



CALL CENTER BEST PRACTICES FOR HANDLING CASES OF MISSING AND SEXUALLY EXPLOITED CHILDREN

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Introduction

Call takers and dispatchers are the first responders for cases of missing and sexually exploited children. Decisions they make in screening calls, providing advice to parents, collecting information for patrol officers, and entering missing children in NCIC all contribute to the swift recovery of missing and abducted children. For cases of child sexual abuse, call takers and dispatchers can help patrol officers and investigators by asking key questions that assess risk and determine how to remove a child from a dangerous situation. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) provides educational materials, technical assistance, and training to help 9-1-1 Call Centers effectively respond to reports of missing and/or sexually exploited children.

This document will provide details of the free resources and training available to Public-Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) across the country. This program will assure that 9-1-1 centers will be capable of providing the best possible assistance to missing and exploited children and their families.

Development of Best Practices

Until 2007, public-safety call centers did not have a set of guidelines that defined the most effective way to handle calls of missing, abducted, and sexually exploited children. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), National Emergency Number Association (NENA), Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO), National Academies of Emergency Dispatch (NAED) and National AMBER Alert joined together to develop a model policy for call centers. That policy was first approved as a NENA Operations Information Document (OID). NCMEC then transformed that into a model policy. APCO, in turn, submitted the model policy to the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), which approved it. Agencies adopted the guidelines as best practices in APCO ANS 1.101.1-2007 – “Standard for Calltakers when Handling Calls Pertaining to Missing and Sexually Exploited Children”. The standard was updated in 2010 to “Standard for Public Safety Telecommunicators When Responding to Calls of Missing, Abducted, and Sexually Exploited Children (ANS 1.101.2 – 2010). The Standard includes removing 24-hour waiting periods before responding to missing child cases, treating cases of runaway children with the same urgency as other missing child cases, and responding to family abductions as missing child cases, not civil matters.

Goals of the Missing Kids and 9-1-1 Readiness Project

Once the ANSI Standard was established, the Missing Kids and 9-1-1 Readiness Project was created through a collaboration with AMBER Alert, a training and technical assistance program, a U.S. Department of Justice initiative; Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO); National Academies of Emergency Dispatch (NAED); National Emergency Number Association (NENA); and NCMEC. The goals of the initiative are noted below.

- **Promote awareness** of the critical role of the 9-1-1 call center in handling calls related to missing, abducted, and sexually exploited children
- **Develop and endorse best practices** to include the minimum performance levels and performance measures for evaluating effectiveness
- **Develop and disseminate tools** to improve the knowledge and skills of public-safety communications staff members to effectively respond to reports of missing, abducted, and sexually exploited children
- **Develop and deliver training** for all levels of public- safety communications staff members to improve their knowledge and ability to effectively respond to reports of missing, abducted, and sexually exploited children

Training Available

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) and National AMBER Alert provide training to PSAP employees. The following trainings have been tailored to the specific roles within a PSAP agency.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Course

The Chief Executive Officer course is a two-day seminar providing Police Chiefs, Sheriffs, and PSAP Directors an orientation to issues related to missing and exploited children's cases including effective policies and practices, technical assistance, training, and available resources. This course is offered to all Chiefs and Sheriffs, not only those involved with a PSAP. This course is designed specifically for those Chief Executive Officers who are directly responsible for the decision-making and policy-approving process in the agency. Instruction, training materials, airfare, and single-occupancy lodging costs are covered while attending class for appropriate attendees. Continental breakfasts and buffet lunches are provided for the days of training. This course is offered at the Jimmy Ryce Law Enforcement Training Center (JRLETC), National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) in Alexandria, VA.

Program Highlights include: Community Self Assessment, Developing a Law-Enforcement Strategy to Missing and Exploited Children, Media Issues and Use, Missing Children: Nature of the Problem; Planning a Strategy; Policies and Practices for CEOs; Training and Resources; Victim Impact

Time to Act: The 9-1-1 Center and Missing Kids Course (COMM)

This one – day course is designed for 9-1-1 Call Center Directors, managers, and others in leadership roles. This comprehensive course provides a compelling overview of the issue of missing and

exploited children, looking at the legal, social, and healthcare implications of kidnapped children and runaways, and the important role of 9-1-1 and the initial emergency response. This training is provided at various locations across the country as a part of state partnerships and is offered at National NAED, NENA and APCO conferences each year. Instruction and training materials provided free-of-charge to attendees

Program Highlights include: Topics covered in the course include: Scope and nature of the issue— dispelling the myths and presenting the facts around kidnapping, family abductions and runaways, The viewpoint and experience of a parent whose child was kidnapped, Resources available from NCMEC to prepare for an event, including new on-line continuing education for telecommunicators, Elements of the new American National Standards Institute's national standard on best practices for 9-1-1 centers in cases of missing kids, and tactics for implementation, What it takes to become a truly child-centered 9-1-1 center, in policy, training and operations, How your 9-1-1 center can become a recognized NCMEC partner.

Train-the-Trainer Seminar: Call Center Best Practices in Handling Calls of Missing and Sexually Exploited Children (TTT)

This one – day course is designed for public-safety telecommunications professionals who are directly responsible for the training and ongoing operational competencies of 9-1-1 / emergency call-takers, dispatchers and telecommunicators. This training is designed to help a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) adopt national standard ANS 1.101.1-207 that defines the role of telecommunicators in response to calls about missing, abducted, and/or sexually exploited children. The curriculum is delivered through a combination of lecture and group interaction regarding: history, scope and scale, model policy, best practices for effective response, availability and use of resources, call intake analysis applications, and action planning strategies. Upon completion of the course, public safety telecommunications trainers will have a thorough understanding and functional working knowledge of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Standard and a Call Taker's Guide that complements it. Participants will be provided assistance in developing an action plan for incorporating training material from this course into their agency/organization's telecommunicator training program. This course is provided at various locations across the country as a part of state partnerships and is offered at National NAED, NENA and APCO conferences each year. Instruction and training materials are provided free-of-charge to attendees.

Telecommunications Best Practices for Missing and Abducted Children

This course was developed and is administered by AMBER Alert. This 100% online course is designed to provide public safety telecommunicators, call-takers and dispatchers with the tools and training which promote swift and decisive response in the critical, early stages of incidents involving missing and abducted children. This course may also be taken by sworn officers who work closely with telecommunications in the areas of NCIC and data management when such incidents occur. This is a free, self-paced online course. Telecommunicators register and work individually in this course. This online class is provided free-of-charge through National AMBER Alert.

Program Highlights include: The Nature of the Problem – Missing, Abducted & Sexually Exploited Children, Best Practices and Operational Protocols, NCIC and Effective Data Management, Resources for the Communications Officer

Tools and Publications

NCMEC and AMBER Alert provide access to publications to assist the implementation of best practices of calls pertaining to missing and sexually exploited children.

The *Standard for Public Safety Telecommunicators when Responding to Calls of Missing, Abducted, and Sexually Exploited Children (ANS 1.101.2 – 2010)* is available for download for free from www.missingkids.com/911. This standard is a reference specifically for public safety telecommunicators to present the missing, abducted and/or sexually exploited child response process in a logical progression from the first response (initial call intake and information entry) through ongoing incident and case support (data query, entry and management in support of field/investigative work).

The *Checklist for Public-Safety Telecommunicators When Responding to Calls Pertaining to Missing, Abducted, and Sexually Exploited Children* is available for download for free from www.missingkids.com. This downloadable version has an interactive Table of Contents for easy navigation and can be downloaded to each agency's console. An agency can also order up to 30 free Checklists from www.ncmecpublications.org. This checklist identifies specific information that should be collected for each type of case pertaining to missing and exploited child cases. This checklist should be used in combination with the *Standard for Public Safety Telecommunicators when Responding to Calls of Missing, Abducted, and Sexually Exploited Children*.

The *Effective Use of the National Crime Information Center Database With Missing-Child Incidents* is available to download for free from www.missingkids.com/911. This downloadable version has an interactive Table of Contents for easy navigation and can be downloaded to each agency's console. This publication outline best-practice information for using the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing-Person File. It also provides links to other resources to find details of the NCIC entry codes for cases of missing, abducted, and sexually exploited children.

9-1-1 Call Center Partner Program

To promote the adoption of the best practices of calls pertaining to missing and exploited children (APCO ANS 1.101.2-2010), NCMEC has created the 9-1-1 Call Center Partner Program. Compliance demonstrates that a 9-1-1 call center has incorporated the best practices in its policies and training and has made a commitment to follow these best practices. Visit www.missingkids.com/911 to get up to date information on the number and location of PSAPs that have been recognized as NCMEC Partners.

Requirements for a 9-1-1 call center to be recognized as an NCMEC 9-1-1 Call Center Partner include:

1. **Train Director/Manager** - Completion of National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) training for call center manager or director provided by NCMEC in Alexandria, VA; at

national conferences; or within selected states. *** To satisfy this requirement, the call center director or manager needs to attend one of the following trainings:

- Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Training Seminar (all Chiefs and Sheriffs are invited to CEO, regardless of 9-1-1 involvement)
- Time to Act: The 9-1-1 Center and Missing Kids Course

2. Train all frontline telecommunicators - Formal Training of all 9-1-1 telecommunicators in your center in best practice in the handling of calls for missing and sexually exploited children, as outlined in the ANSI-approved Standard. *** To satisfy this requirement, all telecommunicators should either be trained:

- by classroom instruction, led by call center trainer who has attended the Train-the-Trainer course - Or -
- by completing free, online training Telecommunications Best Practices for Missing and Abducted Children

3. Adopt the ANSI standard - Formal adoption of the ANSI-approved *Standard for Public-Safety Telecommunicators when Responding to Calls of Missing, Abducted, and Sexually Exploited Children (ANS 1.101.2-2010)*

Use what you have learned through the training to incorporate the ANSI-standard into your existing policies and procedures.

4. Quality Assurance Process - Implementation of a formal, measurable, quality-assurance process for all calls involving missing and sexually exploited children

As with all steps of the process to become a partner, this implementation of a quality-assurance process is specific to your agency. The way that you incorporate the ANSI-standard into your existing protocol will determine the quality-assurance process used. This step of the partner process is to ensure that your agency has implemented the ANSI-standard into your agency's daily processes in a meaningful way.

Conclusion

Time is critical when responding to reports of missing or sexually exploited children. How 911 operators handle these reports can mean the difference between life and death for many children. Adoption of best practices will provide for consistent, reliable, timely and efficient response to calls regarding missing & exploited children. The Missing Kids and 9-1-1 Readiness Project provides free training and resources to PSAPs across the country so that they are prepared for a call of a missing, abducted, or sexually exploited child.

Other Benefits of becoming a NCMEC 9-1-1 Call Center Partner:

- By making this commitment of department/center-wide training and preparedness, agencies will communicate to the citizens and families of the communities that nothing is more important than protecting the lives and safety of their children.
- Armed with the information, knowledge and operational resources gained through your work of becoming a Call Center Partner, your center is positioned to respond comprehensively, more quickly, with less errors when a child's life is at stake.
- Partners stay on top of the latest developments in the MEC field, on cases that are success stories and tools that are developed to help protect children. NCMEC's new partnership with the American Society for Industrial Security (ASIS) International should help improve information sharing between 9-1-1 centers and private sector security.
- PSAP is able to be a leader in the community, bringing awareness to the issue of missing and sexually exploited children.
- As a NCMEC Call Center Partner, your agency is formalizing its commitment to operational and procedural alignment with national standards for effective response to missing and exploited child cases – standards which are recognized as best practice by industry and disciplinary leaders in the public safety telecommunications field.