



605 Missing Persons

Virginia Beach Police Department General Order

Chapter 600 – Patrol Operations
CALEA Standards: 41.2.5, 41.2.6

Purpose:

To establish procedures for the reporting and investigation of missing persons.

Definitions:

Missing Child - Any person who is under the age of 21 years, whose temporary or permanent residence is in Virginia, or is believed to be in Virginia, whose whereabouts are unknown to any parent, guardian, legal custodian, or other person standing in loco parentis of the child, and who has been reported as missing to a law enforcement agency within the Commonwealth.

Unidentified Child - Any person under the age of 18 who is located and is unable or unwilling to provide their address or contact information to their parents.

Runaway - A juvenile (under 18 years of age) whose absence by the totality of the circumstances can be determined to be voluntary.

Abandoned child - A juvenile, whose whereabouts are either known or unknown, believed to be endangered or in need of assistance to ensure his safety. Additionally, the parents are not attempting to help the juvenile or refusing to take parental responsibility.

Abducted child - A juvenile, who is believed to have been taken unwillingly from their environment without permission from a child's parent or legal guardian by either a stranger or a family member.

Absconders – Juvenile Offender under the court-ordered probation or parole supervision of the Court Service Unit (CSU) and have, without permission, left the supervision of their parents or legal guardians for more than 24 consecutive hours and their whereabouts are unknown or for juvenile offenders 18 years of age or older and whose whereabouts are no longer known to the supervising officer after reasonable efforts to locate.

Absent without Leave (AWOL) – Juvenile offenders under the court-ordered probation or parole supervision of the CSU and have, without permission, left or failed to return from an authorized absence (e.g., home visit, school, work) to a DJJ-funded and/or court-ordered non-secure placement within the time frames established within the facility's procedures. Juvenile offenders who are AWOL are classified as absconders.

At Risk/Missing Endangered - Any person, either a juvenile or an adult, whose whereabouts are unknown and whose continued absence poses a significant health or safety concern for that person or others. Included, but not limited to, the elderly, including Alzheimer's patients; subjects who are either homicidal or suicidal; persons prescribed life-sustaining medication, and now do not have access to their medicine.

"Missing Endangered Child" (CODI Alert) refers to a child who is 17 years old or younger, or who is currently enrolled in a secondary school in the Commonwealth, regardless of age. This designation applies to children whose whereabouts are unknown and whose disappearance is under suspicious circumstances or poses a credible threat.

"Critically missing adult" refers to an adult (i) whose whereabouts are unknown, (ii) who is believed to have been abducted, and (iii) whose disappearance poses a credible threat as determined by a law enforcement agency to the health and safety of the adult and under such other circumstances as deemed appropriate by the Virginia State Police.

"Critically missing adult alert" refers to the notice of a critically missing adult provided to the public by the media or other methods under a Critically Missing Adult Alert Agreement.

"Critically Missing Adult Alert Agreement" refers to a voluntary agreement between a law-enforcement agency and members of the media whereby an adult is declared missing, and the public will be notified by media outlets, and includes all other incidental conditions of the partnership as found appropriate by the Virginia State Police.

"Critically Missing Adult Alert Program" refers to the procedures and Critically Missing Adult Alert Agreements aiding in identifying and locating critically missing adults.

Escapees – Juvenile offenders who have, without permission, and (i) with or without force, left a secure placement (e.g., detention center, juvenile correctional center) or (ii) failed to return from an authorized absence (e.g., furlough, school, work) from a secure placement. When officers have taken a juvenile into custody as a result of a Detention Order, Juvenile Intake will be contacted by telephone to screen the case. Juvenile Intake will make the final determination whether a juvenile will be detained or released to a capable guardian.

Policy (CALEA 41.2.6 A):

To provide for the timely response, reporting, and investigation of calls involving a missing child or adult; runaway; abandoned child, abducted child, or unidentified at-risk persons; and to assist in providing for the health, safety, and welfare of these individuals.

Procedures:

Preliminary Investigative Guidelines (CALEA 41.2.5 A, B, 41.2.6 A, E)

Officers shall be cognizant of the following when receiving reports of missing persons:

Missing Persons

- A. Juveniles: Careful preliminary investigation by the reporting officer is required to make distinctions between runaways and missing/abducted/endangered juveniles. When citizens report a missing juvenile to an officer, they shall take a report. Even when a juvenile has already returned home, a report is appropriate. Contact a supervisor to determine the extent of immediate action to be taken.

- B. If the missing child is eleven (11) years or younger or is at risk, the supervisor shall contact the Family Services Squad supervisor and jointly reach a decision on the appropriate action to be taken to ensure that a maximum effort is made to locate the child, to include an immediate entry into the NCIC system, issuance of local or regional be-on-the-look-out bulletins (BOL's), or the notification of supporting agencies.

If the Family Services Squad supervisor is not available, any available Detective Bureau supervisor shall be notified of the situation.

- C. Adults: The officer shall conduct a preliminary investigation, which includes an interview with the reporting person and the documentation of initial attempts to locate the victim. If the victim is deemed to be missing, the officer shall issue a local or regional BOL and report the incident in accordance with the below-listed procedures. If the victim is believed to be at risk, the reporting officer shall contact a supervisor who will determine the extent of immediate action to be taken and contact the Detective Bureau to assume responsibility for the investigation.
- D. Runaways: When a runaway is reported, the patrol officer shall conduct an initial investigation, broadcast a BOL, and submit reports in accordance with the below-listed reporting procedures. BOL's will be broadcast by Emergency Communication and Citizen Services (ECCS) personnel upon receipt and overall uniformed precinct frequencies. The reporting officer shall then provide the complaining parent with *The Runaway: Information for Parents* pamphlet (PD-143), which provides the answers to common questions concerning the runaway child. It is the responsibility of each patrol officer to read and understand this pamphlet and the procedures described therein, to provide quality information to the parents of runaway children.

Reporting Procedures (CALEA 41.2.5 C, 41.2.6 C, E)

The reporting officer shall report missing persons or runaways in accordance with the following:

- A. No required amount of time must elapse prior to reporting someone as missing or having run away.
- B. All runaway or missing persons' reports shall be taken immediately to ensure complete and accurate descriptors are collected. A physical description and any possible leads on the whereabouts of the runaway/missing person shall be included in the narrative of the report. The Code of Virginia requires that the report be received by the Virginia State Police (VSP) within two (2) hours of receiving the initial call for a missing child.
- C. To ensure compliance, the Code of Virginia mandates that officers taking reports of missing/runaway children, senior adults, or any missing person that is entered into NCIC shall, within two (2) hours of receiving the initial call, email the report, the Virginia Missing Person Information Clearing House Report (SP-67) or the Virginia Missing Child Information Clearing House Report (SP-183), a current picture of missing child or adult to the Virginia State Police email VAMissing@vsp.virginia.gov. If a missing adult does not meet the NCIC entry criteria (Disability, Endangered, Involuntary, Catastrophe Victim, and other safety concerns), complete a report, but do not complete an SP-67.

- D. Runaways and missing persons under the age of twenty-one will be entered into the NCIC system by the NCIC Clerk at the time the officer takes the report. Parental consent is not required. Officers reporting missing adults under the age of twenty-one will complete the information in a designated box for the Missing Person aged 18 or over, "Missing Child" as the applicable condition on the NCIC entry condition for the SP-183. Request the signature of the reporting person, but write "REFUSED" if they will not sign. The report for Missing Persons aged 18 or over is located in a designated section on the (Runaway/Missing Persons) of the report.
- E. Any runaway or missing person report will be listed as the primary offense and will be a stand-alone report. No other offense will be placed on a runaway or missing person's report. The reporting officer will submit a separate report for each victim. If multiple persons are reported as runaways or missing at the same time from the same location, separate reports must be completed for each runaway or missing person.
- F. Anyone may report a missing person regardless of their relationship to the missing individual, and a report must be taken regardless of whether the NCIC entry is required at the time of the report.
- G. Supervisors shall review all reports to ensure the report, SP-67, or SP-183, NCIC entry, and/or Detective Bureau notification are completed. In cases involving suspicious circumstances or the need to issue an ALERT (Amber, Ashanti, CODI, or Blue, Senior, Missing Persons with Autism), the supervisor shall ensure the Detective Bureau has all the necessary information and pass down the information to the next shift supervisor.

Absconder, AWOL, and Escape Cases

- A. If the absconder is under the age of 18, the parent or legal guardian shall be instructed to file a runaway report. The parent or legal guardian may also be encouraged to file a runaway report for AWOL and escape cases.
- B. When a petition for violation of a court order, probation, or parole and a detention or shelter care order is issued, the responsible Court Service Unit (CSU) staff shall communicate this information to the parent or legal guardian of the juvenile offender. The parent or legal guardian shall be asked for any additional or new information regarding the juvenile offender's whereabouts and to inform immediately the responsible CSU staff and law enforcement of any such new information.
- C. Designated Court Services Unit staff shall (after three days of the detention order being provided to the appropriate law enforcement agency, but not to exceed five working days) verify with the law enforcement agency that the detention order has been entered into the NCIC and VCIN and document the status in DJJ's electronic data system.
- D. If the supervising Probation Officer (PO) or any other CSU staff receives new information regarding the whereabouts of the juvenile offender, that information shall be communicated immediately to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

Virginia Critically Missing Adult Alert Program – (Ashanti Alert)

Critically Missing Adult Alerts may be local, regional, or statewide. The initial decision to make a local Critically Missing Adult Alert shall be at the discretion of the local law enforcement official. Prior to making a local Critically Missing Adult Alert, the local law-enforcement official shall confer with the Virginia State Police and provide information regarding the critically missing adult to the Virginia State Police. The decision to make a regional or statewide Critically Missing Adult Alert shall be at the discretion of the Virginia State Police.

The Critically Missing Adult Alert shall include the critically missing adult information as defined in § 15.2-1718.2 and any other such information as the law-enforcement agency deems appropriate that will assist in the safe recovery of the critically missing adult.

The Critically Missing Adult Alert shall be canceled by any law-enforcement agency that locates a critically missing adult who is the subject of an alert. The agency canceling the alert shall notify the Virginia State Police immediately that the critically missing adult has been located.

Abducted Children

Upon the discovery that a child has been abducted by either a parent or an unknown person(s), the assigned officer shall notify a supervisor who will determine the need for an immediate response and contact the Detective Bureau. Detective Bureau personnel will assume responsibility for the investigation and determine the need to implement an Amber Alert.

Patrol officers and supervisors shall be aware of the following regarding the activation and approval for implementing the Amber Alert Protocol. Only a Detective Bureau Supervisor, following written protocol, may issue an Amber Alert.

Criteria for Activation of Amber Alert (CALEA 41.2.6 D)

- A. The missing child must be 17 years of age or younger or is currently enrolled in a secondary school in the Commonwealth, regardless of age, and there is a belief that the child has been abducted.
- B. There is a belief that the missing child is in imminent danger of serious bodily harm or death.
- C. There has been an investigation that verified that the abduction has taken place or eliminated alternative explanations for the disappearance of the child.
- D. Sufficient information is available to disseminate to the public that could assist in locating the child, suspect, and/or the suspect's vehicle.
- E. The child must be entered into the Virginia Criminal Information Network (VCIN) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) as soon as possible.
- F. The Amber Alert Plan will not be activated for runaways or parental abductions unless there is a threat of serious bodily injury or death to the child.
- G. Activation of the Amber Alert Plan will be in accordance with the guidelines established by [Virginia's AMBER Alert plan](#).

Virginia Critical Operation for a Disappeared Child Initiative (CODI) Alert Program

The Virginia Critical Operation for a Disappeared Child Initiative (CODI) Alert Program is an alert system designed to efficiently inform the public of information regarding a missing child whose disappearance poses a credible threat, as determined by a law enforcement investigation.

Criteria for the Activation of the CODI Alert (CALEA 41.2.6 D)

Each law enforcement agency shall investigate the matter to verify the disappearance and eliminate alternative explanations where evidence is lacking. Information shall be established to meet the definition of a missing or endangered child. Additionally, sufficient information shall be available to share with the public to aid in locating the missing child, including details about any vehicle involved, if there is one, to facilitate the activation of an alert. The assigned officer shall notify a supervisor who will determine the need for an immediate response and contact the Detective Bureau. Detective Bureau personnel will assume responsibility for the investigation and determine the need to implement a CODI Alert

Elements for a missing or endangered child:

- A. The missing child is 17 years of age or younger or is currently enrolled in a secondary school in the Commonwealth,
- B. The child's whereabouts are unknown, and,
- C. The child's disappearance is under suspicious circumstances or poses a credible threat as determined by law enforcement to the safety and health of the child, or,
- D. Based on any other circumstances as deemed appropriate by the Virginia State Police.

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)

WEA alerts are text notifications sent to all mobile devices within a specific area. These alerts are coordinated with the Virginia Beach Emergency Management Director through a Police Lieutenant or a higher-ranking officer. Several types of WEA alerts exist. The Local Area Emergency alert can be used for cases involving missing children.

Abandoned Children/Lost Children/Located Runaways/Unidentified Children (CALEA 41.2.6)

Officers who locate abandoned, lost, or runaway children shall immediately provide for the safety of the child and provide medical attention if necessary.

Officers shall conduct a preliminary investigation into the circumstances surrounding the location of abandoned children to include the location of evidence associated with the abandonment, or witnesses.

Officers will notify a supervisor and arrange for the investigation of the case to be assumed by the Detective Bureau and the Virginia Beach Department of Social Services.

Officers shall make preliminary attempts to locate the parents or guardians of lost children and attempt to reunite the family. In the event that the parents or guardian cannot be located, the officer shall contact a supervisor and arrange for intervention by the Virginia Beach Department of Social Services.

Officers locating runaway children shall notify the detective assigned to the case and check for pick-up orders. . If pick-up orders are not on file, the officer will arrange for the return of the runaway to his/her parents or guardians.

Officers locating an unidentified child shall make preliminary attempts to locate the parents or guardians of the child and attempt to reunite the family.

In the event that the parents or guardian cannot be located, the officer shall contact a supervisor and arrange for intervention by the Virginia Beach Department of Social Services.

Seton Youth Shelters Referral

Seton Youth Shelters serves as a consistent referral service for youth and families who have experienced a runaway episode or at-risk youths. Priority for emergency shelter will be given to youth between the ages of 9 to 17 who are referred by the Virginia Beach Police Department.

Departmental personnel will provide the youth and the parent and/or guardian with a PD-143 that will list both the services offered by Seton Youth Shelters and their contact numbers. Crisis Intervention Services and Emergency Shelter services will be offered to any Child in Need of Services (CHINS) youth in the care of the Virginia Beach Police, where the parent/legal guardian is currently unavailable and/or where the parent/legal guardian and the youth agree to seek the services offered by Seton Youth Shelters. In such cases, officers may transport the youth to the appropriate shelter as identified by Seton Youth Shelters.

Social Media Release Recommendations

Social media is a valuable tool that can assist in locating missing persons. Due to the volume of missing persons reported in the city, the following criteria will be used to determine which cases will be referred to the Public Affairs Office (PAO) for release on the department's social media accounts.

- A. The subject has articulable reasons for being considered endangered.
- B. The subject needs life-preserving medication.
- C. The subject suffers from significant mental impairment.
- D. The subject disappeared under suspicious circumstances.
- E. The subject is 11 years old or younger.
- F. The subject qualifies for an Amber, CODI, or Ashanti Alert, Blue, Senior, or Missing Persons with Autism.

If the person reported missing fulfills one of the above criteria, they will be referred to the PAO for their information to be more widely distributed via social media. Strictly being a runaway with no aggravating circumstances is not a justification for a social media release.

This will not preclude undefined circumstances that are not listed, but where additional attention may aid in locating the missing person. Those circumstances should be discussed individually with the PAO and the Family Services Sergeant.

Detectives will continue to distribute the standard missing person's flyer on all cases and list if it is available for media release.

Follow-up Investigations (CALEA 41.2.5 C, E, F, 41.2.6 E)

Once Investigative personnel have been assigned cases involving runaways or otherwise missing individuals, the follow-up investigation will continue, and the detective will be mindful of the following procedural issues:

- A. In cases of missing children under the age of 11, or at-risk missing adults or children, the detective may be called to the scene immediately to ensure a prompt and appropriate search for these individuals.
- B. Additional and pertinent information may be obtained by the detective by contacting the reporting person.
- C. Leads as to the whereabouts of the runaway/missing person will be pursued either by the detective assigned to the case or coordinated by the detective utilizing patrol officers.
- D. Runaway or missing person reports shall be maintained in Axon Records. When an SP-67 or SP-183 is completed, they will serve as the original report and will be scanned/attached within Axon. For cases without an SP-67 or SP-183, the Axon report will serve as the original.
- E. Detectives may disseminate, to regional area law enforcement agencies, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, or the media information they deem necessary for investigative action, with the permission of a parent, guardian, or person standing in loco parentis of a juvenile.
- F. If their investigation determines that the situation necessitates a Child in Need of Services (CHINS) petition, the detective shall recommend that one be obtained by the child's parents or guardian. The detective will continue to assist the family until the victim is located.
- G. When the runaway or missing person is located, the detective will cancel all flyers, NCIC entries, and or teletypes as well as the BOL previously issued through ECCS.
- H. Through the debriefing interview process, additional information may be obtained, providing evidence of further serious crimes committed by, or against, the child in question. Pertinent and substantive information learned from these debriefings will be referred to the appropriate agency, i.e., Special Investigations, Social Services, etc.

Debriefing of the Runaway or Missing Person (CALEA 41.2.6 F)

Upon locating a runaway or missing person, an appropriate follow-up interview will be conducted by the assigned detective seeking information regarding the following:

- A. Conditions that prompted the runaway to leave.
- B. The location(s) that the runaway frequented while missing.
- C. Criminal activity committed or witnessed by the runaway.
- D. The need for follow-up services by the court system or social service agencies.

The results of debrief interviews and the actions taken shall be documented by the assigned detective in the report.

By the Authority of the Police Chief:

Paul W. Neudig