdiction.

If all five criteria are not met, and the child is believed to be in imminent danger, notify the FDLE Missing Child Alert at 1.888.356.4774. This will enable FDLE to distribute to the media a flyer with the child's photo.

- d. Determine whether to ask for assistance from the C.A.R.T.

2.7 SPECIAL VICTIMS' UNIT DETECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. Respond to the scene when requested by the CID supervisor or watch commander and assist in gathering information and photo of the missing child.
- b. Once on the scene, determine if additional resources could be utilized (bloodhound, helicopter, dive team, etc.)
- c. Notify the Public Information Officer.
- d. Create flyers for Patrol and send them to the media, Public Information Officers/Media Relations, and other law enforcement agencies.
- e. Ensure a bolo was published, and update the information, if necessary.
- f. Gather information on the suspect(s) utilizing all investigative resources. If criteria are met, obtain warrants on the suspect(s).
- g. Ensure that the child and suspect were entered in NCIC/FCIC. Update as necessary. Ensure that any warrant was entered.
- h. Keep detailed case notes of all action taken, all leads received, and all persons contacted.

2.8 SPECIAL VICTIMS' UNIT RESPONSIBILITIES

A detective shall be assigned to conduct the follow-up investigation when the report of a missing child is received. The assigned detective will also be responsible for ensuring the missing child has been entered into Teletype.

In cases involving another jurisdiction, the Special Victims Unit Supervisor will coordinate the investigative efforts with that jurisdiction regarding the follow-up investigation. In investigations where the missing child was last seen in the City of Orlando but is a resident of another jurisdiction, the Special Victims Unit supervisor will contact the resident jurisdiction to transfer the investigation. If an agreement is reached, the Incident Offense Report and affidavit will be faxed to the resident agency so the Teletype authority can be immediately changed. The Special Victims Unit supervisor will cancel the missing person message as OPD authority and will verify the resident jurisdiction has entered the missing person before closing the investigation.

OPD Communications Validations will validate all missing persons FCIC and NCIC entries monthly. (18.14d) [Florida Statute 937.031](#) requires all missing persons entered into Teletype that remain missing 30 days after the original entry date must then have dental records entered. If the missing child is not located in 30 days, the missing child's dentist must complete a Missing Person Dental Report. It is the responsibility of the assigned detective to obtain these records and have them entered into Teletype. If no dental records exist or are unattainable, the Teletype entry must be updated and a supplemental report must be completed indicating the information was unavailable.

If a missing person is not located within 90 days after the missing person report is filed, the assigned detective shall attempt to obtain a biological specimen for DNA analysis from the missing child (e.g., toothbrush) or appropriate family members (buccal swabs). FDLE will assist in identifying approved biological specimens for DNA analysis. In

accordance with [Florida Statute 937.021\(4\)\(a\)](#) and (4)(b), within 90 days after reporting a missing child, the information shall be transmitted to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs). The assigned Missing Persons Investigator or Missing Juvenile Investigator is responsible for ensuring timely entry. When the circumstances of the disappearance are suspicious or indicate potential criminal activity, the Homicide Unit NamUs Liaison shall complete the NamUs entry.

In cases where the missing child is not located, an investigative supplement will be required every 60 days after the initial investigative supplement giving the status of the investigation until the missing youth is located. At no point will the case be given the status of "Inactive."

3. MISSING OR RUNAWAY JUVENILE

3.1 REPORTING OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon receipt of a missing juvenile or runaway complaint, the reporting officer shall:

- a. Complete an Incident Offense Report.
- b. Complete an OPD Missing Person Affidavit/OPD Missing Child/Juvenile Checklist (Attachment A) front and back) and attach a current photo, if available. Place the affidavit and photo into the Report Review and Information Unit box by the end of the shift. A written statement is optional. Any photograph obtained should be scanned and emailed to the designated missing juveniles investigator or SVU supervisor to ensure timely dissemination.
- c. Enter the missing person into NCIC/FCIC immediately and in any event, no later than two hours of receipt of the report by this Agency, as required by state law.
- d. Broadcast a local lookout; a message shall be sent to all stations via Teletype when the juvenile is not immediately located.

If there are suspicious circumstances surrounding the disappearance of the juvenile, an immediate in-depth investigation shall be conducted utilizing all available resources.

When a lost or missing juvenile is recovered, the recovering officer shall:

- a. Complete a supplement report documenting the recovery by the end of the shift. Include detailed information on where and when the child was located, the child's condition, circumstances, others present, who was notified, who the child was released to, and what operator removed the child from NCIC/FCIC.
- b. Complete an OPD Post-Locate Interview of the Runaway Juvenile (Attachment B).
- c. Authorize Teletype to cancel the NCIC/FCIC entry and include the Teletype operator's employee number in the supplement report.
- d. Attempt to contact the responsible adult party for the juvenile and make arrangements for the juvenile to be picked up. When no contact is made, the juvenile should be taken to Great Oaks Village by a sworn officer for processing unless the child is from out of state (see procedures below).
- e. If the missing juvenile is arrested and taken to the Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC), have Teletype fax the hit to the JAC at 407.836.8871 and attach it to the paperwork. This will make the JAC aware of the fact the juvenile is missing and minimize the juvenile being released to a non-relative, thus increasing the risk that

he or she becomes missing again. Attempt to contact the complainant listed in the report to notify him or her of the juvenile's location and indicate this information in the recovery report.

3.1.1 OUT-OF-STATE RUNAWAY

Any non-delinquent, out-of-state runaway is to be transported to SECURE DETENTION at the Juvenile Assessment Center per the Interstate Compact on Juveniles found at §985.502, Fla. Stat. You will be required to submit a copy of the NCIC/FCIC hit and complete a Warrant Arrest Affidavit. Write "Non-Criminal" on top of the affidavit and for charges write "None." Under the narrative, you may state: "No charges/non-criminal out-of-state runaway. Hold in secure facility per National Rules and Regulations Rule #5-102. Runaway status confirmed through Teletype."

The Juvenile Assessment Center staff will, in turn, contact The Department of Juvenile Justice Interstate Compact Office, 850.488.3795/Suncom 850.278.3795, to arrange for transportation home. The officer shall remove the juvenile from NCIC/FCIC, complete the Post-Locate Interview (Attachment B), complete the recovery supplement by the end of the shift, and attempt to notify the parent/guardian.

If the juvenile is a walk-in recovery at the OPH Information Desk, Communications will be contacted to dispatch an officer to complete an OPD Post-Locate Interview of the Runaway Juvenile form.

Great Oaks Village (GOV) personnel will call the OPD Non-Emergency Number 321-235-5300 to report missing juveniles and recovered juveniles from GOV. Great Oaks personnel shall initiate an OPD Missing Person Affidavit notarized by someone on their staff and an OPD Missing Child/Juvenile Checklist and fax the affidavit to OPD Teletype. A sworn officer must respond to sign/witness the affidavit. Additionally, an officer must go to the GOV office once during each shift to pick up original affidavits and checklists and deliver them to OPD Headquarters.

3.2 SPECIAL VICTIMS' UNIT RESPONSIBILITIES

A detective shall be assigned to conduct the follow-up investigation when the report of a missing juvenile is received. The assigned detective will also be responsible for ensuring the missing juvenile has been entered into Teletype.

In cases involving another jurisdiction, the Special Victims Unit Supervisor will coordinate the investigative efforts with that jurisdiction regarding to the follow-up investigation. In investigations where the missing juvenile was last seen in the City of Orlando but is a resident of another jurisdiction, the Special Victims Unit Supervisor will contact the resident jurisdiction to transfer the investigation. If an agreement is reached, the Incident Offense Report and affidavit will be faxed to the resident agency so the Teletype authority can be immediately changed. The Special Victims Unit supervisor will cancel the missing person message as OPD authority and will verify the resident jurisdiction has entered the missing person before closing the investigation.

OPD Communications Validations will validate all missing persons FCIC and NCIC entries monthly. (18.14d) [Florida Statute 937.031](#) requires all missing persons entered into Teletype that remain missing 30 days after the original entry date must then have dental records entered. If the missing juvenile is not located in 30 days, the missing juvenile's dentist must complete a Missing Person Dental Report. It is the responsibility of the assigned detective to obtain these records and have them entered into Teletype. If no dental records exist or are unattainable, the Teletype entry must be updated and a supplemental report must be completed indicating the information was unavailable.

If a missing person is not located within 90 days after the missing person report is filed, the assigned detective shall attempt to obtain a biological specimen (e.g., toothbrush) from the missing child for DNA analysis or from appropriate family members (buccal swabs). FDLE will assist in identifying approved biological specimens for DNA analysis. It is the responsibility of the assigned detective to obtain these records and have them entered into Teletype. If no DNA records exist or are unattainable, the Teletype entry must be updated, and a supplemental report must be completed indicating the information was unavailable. In accordance with [Florida Statute 937.021\(4\)\(a\) and \(4\)\(b\)](#), within 90 days after reporting a missing juvenile, the information shall be transmitted to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs). The assigned Missing Persons Investigator or Missing Juvenile Investigator is responsible for ensuring timely entry. When the circumstances of the disappearance are suspicious or indicate potential criminal activity, the Homicide Unit NamUs Liaison shall complete the NamUs entry.

In cases where the missing youth is not located, an investigative supplement will be required every 60 days after the initial investigative supplement, giving the status of the investigation until the missing youth is located. At no point will the case be given the status of "Inactive."

4. MISSING ADULT

4.1 REPORTING OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

There is no waiting period for reporting a missing person. Upon receipt of a missing adult complaint, the reporting officer shall:

- a. Complete an Incident Offense Report.
- b. Complete an OPD Missing Person Affidavit.
- c. Enter the missing person into NCIC/FCIC immediately, and in any event, no later than two hours of receipt of the report by this Agency, as required by state law.

See Section 8 for guidelines on Missing Endangered Persons for further information on missing endangered adults.

If the missing adult has dementia or Alzheimer's, has a mental or cognitive disability; an intellectual disability or a developmental disability, as those terms are defined in s. 393.063; a brain injury; another physical, mental, or emotional disability not related to substance abuse; or a combination of any of these that could present additional risk to the subject's well-being, the procedures outlined in Section 6 shall be followed. The on-call Homicide Unit Supervisor shall be notified to determine if a detective will respond and assist.

If a missing adult is accompanied by a missing child/juvenile, a missing person Incident Offense Report shall be completed listing both the adult and child/juvenile. OPD Missing Person Affidavits shall be completed for each person using the same case number.

If a reported missing adult is located and verifies his or her safety, but does not want his or her whereabouts made known to others, including the reporting individual, the location of the individual will not be made public or entered in a police report. The safety and welfare of the "missing adult" may be confirmed with the reporting individual.

The reporting officer shall complete a supplement report indicating the adult was found and shall cancel the NCIC/FCIC entry.

4.2 HOMICIDE UNIT INVESTIGATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

A detective shall be assigned to conduct the follow-up investigation when the report of a missing adult is received. The assigned detective shall be responsible for ensuring the missing adult is entered into Teletype, if necessary.

In cases involving another jurisdiction, the Homicide Unit supervisor will coordinate the investigative efforts with that jurisdiction regarding the follow-up investigation. In investigations where the missing person was last seen in the City of Orlando but is a resident of another jurisdiction, the Homicide Unit supervisor will contact the resident jurisdiction to transfer the investigation. If an agreement is reached, the Incident Offense Report and affidavit will be faxed to the resident agency so the Teletype authority can be immediately changed. The Homicide Unit supervisor will cancel the missing person message as OPD authority and will verify the resident jurisdiction has entered the missing person before closing the investigation.

OPD Communications Validations will validate all missing persons FCIC and NCIC entries monthly. (18.14d) Florida Statute 937.031 requires all missing persons entered into Teletype that remain missing 30 days after the original entry date must then have dental records entered. If the missing adult is not located in 30 days, the missing adult's dentist must complete a Missing Person Dental Report. It is the responsibility of the assigned detective to obtain these records and have them entered into Teletype. If no dental records exist or are unattainable, the Teletype entry must be updated and a supplemental report must be completed indicating the information was unavailable.

If a missing person is not located within 90 days after the missing person report is filed, the assigned detective shall attempt to obtain a biological specimen for DNA analysis from the missing adult (e.g., toothbrush) or appropriate family members (buccal swabs). FDLE will assist in identifying approved biological specimens for DNA analysis. In accordance with Florida Statute 937.021(4)(a) and (4)(b), within 90 days after reporting a missing adult, the information shall be transmitted to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs). The assigned Missing Persons Investigator or Missing Juvenile Investigator is responsible for ensuring timely entry. When the circumstances of the disappearance are suspicious or indicate potential criminal activity, the Homicide Unit NamUs Liaison shall complete the NamUs entry.

In cases where the missing adult is not located, an investigative supplement will be submitted by June 30 of each year giving the status of the investigation until the missing adult is located. At no point will the case be given the status of "Inactive."

5. MISSING PERSONS WITH DEMENTIA, ALZHEIMER'S, OR OTHER DISABILITIES

5.1 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Alzheimer's Disease: A disease that results in the destruction of brain tissues over a 15-20 year period, causing dementia.

Dementia: A set of symptoms that occur when a disease destroys the brain slowly, including:

- a. Loss of short-term and long-term memory.
- b. Poor judgment.
- c. Loss of abstract thinking and problem-solving.

Other Dementing Illnesses: Parkinson's disease, strokes.

Other Qualifying Conditions: Mental or cognitive disability, intellectual disability or a developmental disability, as those terms are defined in s. 393.063; a brain injury; another physical, mental, or emotional disability that is not related to substance abuse; or a combination of any of these.

5.2 RESPONSIBILITIES

5.2.1 COMMUNICATIONS RESPONSIBILITIES

The Communications Division shall dispatch two units to the scene: A primary unit and a backup unit to assist and notify the sector supervisor of the incident.

5.2.2 PRIMARY OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The primary officer shall meet with the reporter and complete an Incident Offense Report, an OPD Missing Person Affidavit (Attachment A), and an Initial Responder Tasks checklist (Attachment D). The primary officer shall broadcast a local lookout, and a message shall be sent to all stations via Teletype when the missing person is not immediately located. The officer shall consider the following information when making a local lookout or entry into NCIC/FCIC during search operations:

- a. The mental and physical condition of the person with dementia.
- b. Dangers in the area such as lakes, culverts, drainage wells, etc.
- c. Past episodes where the person with dementia has been lost and recovered.

The primary officer shall also obtain the following information:

- a. A complete description of the missing person with dementia.
- b. Places the missing person with dementia normally frequent.
- c. A recent photograph.

The primary officer shall begin a preliminary search of the immediate area or attempt to locate the missing person, particularly where a person with dementia could hide. Identify the exact place the missing person was last seen and secure the scene until it can be searched and examined for possible evidence or made available for a K-9 track.

Whether the missing person with dementia is found or not, the primary officer shall refer the complainant/caregiver to the local Alzheimer Resource Center at 407.843.1910 and the Association for Safe Return at 888.572.8566 or the Central and North Florida Alzheimer's Association at 407.228.4299 or 800.272.3900.

5.2.3 BACKUP OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The backup officer shall proceed to the scene and aid in the search and interviewing of possible witnesses.

5.2.4 SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

If the missing person with dementia is not located within 30 minutes of the arrival of the primary officer, the officer's supervisor shall respond to the scene to assume command of the operation. The on-call Homicide Unit Supervisor shall be notified and will determine if a detective will respond and assist.

The sector supervisor assuming command shall coordinate the searching parties, secure additional units and, if needed, establish a command post.

The supervisor should complete the Missing Persons/Code 10 Information Sheet (Attachment E).

If the missing person with dementia is not located within one hour of the arrival of the primary officer, the sector supervisor will notify the watch commander.

5.2.5 WATCH COMMANDER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The watch commander shall:

- a. Request assistance from other agencies and individuals (media, fire department, neighbors, citizens band radio operators, etc.).
- b. Coordinate search units, assign additional on-duty units and, if necessary, establish a command center.
- c. Authorize the termination of a search for a lost or missing person with dementia by uniform patrol. The Homicide Unit shall continue the investigation, or
- d. Initiate an extended search.
- e. If the criteria are met, activate the Silver Alert System (see Section 6.3).

5.3 ALERTS FOR MISSING ADULTS

5.3.1 SILVER ALERT

The Silver Alert System has been developed to broadcast information about a missing elderly person who suffers from Dementia or Alzheimer's Disease to the general public promptly.

The Silver Alert System may be activated if all of the following criteria are met:

- a. The investigating officer has entered the missing person in NCIC/FCIC;
- b. The missing person is 60 years of age or older;
- c. There must be a clear indication the individual has a diagnosed cognitive impairment, such as Dementia; or
- d. Under extraordinary circumstances when a person ages 18 to 59, has irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties and the watch commander or Homicide sergeant has determined the missing person cannot consent, the use of dynamic message signs may be the only possible way to rescue the missing person.
- e. The missing person is believed to be in danger.
- f. A Silver Alert activation must be authorized by a watch commander or the Homicide supervisor.

ACTIVATION PROCEDURES: The investigating officer and patrol sergeant shall be responsible for the following procedures:

- a. The Silver Alert System should be activated as soon as possible after it is determined all of the above criteria have been met and when an immediate search of the area has failed to locate the individual. It is further believed the activation of the alert through media and other local resources would aid in the safe recovery of the individual. Contact 1.888.356.4774, which is the FDLE Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse (MEPIC), to activate the Silver Alert.
- b. Contact should also be made with A Child is Missing to activate a neighborhood call alert at 1.888.875.2246.
- c. Notify the PIO/Media Relations to alert local media.
- d. If a vehicle is involved, the statewide messaging system may also be activated via FDOT's highway dynamic message signs and other highway advisory methods.
- e. Advise the following information to the person answering the activation of the Silver Alert Plan:
 1. Vehicle description and tag number (verified via Teletype or other means).
 2. That a statewide BOLO to other law enforcement agencies has been initiated.
 3. Notification to the local media has been done.
- f. Notify the on-call Homicide sergeant.
- g. A case may also be opened with the FDLE Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse (MEPIC). Refer to Section 9 for more information.
- h. Once the individual is located, the Silver Alert must be canceled. FDLE and the PIO/Media Relations should be notified.

5.3.2 PURPLE ALERT

The Purple Alert System has been developed to promptly broadcast information to the general public regarding a missing adult who suffers from other listed qualifying health conditions.

The Purple Alert System may be activated if all of the following criteria are met concerning a missing adult:

- a. Who has a mental or cognitive disability that is not Alzheimer's disease or a dementia-related disorder; an intellectual disability or a developmental disability, as those terms are defined in FSS 393.063; a brain injury; another physical, mental, or emotional disability that is not related to substance abuse; or a combination of any of these;
- b. Whose disappearance indicates a credible threat of immediate danger or serious bodily harm to himself;
- c. Who cannot be returned to safety without law enforcement intervention; and
- d. Who does not meet the criteria for activation of a local Silver Alert.

To utilize the Purple Alert System, the following minimum criteria must be met by the department:

- a. Be the only viable means by which the missing adult is likely to be returned to safety;
- b. Provide, to the greatest extent possible, for the protection of the privacy, dignity, and independence of the missing adult and safeguarding these civil liberties by preventing the inadvertent or unnecessary broadcasting or dissemination of sensitive health and diagnostic information;

- c. Limit the broadcasting and dissemination of alerts and related information to the geographic areas where the missing adult could reasonably be, considering their circumstances and physical and mental condition, the potential modes of transportation available to them or suspected to be involved, and the known or suspected circumstances of their disappearance; and
- d. Be activated only when there is sufficient descriptive information about the missing adult and the circumstances surrounding their disappearance to indicate that activating the alert is likely to help locate the missing adult.
- e. A Purple Alert activation must be authorized by a watch commander or the Homicide supervisor.

If a Purple Alert is determined to be necessary and appropriate, the media and subscribers in the jurisdiction or jurisdictions where the missing adult is believed to or may be located must be notified. The Purple Alert notification may also be broadcast on lottery terminals within the geographic regions where the missing adult may reasonably be, including, but not limited to, lottery terminals in gas stations, convenience stores, and supermarkets.

Under the Purple Alert, a case can be opened with the Department of Law Enforcement's Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse. To enhance local or regional efforts when the investigation indicates an identifiable vehicle is involved, the clearinghouse must coordinate with the Department of Transportation and the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles for the activation of dynamic message signs on state highways and the immediate distribution of critical information to the public regarding the missing per the alert.

ACTIVATION PROCEDURES: The investigating officer and patrol sergeant shall be responsible for the following procedures:

- a. The Purple Alert System should be activated as soon as possible after it is determined all of the above criteria have been met and when an immediate search of the area has failed to locate the individual. It is further believed the activation of the alert through media and other local resources would aid in the safe recovery of the individual. Contact 1.888.356.4774, which is the FDLE Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse (MEPIC), to activate the Purple Alert.
- b. Contact should also be made with A Child is Missing to activate a neighborhood call alert at 1.888.875.2246.
- c. Notify the Media Relations to alert local media.
- d. If a vehicle is involved, the statewide messaging system may also be activated via FDOT's highway dynamic message signs and other highway advisory methods.
- e. Advise the following information to the person answering the activation of the Purple Alert Plan:
 1. Vehicle description and tag number (verified via Teletype or other means).
 2. That a statewide BOLO to other law enforcement agencies has been initiated.
 3. Notification to the local media has been done.
- f. Notify the on-call Homicide sergeant.
- g. A case may also be opened with the FDLE Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse (MEPIC). Refer to Section 9 for more information.
- h. Once the individual is located, the Purple Alert must be canceled. FDLE and the Media Relations should be notified.

5.4 FACTS ON PERSONS WITH DEMENTIA WHO BECAME LOST AND WERE FOUND

Persons with dementia, whether from Alzheimer's or other causes, who become lost rarely ask for assistance. Some will seclude themselves and not respond to searchers.

Persons who are found alive have generally continued to walk in the community and are found in populated areas such as yards, streets, sidewalks, businesses, and open buildings.

Persons who are found dead are almost always found in natural areas, such as fields, woods, bodies of water, ditches, etc.

Some become lost when they are wandering, but there are many other reasons someone might become lost.

Factors contributing to becoming lost include:

- a. Agitated or difficult behavior in the home setting.
- b. The caregiver performs other tasks.
- c. The caregiver is asleep.

NOTE: Officers interviewing caregivers who are reporting a lost or missing person with dementia should be very careful not to be critical or demeaning to the caregiver. The caregiver has probably been under much stress for the past several months/years, and this event will only compound his or her anxiety. A critical approach will not only make the caregiver feel worse, but it may also significantly decrease his or her ability to cope and provide timely, needed information to continue the search.

5.5 FINDING A LOST PERSON

5.5.1 BASIC SEARCH STRATEGIES

- a. Use as many resources as you can so you can find the person while he or she is still walking.
- b. Initially, focus on populated areas near where the person was last seen (1–5 mile radius).
 - 1. Cover an area of increasing circumference around where the person was last seen. Start with one mile and go out to five miles.
 - 2. Wandering outside a radius of five miles is unusual, but not usually associated with death, so a less intense search is needed.
- c. Search carefully:
 - 1. Lost persons rarely seek help after they are lost; so you must be actively searching to find them.
 - 2. Even when searchers are very near to them, they will not respond but will remain secluded.
 - 3. You must almost “trip over them” to find them. Walking searches are most effective.
 - 4. Search all streets and highways, residential yards, and easily accessible buildings.
 - 5. Continue searching throughout the night.

5.5.2 EXTENDED SEARCH STRATEGIES

If the person is not found within six to 12 hours from the time he or she was initially missing, shift the search to secluded/natural areas starting from the last known point and working out to a one-mile radius. This search should begin within 24 hours.

- a. Use community alerts judiciously.
- b. Search natural, secluded areas using intensive search strategies.
- c. Intensify the search within a half-mile radius of the residence.
- d. Move the search radius out to one to two miles and search the same area again.
- e. If they left in their car:
 1. First find the car. Use aerial search techniques as often the person will drive the car into a remote location, such as woods or fields.
 2. Begin an intensive search of secluded/natural areas immediately!
 3. Search around the car within a 1-mile radius as he or she often will walk away from the car, but not get far.

5.6 TIPS FOR SEARCHING FOR PERSONS WITH DEMENTIA

5.6.1 WHY PERSONS WITH DEMENTIA BECOME LOST IN THE COMMUNITY

Dementing illnesses result in persons with dementia forgetting their address, their name, or who they live with, and not being able to recognize familiar areas such as their street or home.

The changes in judgment cause them to enter unsafe situations that may lead to their death, most notably entering secluded natural areas such as woods and remaining there until they die. For instance, the previously familiar dress of a police officer may now be unrecognizable to them. It is often up to law enforcement or good Samaritans to recognize that a person with dementia needs help.

5.6.2 WHERE PERSONS WITH DEMENTIA TEND TO GO WHEN THEY ARE LOST

Often persons with dementia will wander around the neighborhood and can be found in nearby front and backyards. Other common places include streets, highways, and easily accessible buildings such as convenience stores, hospitals, and businesses.

Unfortunately, some persons with dementia who are lost seek seclusion in natural areas. These can be woods, thick bushes, swamps, rivers, lakes/ponds, and remote fields. When this occurs, the person is very difficult to find and often succumbs to exposure and dies. Also, searchers can walk within a few feet of the person and he or she will not respond to calls or initiate action to get help. In many cases, unless a searcher literally walks into the person with dementia, he or she will not be found and will die even in well-searched areas.

When persons with dementia are found alive or dead, the location and direction they have gone rarely make logical sense. Searchers often are fooled by assuming that a person with dementia is successfully navigating to a certain location. While caregivers will often try to “make sense” of where the persons with dementia may be going, it is rarely correct and often delays effective searching.

5.6.3 THE MOST CRUCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUCCESSFUL SEARCH

- a. Start searching immediately.
 - 1. It is critical to find persons with dementia before they enter a secluded area where they become extremely difficult to find and likely to die.
 - 2. Ensure the caregivers arrange to leave a familiar person in the home in the event of a successful return or find. Ensure the primary caregiver can be reached by phone during the search.
- b. The initial search should concentrate on a one-mile radius of the place last seen.
 - 1. All accessible areas should be searched with most areas requiring a foot search. This includes front and backyards of houses, inside easily-accessible buildings, and streets/highways.
 - 2. The initial search should then extend to about a five-mile radius from the place last seen.
 - 3. Searching in this manner should continue for several hours depending how long the person with dementia has been missing. After six to eight hours from the time last seen, it will be crucial to begin to concentrate on the areas where poorer outcomes are more likely.
- c. If the initial search has been thorough and the person with dementia is not found, it is critical to return to the place last seen and plan an intensive search of the natural areas within a one-mile radius.
 - 1. This includes all woods, brush, fields, water, and abandoned spaces such as cars and buildings.
 - 2. Every square foot has to be visually inspected; thus for areas with heavy brush or undergrowth, a shoulder-to-shoulder walking search must be undertaken.
 - 3. Persons with dementia who die when lost will be found within one mile of the place last seen more than 90% of the time.
 - 4. It is critical to plan the search so that every foot of the natural area has been inspected visually.
 - 5. If the individual is not found within one mile, planning for the next mile should be done and the search extended.
 - 6. When a person with dementia becomes lost while driving a vehicle:
 - i. The typical range in which the person is found is equal to the number of miles that can be traveled with the available gas. It is rare for a person with dementia to successfully negotiate filling their gas tank alone.
 - ii. The car is often found at the side of the road in a ditch. Other common places are fields and woods where the car can be obscured.
 - iii. Persons with dementia who become lost driving usually abandon the safety of the car and are found in a secluded natural area within one mile; frequently they are found within 50 yards.
 - iv. The initial search should focus on finding the car; then focus on a one-mile radius of the abandoned car using the above techniques.
- d. Most commonly, searchers find persons with dementia while on foot.
 - 1. Helicopters may be useful, particularly in cases of drowning in remote areas or when searching for abandoned cars. However, be careful not to exclude a foot search of an area in which a helicopter search did not locate anything. Frequently a person with dementia has so secluded themselves in the brush a visual sighting is not possible, even from a close distance.
 - 2. Search dogs may be useful, but search dogs frequently have missed persons with dementia secluded in a natural area. Often the only successful approach to finding a person with dementia is an intense foot search that literally “runs into” the individual.

5.6.4 SEARCH CONSIDERATIONS

- a. Persons with dementia-related illnesses may not respond to their name being called. They may perceive that they are “in trouble” and further hide or seclude themselves.
- b. If the person is located, those having initial contact with the recovered person suffering from dementia-related illnesses should do the following:
 1. Use low, calm voices and short simple sentences or questions.
 2. Clearly identify yourself as law enforcement and explain what you are doing.
 3. Ask permission before touching.
 4. Use simple instructions and positive reinforcement.
 5. Allow plenty of time for the person to respond.
 6. Limit the volume of radios and curtail the use of lights and sirens, if possible and practical, as this may further agitate the person.

5.7 RESOURCES

Safe Return is a program of the National Alzheimer's Association to enable the safe return of persons with dementia who have become lost in the community. It is similar to a “medic alert” program. All persons with dementia should be registered with the program so that correct information can be obtained when someone is found. After someone is missing, the Safe Return program should be contacted in case it receives a call of someone being found. Contact the local Alzheimer Resource Center at 407.843.1910 or the Association for Safe Return (888.572.8566) for details.

6. MENTAL HEALTH PATIENTS

Cases involving mental health patients from a mental health facility shall be processed according to the current issue of P&P 1114, Mental Health Cases (Baker Act).

7. GENERAL AREA SEARCH

The watch commander shall be responsible for briefing all search and rescue personnel. All searches shall be coordinated through the watch commander, who will oversee the assignment of areas of responsibility as follows: (21.01c)

- a. The general area search includes any wooded or uninhabited areas not far from the missing person's residence or area last seen, bodies of water, areas that attract curious children (vacant buildings, shafts, holes, underpasses, neighbors' backyards), neighborhood hangouts, all vehicles for which the victim may have had access including trunks of vehicles, abandoned vehicles, and secluded areas. The Orlando Fire Department may be utilized for searching bodies of water when needed. (21.01c) Chase, K-9, Bloodhounds, etc., may be utilized during the search when needed.
- b. The following areas should also be checked: playgrounds, parks, malls, theatres, stores, schools, hospitals, and the Juvenile Assessment Center.
- c. Personnel assigned to the neighborhood canvass should ask the persons they contact for consent to search their residences/businesses for the missing person.

8. MISSING ENDANGERED PERSONS

An adult 26 years of age or older should be considered endangered if any and/or all of the following can be obtained:

- a. A statement from the reporting person stating “firsthand” knowledge of a mental or physical illness.
- b. A written statement from a physician or other authoritative source corroborating the missing person’s physical or mental condition.
- c. A written statement from a parent, legal guardian, family member, or other authoritative source advising the missing person’s disappearance was not voluntary or that the subject is in the company of another person under circumstances indicating that the subject’s physical safety is in danger.

Any person may submit to the Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse (MEPIC) information concerning missing endangered persons. MEPIC can assist law enforcement in Missing Endangered Persons cases. If the case involves a missing endangered person 26 years of age and older, only the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the case may submit a missing endangered person report to MEPIC. After making a report to MEPIC, it will be the law enforcement agency’s responsibility to notify MEPIC immediately of any case where the person has been located. MEPIC may be reached at 888.356.4774 toll-free. The Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse Report Form (Attachment F) will be used to make these reports.

9. BLUE ALERTS

Blue Alert: The Blue Alert plan, which uses some of the technologies employed in AMBER and Silver Alerts, was established in response to the increasing number of law enforcement officers in the state killed, injured, or missing in the line of duty. In some of these cases, the offender(s) used vehicles to flee and attempt to escape. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles’ Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) immediately broadcast important information about an offender(s), who has seriously injured, killed, or abducted a law enforcement officer. Under this plan, the information is broadcast through dynamic highway message signs and other appropriate notification methods to increase the chances of capturing the suspect(s) responsible for injuring, killing, or abducting a law enforcement officer.

9.1 ACTIVATION PROCEDURES

In the event, an incident occurs involving an Orlando Police Officer that may warrant activation of the Blue Alert system, the scene supervisor shall review the following statutory requirements and notify the on-duty watch commander.

9.1.1 STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS ([FLORIDA STATUTE 784.071](#))

A Blue Alert may be issued at the request of an authorized person when:

- a. A law enforcement officer has been killed, has suffered serious bodily injury, or has been assaulted with a deadly weapon; OR
- b. A law enforcement officer is missing while in the line of duty under circumstances evidencing concern for the law enforcement officer’s safety; AND
 1. The suspect has fled the scene of the offense;
 2. The law enforcement agency investigating the offense determines the suspect poses an imminent threat to the public or to other law enforcement officers;
 3. A detailed description of the suspect’s vehicle, or other means of escape, or the license plate of the suspect’s vehicle is available for broadcasting;

4. Dissemination of available information to the public may help avert further harm or assist in the apprehension of the suspect; and
5. If the law enforcement officer is missing, there is sufficient information available relating to the officer's last known location and physical description, and the description of any vehicle involved, including the license plate number or other identifying information, to be broadcast to the public and other law enforcement agencies, which could assist in locating the missing law enforcement officer.

9.1.2 AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL

The Chief of Police has authorized watch commanders to request the issuance of a Blue Alert on behalf of the City of Orlando Police Department.

9.1.3 REQUEST FOR ISSUANCE

Once notified by the scene supervisor, the on-duty watch commander shall determine if activation is warranted. If the on-duty watch commander determines activation is warranted, he or she shall contact both the Homicide Unit Supervisor and the CFI Deputy Commander for guidance and assistance coordinating OPD, City Administration, and PIO notifications. The on-duty watch commander shall also contact the Florida Fusion Center at (800) 342-0820 or (850) 410-7645. An FDLE Regional Supervisor will work with the department to ensure the activation criteria have been met and offer assistance.

V. FORMS AND APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT A-Missing Person Affidavit/Missing Juvenile Checklist

ATTACHMENT B-Post Locate Interview of the Runaway Juvenile

ATTACHMENT C-Missing Child Initial Responder Tasks

ATTACHMENT D-Missing Persons with Dementia Initial Responder Tasks

ATTACHMENT E-Missing Persons Code 10 Information Sheet

ATTACHMENT F-Missing Endangered Persons Report Form

VI. REFERENCES

This policy rescinds Policy and Procedure 1115.14

Related Policies: Not Applicable

Related Laws: Florida Statutes [937.021](#) and [937.031](#)