

- A potential victim of foul play or with adults who could endanger the child's welfare
- Communicating with someone he or she has become acquainted with via the Internet and has arranged to meet, in person, with the individual

Request your child's name and identifying information be immediately entered into the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File. This helps ensure any law-enforcement agency in the country will be able to identify your child if he or she is found in another community.

Federal Missing Children Acts

The Missing Children Act of 1982 (28 U.S.C. § 534 (a)) enables families to guarantee information about their missing child is properly entered into the FBI's NCIC databases. If you have doubts about whether the law-enforcement agency taking the missing-child report has entered your child's information, you have the right to ask the FBI to verify the entry. If the case has not been entered, ask the FBI to make the entry for you. You may also call the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children to verify your child's information was correctly entered into the NCIC databases.

The Missing Children Assistance Act of 1984 (42 U.S.C. §§ 5771 *et seq.* as amended) mandates the U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) to provide certain services including the establishment of a toll-free telephone line to receive information about missing and sexually exploited children and provision of assistance to families and law enforcement in the search for missing children. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children serves as the national clearinghouse

and resource center that carries out these mandates on behalf of DoJ with funding and program coordination provided by DoJ's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

The National Child Search Assistance Act of 1990 (P.L.101-647) requires federal, state, and local law enforcement to immediately enter reports of a missing child who is younger than 18 years of age and unidentified persons into the NCIC, and work cooperatively with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children on these difficult cases. It also eliminates any waiting period prior to entry of this information into NCIC.

In addition the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006 (Pub. L. No. 109-248) mandates entry must be made by law enforcement into NCIC's Missing Person File within two hours' receipt of a report of a missing or abducted child.

Please understand and exercise your rights as stipulated by these Acts.

How NCMEC May Help

After you have reported your child missing to local law enforcement, call NCMEC's toll-free telephone number 1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678). A Call Center Specialist will take information concerning your child and forward it to NCMEC's Missing Children Services. An NCMEC Case Manager will follow-up with you and the law-enforcement agency investigating the case. NCMEC may also be able to refer you to a support group in your community.

Another resource is *When Your Child Is Missing: A Family Survival Guide* (NCJ 204958). This book, written by searching parents and published by OJJDP, explains the role various agencies play in the search for a missing child and features helpful checklists. Copies are available by calling 1-800-851-3420 or visiting www.ncjrs.org.

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC), established in 1984 as a private, nonprofit organization, serves as a clearinghouse of information about missing and exploited children; provides technical assistance to the public and law-enforcement agencies; offers training programs to law-enforcement and forensic, social-service professionals; distributes photographs of and descriptions about missing children worldwide; creates and coordinates child-protection education and prevention programs and publications; coordinates child-protection efforts with the private sector; networks with nonprofit service providers and missing-children clearinghouses regarding missing child cases; and provides information about effective legislation to help ensure the protection of children per 42 U.S.C. §§ 5771 *et seq.*; 42 U.S.C. § 11606; and 22 C.F.R. § 94.6.

A 24-hour, toll-free telephone line, **1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678)**, is available in Canada and the United States for those who have information regarding missing and exploited children. The "phone free" number is 001-800-0843-5678 when dialing from Mexico and 00-800-0843-5678 when dialing from many other countries. For a list of other toll-free numbers available when dialing from specific countries visit www.missingkids.com, and from the home page click on the link to "More Services" and then on the link to "24-Hour Hotline." The CyberTipline® is available worldwide for online reporting of these crimes at www.cybertipline.com. The TTY line is 1-800-826-7653. The NCMEC business number when dialing in the United States is 703-274-3900. The NCMEC business number when dialing from other countries is 001-703-522-9320. The NCMEC facsimile number is

703-274-2200. The NCMEC website address is www.missingkids.com.

For information about the services offered by NCMEC's regional offices, please call them directly in California at 714-508-0150, Florida at 561-848-1900, Florida/Collier County at 239-566-5804, Kansas City at 913-469-5437, New York at 585-242-0900, New York/Buffalo at 716-842-6333, New York/Utica at 315-732-7233, and South Carolina at 803-254-2326.

A number of publications, addressing various aspects of the missing- and exploited-child issue, are available free-of-charge in single copies by contacting the



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Just in case...

Guidelines in case your child might someday be missing



National Center for Missing & Exploited Children®

**1-800-THE-LOST®
(1-800-843-5678)**

www.missingkids.com



OJJDP Office of Juvenile Justice
and Delinquency Prevention
Office of Justice Programs • U.S. Department of Justice

Guidelines in case your child might someday be missing

The rising awareness of crimes being committed against children—and of missing children in particular—has left many families feeling vulnerable. It is important to be aware and alert, but you and your family do **not** need to be afraid. You should, however, be wary of gadgets and gimmicks that purport to protect your child or any sort of data-collection or registration services storing information about your child. To help ensure others do not misuse this information, you should be the **only person** to keep this information about your child.

The most important key to child safety is effective communication with your child. Remember, children who do not feel they are listened to or think their needs are met in the home are more vulnerable to abduction or exploitation. The first step you should take is to establish an atmosphere in the home in which your children truly feel comfortable about discussing sensitive matters and relating experiences in which anyone may have approached them in an inappropriate manner or a way that made them feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused. The simple truth is that children are often too afraid or confused to report their experiences and fears. Allow them to talk freely about their likes, dislikes, friends, and true feelings.

This brochure gives instructions about the actions you should take to prepare for the **remote** possibility that your child may someday be missing. It also provides instructions about the **immediate** actions you should take when you believe your child is missing.

Preparation

There are six steps you should take now to be prepared in case your child might someday be missing. Collecting the data noted below will help law enforcement search for and identify your child when he or she is recovered.

- **Keep a complete description of your child.** This description must include color of hair, color of eyes, height, weight, and date of birth. In addition the descriptions should include identifiers such as eyeglasses or contact lenses, braces on teeth, pierced ears, and other unique physical attributes. The complete description should be written down.
- **Take color photographs of your child every six months.** Photographs should be of high quality and in sharp focus so your child is easily recognizable. Head and shoulder portraits from different angles, such as those taken by school photographers, are preferable, but make certain you have a photograph that most resembles your child. Candid photographs may be more representative of how your child looks than a posed shot. For information about the importance of having a good quality photograph of your child visit www.missingkids.com, and from the home page click on the link to “Parents & Guardians.”
- **Have your dentist prepare dental charts and prints for your child. Be sure the dental chart is updated each time an examination or dental work is performed and dental prints are taken once every two years until your child is 18 years old.**

Make sure your dentist maintains accurate, up-to-date dental charts and X-rays for your child as a routine part of his or her normal office procedure. If you move, you should get a copy from your former dentist to keep yourself until a new dentist is found. Make certain the information is easily accessible should you need it quickly. Also consider taking a bite impression of your child’s teeth. Take a two-inch square of flat material such as Styrofoam® and have your child bite partially through it. The bite should be strong enough to leave an impression of the upper and lower teeth. A new bite sample should be made each time your child loses or grows a tooth.

- **Know where your child’s medical records are located.** Medical records, particularly X-rays, may be invaluable in helping to identify a recovered child. It is important to have all permanent scars, birthmarks, blemishes, and broken bones recorded. You should find out from your child’s doctor where such records are located and how you may be able to obtain them if the need arises.
- **Arrange with your local law-enforcement agency to have your child fingerprinted.** In order for fingerprints to be useful in identifying a person, they must be properly taken. Your law-enforcement agency has trained personnel to help ensure the fingerprints taken are useful. They will give you the fingerprint card and **not** keep a record of the prints.
- **Consider having a DNA sample taken from your child.** DNA, or deoxyribonucleic

acid, is rapidly becoming the “gold standard” for identifications. There are many DNA collection kits available, but it is simple for you to collect a sample. For example an old toothbrush that has been used by your child is rich with his or her DNA. Allow the toothbrush to air dry and place it in a brown envelope, have your child lick the envelope shut, and label it. The same procedure may be used for other samples such as baby teeth, an old hairbrush used exclusively by your child for at least one month, and dried blood from a bandage. If using a buccal-swab sample from the inside of your child’s mouth it is important to follow the instructions to allow for the swab to dry prior to storage.

As a family project make an identification box for each family member. Each family member should use a separate shoebox. In each shoebox place one family member’s fingerprints, extra dental X-rays and prints as obtained from the dentist, a recent picture, and the DNA sample in separate brown envelopes. Store the box at room temperature in a dry place away from heat. The DNA sample should be good for up to six or seven years.

Action

If you believe your child is missing, it is critical that you act **immediately**. If your child is missing from home, search the home checking closets, piles of laundry, in and under beds, inside large appliances, and in vehicles including trunks—wherever a child could crawl into or hide and

possibly be asleep or not able to get out. Check with your neighbors and friends of your child. If you still cannot find your child, **immediately call your local law-enforcement agency.**

If your child disappears when you are away from home—on a shopping trip, for example—notify the manager of the store or the security office and ask for assistance in finding your child. Then **immediately call law enforcement.** Many stores have initiated a plan of action if a child is missing while shopping in their establishment, such as Code Adam started by Wal-Mart® and used by retailers all over the country.

When you call law enforcement, try to stay calm. Identify yourself and your location, and say, “Please send an officer; I want to report a missing child.” You should give your child’s name; date of birth; height; weight; and any unique identifiers such as eyeglasses, pierced ears, or braces on the teeth. In addition you should tell them when you noticed the disappearance, last saw your child, and what your child was wearing. After you have reported your child missing to law enforcement, listen to their instructions and respond to their questions.

Any significant and unexplained deviation from your child’s daily routine should prompt a timely law-enforcement response. This response may be expedited if any of these circumstances exist. Your child is

- Younger than 13 years of age
- Mentally incapacitated or drug dependent