

**CITY OF OCONOMOWOC POLICE DEPARTMENT  
POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

DATE: July 27, 2022

HISTORY: September 21, 2007  
November 6, 1999  
May 14, 2020

SUBJECT: Missing Persons Adult & Juvenile

POLICY NUMBER: 99-067

**I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish responsibilities and guidelines for the investigation of missing persons.

**II. POLICY**

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 role of the initial responding officer is critical in identifying the circumstances surrounding missing persons and to identify those persons at risk. Therefore, it is the policy of this agency that (1) all reports of missing persons are 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 is exercised in instances involving missing children and those who may be mentally or physically impaired or others who are insufficiently prepared to take care of themselves. The Incident Command System (ICS) will be utilized when four or more officers are used to locate the missing person.

**III. PROCEDURES**

A. Reporting/Classification of Missing Persons IE: Missing, Missing Endangered, Amber Alert, Green Alert, Silver Alert

1. There is no waiting period for reporting a missing person. Missing person reports shall be taken in-person 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 missing critical, who meets the foregoing criteria and who, among other possible circumstances;
  - a. Possibly the subject of foul play.
  - b. Because of age (young or old), may be unable to properly safeguard or care for himself/herself. (See Silver Alert Criteria and Procedure attached)
  - c. Suffers from diminished mental capacity or medical conditions that are potentially life threatening if left untreated/unattended. (See Silver & Green Alert Criteria and Procedure attached)
  - d. Is a patient of a mental institution and is considered potentially dangerous to himself or others.
  - e. Has demonstrated the potential for suicide.

- 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 (i.e., "runaways") should be classified as such only after thorough investigation.
    - a. Verify runaway is under 18 or ward of court.
    - b. Obtain all descriptive information, photograph and possible destination.
    - c. Complete missing person form signed by parent or guardian.
    - d. Arrange with WCC to enter into NCIC.
    - e. Follow up to locate.
  5. Based on the outcome of initial inquiries, a decision may be made concerning the potential danger posed to the missing person and the urgency of police response.

#### B. Initial Report Taking

1. The initial responding officer will immediately conduct a search of the residence, yard and garage in the presence of the caller or resident.
2. The initial responding 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, date of birth and physical description including detailed clothing description, piercings and tattoos of the subject and relationship of the reporting party to the missing person.
  - b. Time and place of last known location and the identity of anyone accompanying the subject.
  - c. The extent of any search for the subject.
  - d. Whether the subject has been missing on prior occasions and the degree, to which the absence departs from established behavior patterns, habits or plans.
  - e. 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.
  - f. The current physical condition of the subject and whether the person is currently on prescription medication.
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 (if "a" and/or "b", then an Amber Alert should be initiated).
  - c. Has previously run away from home, has threatened to do so.
  - d. Has a history of explainable or unexplainable absences for extended periods of time.
4. Amber Alert Criteria
  - a. 17 years of age or younger.
  - b. must be in danger of serious bodily harm or death.
  - c. Initiating agency must have enough descriptive information about the following to believe an immediate broadcast alert will help locate the child:
    1. child information
    2. abductor information or description
    3. vehicle description or details

- d. Initiate Amber Alert employing Amber Alert binder in OIC office

**NOTE:** Not for use with runaways or family abductions unless life is in immediate danger

5. A supervisory officer shall be notified immediately upon classification of a report as "missing-critical."
- C. 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:
1. Complete description of the subject and a recent photograph.
  2. Details of any physical or emotional problems identified in items B (l)(e) and (f) of this policy.
  3. Identity of the last person(s) to have seen the subject as well as friends, relatives, co-workers or associates who were or may have been in contact with the subject prior to disappearance.
  4. Plans, habits, routines and personal interests of the subject, including places frequented or locations of particular personal significance.
  5. Indications of missing personal belongings, particularly money and other valuables.
  6. Any suggestions of foul play or accident.
  7. In the case of missing children, officers shall be particularly cognizant of information that may suggest the potential for parental abduction or the possibility of stranger abduction, as well as:
    - 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.
    - e. The name and location of the school attended by the child.
    - f. Any persons who may be responsible for private transportation to and from the location.
  8. Upon verification of a missing person, a missing person report shall be completed and appropriate entries made in state and national information databases.
  9. In the case of persons designated as "missing critical" a supervisory officer may direct that;
    - a. Waukesha County Communications (WCC) broadcast to all persons on duty all information necessary to identify the missing person, and;
    - b. Request the mobilization of resources necessary for an area search. This should include the use of mutual aid from other departments as well as working in tandem with the fire department in coordinating a grid search.
    - c. The notification and request for Drone operator and equipment to the scene.
- D. Ongoing Investigation of missing persons should include, but should not be limited to, the following actions and activities:
1. Request release of dental records and any fingerprints available.
  2. Contact hospitals and the coroner's office as appropriate for injured or deceased persons fitting the description of the missing person.

3. 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.
  4. 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 kidnaping or running away.
  5. Provide identification and related information to all elements of this agency, the neighboring police agencies and, if parental or stranger-to-stranger abduction is suspected, the FBI.
  6. 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.
  7. 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.
- E. 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.
    - 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 questioned 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 if necessary in a timely manner.
    - 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. That parents, guardians and/or the person reporting the missing youth are notified in a timely manner.
    - d. Complete a supplemental report outlining the return of the juvenile.
  5. Upon location of a missing person, all agencies and information systems previously contacted for assistance will be notified or updated. The officer taking the return supplement report is responsible for notifying the police support specialist to cancel the missing person entry.
    - a. If the ICS had been activated and on-scene operations have been concluded, the Incident Commander will release the resources and terminate command.

6. Where indicated, follow-up action should include filing of "A child in need" report and forwarded to the proper agency.
7. The case report shall include a complete report on the whereabouts, actions and activities of children while missing.
8. Where indicated, criminal charges shall be filed with the prosecutor's office.

**IV. See attached Silver Alert Criteria and Procedure**

**V. See attached Green Alert-Missing Veteran Criteria and Procedure**

**VI. EXCEPTIONS TO THIS POLICY MAY BE AUTHORIZED ONLY BY THE CHIEF OF POLICE**

This policy is effective immediately  
and will supersede any directives or understandings in conflict