

# **Basic Course**

# **Workbook Series**

# **Student Materials**

**Learning Domain 27**

**Missing Persons**

**Version 2.2**

**Basic Course Workbook Series  
Student Materials  
Learning Domain 27  
Missing Persons  
Version 2.2**

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## **THE ACADEMY TRAINING MISSION**

The primary mission of basic training is to prepare students mentally, morally, and physically to advance into a field training program, assume the responsibilities, and execute the duties of a peace officer in society.



## **FOREWORD**

The California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training sincerely appreciates the efforts of the many curriculum consultants, academy instructors, directors and coordinators who contributed to the development of this workbook. The Commission extends its thanks to California law enforcement agency executives who offered personnel to participate in the development of these training materials.

This student workbook is part of the POST Basic Course Training System. The workbook component of this system provides a self-study document for every learning domain in the Basic Course. Each workbook is intended to be a supplement to, not a substitute for, classroom instruction. The objective of the system is to improve academy student learning and information retention.

The content of each workbook is organized into sequenced learning modules to meet requirements as prescribed both by California law and the POST Training and Testing Specifications for the Basic Course.

It is our hope that the collective wisdom and experience of all who contributed to this workbook will help you, the student, to successfully complete the Basic Course and to enjoy a safe and rewarding career as a peace officer serving the communities of California.

**PAUL CAPPITELLI**  
Executive Director





# LD 27: Missing Persons

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# Preface

## Introduction

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### **Student workbooks**

The student workbooks are part of the POST Basic Course Instructional System. This system is designed to provide students with a self-study document to be used in preparation for classroom training.

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### **Regular Basic Course training requirement**

Completion of the Regular Basic Course is required, prior to exercising peace officer powers, as recognized in the California Penal Code and where the POST-required standard is the POST Regular Basic Course.

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### **Student workbook elements**

The following elements are included in each workbook:

- chapter contents, including a synopsis of key points,
  - supplementary material, and
  - a glossary of terms used in this workbook.
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# How to Use the Student Workbook

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## Introduction

This workbook provides an introduction to the training requirements for this Learning Domain. You may use the workbook in several ways: for initial learning, for test preparation, and for remedial training.

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## Workbook format

To use the workbook most effectively, follow the steps listed below.

Step	Action
1	Begin by reading the: Preface and How to Use the Workbook, which provide an overview of how the workbook fits into the POST Instructional System and how it should be used.
2	Refer to the Chapter Synopsis section at the end of each chapter to review the key points that support the chapter objectives.
3	Read the text.
4	Complete the workbook learning activities at the end of each chapter. These activities reinforce the material taught in the chapter.
5	Refer to the Glossary section for a definition of important terms. The terms appear throughout the text and are bolded and underlined the first time they appear (e.g., <b><u>term</u></b> ).

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction to Missing Persons

### Overview

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**Learning need** Peace officers need to understand their legal and professional obligations as well as the need for sensitivity and effective communication when responding to a missing person investigation.

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**Learning objectives** The chart below identifies the student learning objectives for this chapter.

After completing study of this chapter, the student will be able to...	E.O. Code
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• State the statutory definition of:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- missing person</li><li>- child</li></ul></li></ul>	27.01.EO2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discuss missing person statutes as specified in:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- California Penal Code</li><li>- California Welfare and Institutions Code</li></ul></li></ul>	27.01.EO4

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## Overview, Continued

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**In this chapter** This chapter focuses on the statutory and regulatory obligations associated with the handling of missing person reports. Refer to the chart below for specific topics.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>See Page</b>
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Workbook Learning Activities	1-9

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# Legal and Professional Requirements

[27.01.EO2, 27.01.EO4]

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## Introduction

The initial response and ongoing investigative efforts on the part of peace officers can have a profound effect on the outcome of a case and the safety and well being of the victim.

All peace officers should approach each missing person report **as a potential criminal investigation.**

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## Definition

A **missing person** is any adult or child who is reported missing to a law enforcement agency. (*Penal Code Section 14213*)

An *adult* remains “missing” until that individual:

- can be located (alive or dead) **or**
- is determined to be a voluntary missing.

A *child* remains “missing” until that child is located (alive or dead).

NOTE: A **voluntary missing person** is an individual who has left on that person’s own free will.

NOTE: A **child** is any person under the age of 18-years-old.

NOTE: Federal Reporting requirements define a missing child as anyone under the age of 21.

*Title 42 of the United States Code Section 5779 (a)* states the following: Each, Federal, State, and local law enforcement agency shall report each case of a missing child under the age of 21 reported to such agency to the National Crime Information Center of the Department of Justice.

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## Legal and Professional Requirements, Continued

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**Legal requirements, penal code sections**

It is the duty of all law enforcement agencies to immediately assist any person who is attempting to make a report of a missing person. (*Penal Code Section 14210*)

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**Legal requirements, welfare and institutions code**

*Welfare and Institutions Code Section 601* states:

Any person under the age of 18 years who persistently or habitually refuses to obey the reasonable and proper orders or directions of his or her parents, guardian, or custodian, or who is beyond the control of that person, or who is under the age of 18 years when he or she violated any ordinance of any city or county of this state establishing a curfew based solely on age is within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court which may adjudge the minor to be a ward of the court. And to the extent practically feasible, a minor who is adjudged a ward of the court pursuant to this section shall not be permitted to come into or remain in contact with any minor ordered to participate in a truancy program, or the equivalent thereof.

*Welfare and Institutions Code Section 207* states that custody can be:

For up to 24 hours after having been taken into custody, in order to locate the minor's parent or guardian as soon as possible and to arrange the return of the minor to his or her parent or guardian.

OR

For up to 24 hours after having been taken into custody, in order to locate the minor's parent or guardian as soon as possible and to arrange the return of the minor to his or her parent or guardian, whose parent or guardian is a resident outside of the state wherein the minor was taken into custody, except that the period may be extended to no more than 72 hours when the return of the minor cannot reasonably be accomplished within 24 hours due to the distance of the parents or guardian, from the county of custody, difficulty in locating the parents, or guardian, or difficulty in locating resources necessary to provide for the return of the minor.

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## Legal and Professional Requirements, Continued

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### **Mandated actions**

The State of California mandates that all agencies perform certain activities associated with the investigation of reports involving missing persons. Such actions include the following:

- all missing person reports will be accepted without delay and regardless of jurisdiction.
- If the missing person is a child who is attending school, the *Education Code Section 49068.6* requires notification to the missing child's school within 10 days.
- When appropriate, comply with Title 42, Chapter 72, Subchapter IV (Missing Children aka "Suzanne's Law")
- all missing person reports will have priority over non-emergency property crimes,
- information regarding a missing person will be broadcast without delay
- the submission of information regarding missing person reports to state and national data bases,
- providing the parent, guardian, or next of kin of a missing person with Department of Justice forms regarding the release of dental/skeletal X-rays and photographs of the missing person, if available, giving a voluntary sample of DNA from a personal article belonging to a missing person. (*Penal Code Section 14250(c)(2)*)

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## Legal and Professional Requirements, Continued

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### **Mandated actions** (continued)

- when a missing person is found, alive or dead, the law enforcement agency locating that person should:
  - cancel any automated systems entries that were previously made, (e.g., CJIS, MPS/UPS)
  - relay the information to:
    - the reporting party, and
    - all other agencies who were involved in the investigation.

NOTE: Law enforcement actions may be guided by specific local governing bodies (e.g., city council, local agency resolutions, etc.). Agency policies and procedures for notifying the reporting party, family members, next of kin, etc., may vary.

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### **Benefits to law enforcement**

Peace officers have an ethical and professional responsibility to take each report involving a missing person as seriously as they would any other report of potential criminal activity.

Approaching each missing person report and investigation in a sensitive and professional manner can enhance law enforcement's ability to:

- offer law enforcement officers an opportunity to provide a valuable service and promote good community relations by:
    - easing each person's concerns regarding unfamiliarity with law enforcement procedures, and
    - helping family members, friends, and others within the community manage their feelings of helplessness, fear, and anger.
  - obtain vital information,
- 

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## Legal and Professional Requirements, Continued

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### Benefits to law enforcement (continued)

- conduct a thorough investigation, and
  - locate the missing person.
- 

### Unprofessional approach

Officers conducting the preliminary investigation should never consider any case to be routine. Officers should assume the missing person is in immediate danger or at risk until the facts contradict that assumption.

Officers approaching the case in a less than serious and/or an unprofessional manner may undermine the seriousness of the situation, they are more likely to miss critical information and not collect important evidence that might have otherwise been key to the quick and safe recovery of the missing person.

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### Demonstrating sensitivity

Any case involving a missing person, especially a missing child, can lead to a wide range of feelings and reactions on the part of the reporting party, family, and community. It is important that each involved person recognizes that law enforcement, from the person taking the initial report to the officers investigating the case, genuinely cares about the safety and well being of the missing person, **no matter what the specific circumstances of the case are.**

NOTE: Officers should ask themselves, “If I were the family member of the missing child or adult, would I want me looking for my loved one?”

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# Chapter Synopsis

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**Learning need** Peace officers need to understand their legal and professional obligations as well as the need for sensitivity and effective communication when responding to a missing persons investigation.

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**Definition of missing person and child** A missing person is any adult or child who is reported missing to a law enforcement agency. (*Penal Code Section 14213*)

**[27.01.EO2]**

An *adult* remains “missing” until that individual:

- can be located (alive or dead) *or*
- is determined to be a voluntary missing.

A *child* remains “missing” until that child is located (alive or dead).

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**Missing persons statute** The California Penal Code, California Welfare and Institutions Code all have requirements regarding missing persons.

**[27.01.EO4]**

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# Workbook Learning Activities

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## **Introduction**

To help you review and apply the material covered in this chapter, a selection of learning activities has been included. No answers are provided. However, by referring to the appropriate text, you should be able to prepare a response.

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## **Activity questions**

1. Under what, if any, circumstances can an officer on patrol decline to accept a missing person report from a citizen who has approached the officer in person?

2. Imagine that your wife, husband, elderly parent, child, or another loved one has failed to return home at a specified time or suddenly “disappears.” Consider what it would be like to make a missing persons report about that person. What officer behaviors or actions might help you focus and cope? What might make you less willing or able to provide important information?

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## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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**Activity  
questions**  
(continued)

3. A 45-year-old man reports his mother, a dependent adult who suffers from a traumatic brain injury, missing after she fails to return from a convenience store one block from the home they share. Presume you are the officer interviewing the son. List at least five actions or behaviors that would demonstrate your sensitivity to him and his situation.

## Chapter 2

### Initial Law Enforcement Response

#### Overview

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**Learning need** Peace officers need to know how to obtain sufficient and accurate preliminary information from the reporting party.

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**Learning objectives** The chart below identifies the student learning objectives for this chapter.

<b>After completing study of this chapter, the student will be able to...</b>	<b>E.O. Code</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explain the statutory requirements for accepting a missing person report.</li></ul>	27.02.EO1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Describe information that should be obtained, and steps taken by the initial responder to a report of a missing person, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- verification that the report is for a missing person</li><li>- classification of missing person case</li><li>- determining at risk status</li><li>- obtaining missing person description, recent photograph and release waiver</li><li>- efforts to locate missing person</li><li>- notification of a supervisor or investigator</li><li>- completion of the report</li><li>- (BOLO) broadcasts</li><li>- entries to missing person information databases (e.g., MPS/UPS)</li><li>- AMBER Alert</li></ul></li></ul>	27.02.EO10

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*Continued on next page*

## Overview, Continued

### Learning objectives (continued)

After completing study of this chapter, the student will be able to...	E.O. Code
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the conditions that influence the level of law enforcement response to a report of a missing person:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- age,</li> <li>- family and social environment,</li> <li>- missing person's knowledge of the area,</li> <li>- suspicious circumstances,</li> <li>- mental, emotional, medical or physical condition</li> <li>- weather/time of day</li> <li>- resources available to missing person</li> <li>- length of time person has been missing, and</li> <li>- parental custody status</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	27.02.EO11

### In this chapter

This chapter focuses on initial law enforcement actions when first taking a report of a missing person. Refer to the chart below for specific topics.

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# Accepting a Missing Persons Report

[27.02.EO1]

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## **Introduction**

One of the most critical stages of any investigation of a missing person is the initial actions taken by the law enforcement personnel accepting the report. This individual's response must be as timely and thorough as possible.

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## **Professionalism, leadership, and ethics**

Locating missing persons can be one of the greatest services law enforcement can provide to the community. Therefore, it is imperative that peace officers understand the importance of this service and recognize how appropriate and professional behavior will enhance this valuable community service.

Conducting a thorough investigation requires attention to detail, commitment, and effective communication. Good law enforcement practices in the case of a missing person can increase the chances of finding the person quickly and will give comfort to the family at a time when they are feeling helpless and anxious.

High priority is given to calls for service regarding missing persons or runaways. It is important to take and process reports quickly regardless of jurisdiction or your personal bias. The level and speed of response will be determined by the nature of the case. The age of the person, the mental, emotional and physical condition, suspicious circumstances, and other evidence are all factors that will be considered in the initial evaluation of the case. Personal opinions, if allowed to affect your decision to take a report or not, can be detrimental to the investigation and a disservice to the community.

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## **Jurisdiction**

Missing person reports shall be accepted by law enforcement personnel regardless if the missing person's residence or the last place the missing person was seen is in another jurisdiction.

Generally, the agency having jurisdiction over the missing person's place of residence has responsibility for the investigation of the missing person.

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## Accepting a Missing Persons Report, Continued

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### Statutory requirements penal code sections

*Penal Code Section 14205(a)* states that reports of missing persons shall be:

- accepted without delay,
- regardless of jurisdiction.

Reports shall be accepted no matter if they are made by phone, in writing, or given in person directly to law enforcement personnel.

NOTE: There is *no requirement* that a person must be missing for a set amount of time (i.e., 24 hours) before a report can be accepted by law enforcement personnel.

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### Responding to the call

The most critical phase of a missing person investigation is the first few hours after the initial report has been made. For this reason, peace officers who are called upon to conduct preliminary investigations should promptly do the following:

- observe the scene for possible evidence of a crime,
  - listen carefully,
  - ask additional specific questions,
  - objectively evaluate the situation, and
  - initiate further actions as the circumstances require.
- 

### Responding personnel

A **public safety dispatcher** is a non-sworn employee of a law enforcement agency who is trained to receive calls and dispatch officers or other designated personnel based on the facts collected.

In most situations, it is a public safety dispatcher who must elicit critical information regarding the missing person from the reporting party and set the proper actions in motion. Sworn peace officers may also be called upon to accept reports of missing persons when responding to field contacts or performing assigned duties.

No matter who initially receives the report, it shall be accepted and acted upon without delay.

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# Initial Report of Missing Person

[27.02.EO10]

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## Introduction

The capability to rapidly assess a situation based on the available facts and take appropriate actions can have a profound effect on the outcome of a missing person case.

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## Verification of report

Peace officers must use good judgment and common sense when assessing a missing person report. Enough initial information must be obtained from the reporting party to verify that the incident is a missing person case (rather than someone expressing concern about another person).

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## Obtaining information

Officers conducting a preliminary investigation should apply appropriate interview techniques for obtaining information from the reporting party.

NOTE: For additional information pertaining to techniques for conducting field interviews, refer to LD 18: *Investigative Report Writing*.

The following table identifies initial information that may be obtained from the reporting party:

	<b>Additional Information</b>
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The missing person's:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- name, address,</li><li>- date of birth,</li><li>- age, etc.</li></ul></li></ul>

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## Initial Report of Missing Person, Continued

**Obtaining information**  
(continued)

	<b>Additional Information</b>
Description and Identifying Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief description of the missing person including clothing worn</li> <li>• Unique identifying features or physical characteristics (e.g., walks with a limp, cast on arm, glasses, etc.)</li> <li>• Whether the person is enrolled in any special identification programs (e.g., medical alert, SAFE RETURN program for persons with memory impairments, etc.)</li> </ul>
Nature of the Circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circumstances under which the person was determined to be missing (e.g., failure to return home from school, etc.)</li> <li>• Current status of any parental custody issues if the missing person is a child</li> <li>• The missing person's access to a vehicle or other form of transportation (e.g., automobile, bicycle, bus stop, etc.)</li> <li>• Whether or not the missing person has a physical or mental disorder that could affect that person's abilities or the safety of others</li> </ul>
Other Associated Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Names and addresses of friends or family members the person may associate with or visit</li> <li>• Areas where the person frequently goes (e.g., hangout locations, bars, parks, etc.)</li> </ul>

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## Initial Report of Missing Person, Continued

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### Relevant information

Interviewing officers must obtain enough information from the reporting party (or other involved parties) to initiate appropriate law enforcement actions for locating the missing person. The following table identifies a number of areas of relevant information:

Content Area	Information
Physical descriptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Name, address and date of birth of missing person,</li><li>• <b>Detailed</b> description of the missing person including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- age and gender</li><li>- physical characteristics</li><li>- appearance (e.g., clothing, accessories, etc.)</li><li>- unique characteristics (e.g., limp, birth marks, tattoos, etc.)</li></ul></li><li>• Description of favorite pieces of jewelry or possessions associated with the missing person</li><li>• Any forms of identification the person may have (e.g., name tags in clothing, medical alert or identification jewelry, etc.)</li></ul>
Condition of the missing person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical, mental, emotional condition of the missing person</li><li>• Medications taken (along with the consequences of the person not taking the medication)</li><li>• Known addictions (e.g., alcohol, drugs, tobacco, coffee, gambling, etc.)</li></ul>

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## Initial Report of Missing Person, Continued

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**Relevant information**  
(continued)

Content Area	Information
Circumstances of the disappearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Type of incident involved (i.e., parent/family abduction, runaway, lost adult or child, etc.)</li> <li>• Exact locations and times the missing person was last seen</li> <li>• Activities the missing person was engaged in when last seen</li> <li>• Conflicts, arguments, etc., the missing person may have been involved in</li> <li>• Missing person's access to transportation, money, etc.</li> <li>• Information regarding similar disappearances in the past</li> </ul>
Possible contacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Names, addresses, and phone numbers of individuals who may provide additional information such as:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- person(s) who last saw or had contact with the missing person</li> <li>- close friends, associates, or family members of the missing person</li> <li>- potential witnesses</li> <li>- primary care givers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

*Continued on next page*

## Initial Report of Missing Person, Continued

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**Relevant information**  
(continued)

Content Area	Information
Additional background information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exact relationship of the reporting party (or person being interviewed) with the missing person</li><li>• Name, address, and phone numbers of each individual interviewed</li><li>• Verification that the person is in fact missing</li><li>• If report involves a child, verify any custody status of the parents</li><li>• Habits, interests, hobbies, and routines of the missing person</li><li>• Locations the missing person often frequented (e.g., video game arcades, shopping malls, restaurants, parks, etc.)</li><li>• Information regarding the missing person's usual or normal routines and behaviors</li><li>• If the missing person has a memory impairment, whether or not the person has a history of wandering</li></ul>

NOTE: Fingerprints of the missing person along with other relevant documents may also be voluntarily submitted to the investigating law enforcement agency. (*Penal Code Section 14206(c)*)

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*Continued on next page*

## Initial Report of Missing Person, Continued

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### Missing person classifications

One portion of verification of the missing person case is the identification of the type or classification of missing person case involved. The following table identifies and describes the nine categories used by law enforcement to classify a missing person case:

Classification	Description	Example of Circumstances
Voluntary Missing Adult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adults who are reported missing, but</li><li>• have left of their own free will</li></ul>	A woman who is otherwise very dependable is reported missing by her employer after the woman failed to report to work for three consecutive days and did not answer her phone. It is later determined that the woman moved out of her apartment on her own without telling anyone or leaving a forwarding address.
Dependent Adult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adults who are reported missing and</li><li>• who have physical or mental limitations which</li><li>• restrict their abilities to carry out normal activities</li></ul>	A 46-year-old man with a memory impairment who resides at a care facility is reported missing after leaving the facility with a group of visitors who didn't know his limitations and then boarding a city bus.

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*Continued on next page*



## Initial Report of Missing Person, Continued

**Missing person classifications**  
(continued)

Classification	Description	Example of Circumstances
Parent/Family Abduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children who are:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- taken,</li> <li>- detained,</li> <li>- concealed,</li> <li>- enticed away, or</li> <li>- retained</li> </ul> </li> <li>• by a parent or</li> <li>• nonparent family member</li> </ul>	A seven-year-old child is reported missing by the child's mother (who is the custodial parent) after the boy is picked up from school by the boy's father and taken to an undisclosed location.
Runaway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children who are reported missing, but</li> <li>• have left of their own free will or</li> <li>• have been rejected or "thrown away" by their families</li> </ul>	A 15-year-old girl, who was angry about her parents' strict rules, is reported missing after she leaves home without telling her parents and fails to return.
Catastrophic Missing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adults or children who are reported missing, and</li> <li>• assumed to be victims of some type of disaster (e.g., flood, earthquake, fire, etc.)</li> </ul>	A woman last seen in her apartment is reported missing after the apartment building is destroyed by fire and the woman cannot be located.
Lost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adults or children who are reported to have strayed away and</li> <li>• whose whereabouts are unknown</li> </ul>	A teenager is reported missing after he left a group of friends at their camp site to hike in a nearby wooded area and has failed to return before dark.

*Continued on next page*

## Initial Report of Missing Person, Continued

**Missing person classifications**  
(continued)

Classification	Description	Example of Circumstances
Stranger Abduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adults or children who are taken or abducted against their will</li> <li>by an unknown person or</li> <li>a known person who is not a family member</li> </ul>	A 10-year-old girl is reported missing when she fails to come home from school and a neighbor reports seeing her being physically forced into a van with an unknown man.
Suspicious Circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adults or children who are reported missing, and</li> <li>the circumstances give rise to believe that:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>foul play may be involved,</li> <li>the person is a danger to self or others (due to mental, physical, or emotional condition), or</li> <li>the disappearance is out of character for the individual and no known reasons can be determined</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	A woman who is eight months pregnant and lives with her parents is reported missing when she does not return home from a shopping trip and is last seen getting into a vehicle and leaving the parking lot with two men.
Unknown Missing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adults or children who are reported missing, <i>but</i></li> <li>there are insufficient facts to determine the circumstances</li> </ul>	A man is reported missing after he failed to return home in a reasonable amount of time after taking the family dog out for a walk.

*Continued on next page*

## Initial Report of Missing Person, Continued

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### Evidence of risk

Peace officers who accept reports of missing persons must not only obtain a brief description of the person but also enough information to determine if the person is at risk or suspicious circumstances exist.

*Penal Code Section 14213(b)* identifies a number of indicators that would show sufficient evidence that a missing person is at risk. The following table identifies each indicator:

<b>There is evidence that a person is <i>at risk</i> if the person missing...</b>	<b>Example</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• is the victim of a crime or <i>foul play</i>.</li></ul>	A woman was reported missing by her employer because she had failed to show up for work three days in a row. Phone calls were not answered and her car was missing. Friends and co-workers reported that after the woman broke up with her boyfriend, he threatened her with violence. The information alerted the investigating officers that the woman could be the victim of a crime. Further investigation revealed that the woman's boyfriend had killed her after a quarrel.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• is in need of <i>medical attention</i>.</li></ul>	A group of people who were on a weekend camping trip in the mountains reported to the park ranger that one member had wandered away and had been missing for three hours. The individual, a 38-year-old man, was a diabetic and did not have his medication with him. Because of the person's medical condition, it was important to begin an immediate search.

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*Continued on next page*

## Initial Report of Missing Person, Continued

**Evidence of risk**  
(continued)

<b>There is evidence that a person is <i>at risk</i> if the person missing...</b>	<b>Example</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has <i>no pattern</i> of running away or disappearing (adult or juvenile).</li> </ul>	<p>A 25-year-old man routinely had Sunday dinner with his parents. One Sunday he didn't show up and didn't respond to messages left on his answering machine. After two days, his parents called his place of employment and were told that their son had not been at work since the previous Friday. A visit to the man's apartment revealed that his car was missing and neighbors reported that he hadn't been seen for several days. The parents filed a missing person's report. The police considered the man at risk because he had no pattern of disappearing and was judged a dependable and mature individual.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• may be the victim of <i>parental/family abduction</i>.</li> </ul>	<p>A father notified the police that his 7-year-old son was missing. When the father went to pick up his child at his ex-wife's home, he found the house to be empty. He then contacted the child's school and was told the child was no longer enrolled and the school records had not been requested for forwarding to another school. The child may be the victim of a parental abduction and is considered at risk.</p>

*Continued on next page*

## Initial Report of Missing Person, Continued

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### Evidence of risk (continued)

<b>There is evidence that a person is <i>at risk</i> if the person missing...</b>	<b>Example</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• is <i>mentally impaired</i>.</li></ul>	A woman called police to report that she had returned home from shopping to find her 68-year-old mother, who lives with her, gone. The missing woman has Alzheimer's disease, and she appeared to have left the house wearing only light clothing. As the weather was cold and rainy, she was considered at risk even though she had been missing only a short time.

### Photographs or images of missing persons

Officers should request *recent* and *realistic* photographs or images of the missing person from the reporting party whenever possible. Such images may be used to help identify the missing person when questioning others (e.g., neighbors, etc.), posting notices and bulletins, etc.

Sources of photographs may include but are not limited to:

- school year books or files,
- family albums (e.g., vacation pictures, family portraits, etc.),
- home videos,
- friends or family members, etc.

NOTE: Depending on individual agency policies, photographs may be returned at the conclusion of the case.

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## Initial Report of Missing Person, Continued

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### Examples

Example: Officers investigated a report of a missing 8-year-old boy who had not returned home from school. The officers interviewed the child's classmates, teacher, and other school personnel. In their discussion with the school principal the officers learned that the boy had received a poor report card that day. Through interviews with the child's classmates, the officers learned where the child had last been seen. The interviewing officers obtained enough relevant information to canvass the area and located the missing child near the school, reluctant to go home.

Example: A peace officer responded to a missing persons report from a nursing home involving a 73-year-old man with Alzheimer's disease. During the interview with the staff, the officer learned that the man had a habit of wandering away from the care-giver and had to be carefully watched at all times. The officer conveyed this information about the wandering behavior to all units who were searching. The man was found a few hours later and the officers who located him were careful to keep one officer with him until he was transported back to the nursing home. The interviewing officer elicited an important piece of information about the missing person that was critical in ensuring a safe return.

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*Continued on next page*

## Initial Report of Missing Person, Continued

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### **Examples** (continued)

Non-example: A mother called police early Saturday morning to report that her 12-year-old son had not returned Friday night after going to the movies with a friend. When interviewed by a peace officer, the mother, very upset and crying, said that she did not have an address, phone number, or last name for her son's friend. The officer asked, "You let your child go with someone you don't even know?" The mother became hysterical and angry and the officer was unable to get any further information from her. The officer should have maintained a professional attitude in order to get as much relevant information as possible.

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### **Efforts to locate the missing person**

In almost every situation, a preliminary search for the missing person has been conducted by family, friends, loved ones, or care-givers. When the person fails to be located a call is usually placed to the local law enforcement agency for 911.

Upon arrival at the scene, a peace officer should ask the reporting party about efforts they have already made to locate the missing person (e.g., inside of residence, yard, neighbor's house, etc.).

This information should be included in the missing persons report.

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*Continued on next page*

## Initial Report of Missing Person, Continued

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### **Other agency notifications**

Sometimes a law enforcement agency may accept a report involving a missing person whose place of residence is outside the jurisdiction of the accepting agency.

In such cases, the agency that initially accepted the report shall notify and forward a copy of the report to the appropriate law enforcement jurisdiction(s) without delay. In cases where the missing person is considered to be at risk and/or under the age of 16, the notification shall be made *within 24 hours*. (*Penal Code Section 14205(c)*)

Notifications and reports shall be forwarded to law enforcement agencies having jurisdiction over the:

- missing person's place of residence, and (if different)
- place where the missing person was last seen.

NOTE: The actual responsibility for forwarding the report will vary depending on each specific law enforcement policy.

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### **Completion of reports**

In all instances, a complete and thorough report is of the utmost importance. Officers investigating the initial missing persons call should make every attempt to document all information provided by the reporting party. A thorough report may assist in the quick and safe recovery of the missing person.

Attention to detail when completing a report is critical to an investigator should the missing person investigation need to continue or be expanded. All documentation, notes and reports may also be used by another investigation.

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# Broadcasts and Notifications

[27.02.EO10]

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## Introduction

One of the first actions associated with law enforcement's response to a report involving a missing person is the swift generation of local broadcasts and notifications of state and federal missing person databases.

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## Initial broadcasts

When a reported missing person is considered to be at risk and/or under 16 years of age, a **“be-on-the-lookout” (BOLO)** bulletin regarding that adult or child shall be broadcast locally without delay within the jurisdiction. (*Penal Code Section 14205(a)*)

Such broadcasts can be made via local:

- law enforcement radio
- teletype, or
- mobile digital terminals (MDTs) located within law enforcement vehicles.

NOTE: The amount of time that constitutes “without delay” is determined by specific agency policy.

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## Broadcasts and Notifications, Continued

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### **BOLO content**

The BOLO bulletin should contain as much information about the person and circumstances of the disappearance as possible. Although the initial broadcast may not contain *complete* information, the relaying of what is known at that point in time may lead to the prompt and safe recovery of the missing person.

Content may include but not be limited to:

- name and age of person,
- physical description including clothing,
- mental disabilities/conditions
- physical description,
- factors that could affect officer safety or the safety of the individual or others (e.g., person has threatened suicide; person becomes violent without medication, etc.),
- time and location last observed,
- mode of transportation (if available),
- pattern of previous behavior,
- suspect information (if known),
- information regarding vehicles (missing person's or suspect's), and/or
- the risk of the individual being removed from the jurisdiction.

**NOTE:** As additional information is obtained, either by the person taking the report or by officers conducting a preliminary investigation, additional broadcasts can supplement the initial announcement.

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## Broadcasts and Notifications, Continued

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**Missing/  
Unidentified  
Persons  
System  
(MPS/UPS)**

Law enforcement agencies shall notify the California Department of Justice Attorney General's office of all reports of missing persons. This notification is accomplished by utilizing the **California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS)** to access the **Missing/Unidentified Persons System (MPS/UPS)** databases. (*Penal Code Section 14205(b)*)

MPS/UPS is an electronic file of records which catalogs reports of missing and unidentified persons (alive or dead) according to a variety of physical and dental characteristics. It is continuously available to authorized law enforcement agencies within the state to assist in locating and recovering missing or unidentified persons.

NOTE: Information regarding any unidentified persons, found alive or dead, should be entered into the CJIS Missing/Unidentified Person System (MPS/UPS) data bases.

NOTE: Even if the missing person has been found before the report has been entered, it still shall be submitted to DOJ via MPS/UPS. (*Penal Code 14207*)

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**MPS/UPS  
time  
requirements**

*Penal Code Section 14205(b)* states that agencies should submit reports of missing persons within a specified time period. Time requirements for making such entries into the MPS/UPS will vary according to the age of the missing person and the circumstances of the case.

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*Continued on next page*

## Broadcasts and Notifications, Continued

**MPS/UPS  
time  
requirements**  
(continued)

The following table identifies the time requirements for MPS/UPS submissions:

<b>IF...</b>	<b>THEN information shall be submitted to MPS/UPS...</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there is <i>evidence of risk</i>, or</li> <li>• the missing person is <i>under 16</i> years of age (whether or not there is evidence of risk)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• within <i>two hours</i> of accepting the report of a missing person.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there is <i>no evidence of risk</i>, and</li> <li>• the missing person is <i>16 years of age or older</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>without delay</i>.</li> </ul>

NOTE: The amount of time that constitutes “*without delay*” is determined by specific agency policy.

NOTE: Responsibility for actual entries into MPS/UPS will vary depending on agency policy.

NOTE: Information regarding any unidentified persons, found alive or dead, should be entered into the CJIS Missing/Unidentified Person System (MPS/UPS) data bases.

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## Broadcasts and Notifications, Continued

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### Activating an AMBER alert

Agencies are required by law to ensure that the following conditions are met before activating an **AMBER Alert**:

- the agency has confirmed that an abduction has occurred,
  - the victim is 17 years of age or younger, or of proven mental or physical disability,
  - there is reason to believe that the victim is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death,
  - there is information available that, if disseminated to the general public, could assist in the safe recovery of the victim.
- 

### Nationwide notifications

The **National Crime Information Center (NCIC)** system is a nationwide computerized information system that serves all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, and Canada.

Once a notification is submitted and accepted to the state MPS/UPS, it will also *automatically* be submitted to the NCIC Missing Person File. This allows information regarding a missing person report in California to be available not only to neighboring states, but throughout the country as well.

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# Conditions Influencing Response

[27.02.EO11]

## Introduction

Along with the missing person classification and mandated evidence of risk, the initial law enforcement response to a missing person report can be influenced by a number of other contributing factors.

## Conditions influencing response

The following table identifies a number of these factors:

Contributing Factor	Considerations	
Age	Very young (i.e., infants and toddlers)  Very old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May have virtually no communication or survival skills and limited mobility</li><li>• Missing person reports involving these age groups usually command the highest level of response</li></ul>
	Young children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May have:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- basic communication skills (i.e., able to give name, address, phone number, etc.) depending on the age of the child</li><li>- increased mobility (e.g., bicycle, riding toys, etc.) but still lack means of securing food, shelter, etc.</li></ul></li></ul>
	Teenagers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Often:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- have greater mobility (i.e. access to vehicles, knowledge of public transportation, etc.)</li><li>- have access to money, computer systems, etc.</li><li>- follow a predictable pattern of behavior (e.g., local hangouts, set peer groups, etc.)</li></ul></li></ul>

*Continued on next page*

## Conditions Influencing Response, Continued

Conditions influencing response	Contributing Factor	Considerations
(continued)	Age (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- appear older or younger than they are, and</li> <li>- make preparations in advance when leaving of their own free will (e.g., packing specific items, cashing savings bonds, contacting friends, etc.)</li> </ul>
	Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May choose to leave of their own free will</li> <li>• If no suspicious circumstances exist to indicate otherwise, officers should consider whether the individual has:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a history of alcohol or drug abuse,</li> <li>- been recently involved in any arguments with a spouse, family member, employer, etc.</li> <li>- financial problems,</li> <li>- been involved in extramarital relationships, or</li> <li>- has had previous incidents of leaving for short periods of time.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	Elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have decreased communication skills or mobility difficulties due to hearing loss, poor vision, or other physical impairment.</li> </ul>

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## Conditions Influencing Response, Continued

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**Conditions influencing response**  
(continued)

<b>Contributing Factors</b>	<b>Considerations</b>
Suspicious circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evidence or indications may exist that lead officers to believe the individual's absence may be associated with some form of criminal activity.</li> <li>• Examples include but are not limited to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- a witnessed abduction,</li><li>- notes or letters left at the scene (e.g., ransom notes),</li><li>- signs of a struggle or a violent occurrence,</li><li>- unusual behavior by the reporting party or other involved individuals (e.g., spouse, parent, caregiver, etc.),</li><li>- unusual behavior on the part of the missing person,</li><li>- a history of criminal involvement on the part of the missing person,</li><li>- missing money, medications, weapons, etc., and</li><li>- special pieces of clothing or personal items are missing or have been left behind.</li></ul></li></ul>

*Continued on next page*



## Conditions Influencing Response, Continued

Conditions influencing response (continued)

Contributing Factor	Considerations
Mental or emotional conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conditions which may cause the individual to be a <i>danger</i> to themselves or others</li> <li>• Whether or not the person is taking medication and if so, possible consequences of the person <i>not</i> taking it (e.g., violent behavior; confusion, etc.)</li> <li>• Examples include but are not limited to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- depression, paranoia, schizophrenia</li> <li>- irrational behavior resulting from the death of a loved one, a broken relationship, or a recent personal crisis</li> <li>- threats of suicide or a history of suicide attempts.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Physical or medical conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conditions which may cause the individual to be a <i>risk</i> to themselves or others, or be unable to procure food, shelter, etc. without assistance</li> <li>• Whether or not the person is taking medication. If currently being taken, list all medications and the possible consequences if <i>not</i> taken (e.g., seizures; diabetic shock, cardiovascular problems, etc.)</li> <li>• Examples include but are not be limited to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- medical conditions requiring continued medication or care (e.g., diabetes, asthma, kidney failure, etc.)</li> <li>- physical disabilities (e.g., blindness, deafness, etc.)</li> <li>- developmental disabilities (e.g., cerebral palsy, autism, etc.)</li> <li>- an individual with AIDS or other highly communicable disease</li> <li>- other impairments (e.g., pregnancy, chemical dependency, dementia or memory impairment, etc.)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

*Continued on next page*

## Conditions Influencing Response, Continued

Conditions influencing response (continued)

Contributing Factor	Considerations
Lack of knowledge of the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the individual is unfamiliar with the surrounding area they may be less able to find their way safely or become a victim of foul play.</li> <li>• Examples may include but are not limited to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- an inexperienced hiker lost in the woods,</li> <li>- a rural person lost in a metropolitan area, or</li> <li>- a foreign traveler who does not speak the language.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Environmental conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals who are exposed to adverse weather conditions (e.g., cold, heat, snow, etc.) without appropriate clothing, gear, shelter, etc., may require law enforcement to deploy trained personnel or use special equipment.</li> <li>• The person's mobility may be limited by darkness at night.</li> </ul>
Social, family, or living conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certain conditions may indicate discord or problems that may have contributed to the incident or give rise to other factors.</li> <li>• Examples include but are not limited to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- recent family or social rejection,</li> <li>- known financial problems,</li> <li>- available resources (e.g., vehicles, money, etc.),</li> <li>- involvement with cults, gangs, dissident groups, etc.,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

*Continued on next page*

## Conditions Influencing Response, Continued

Conditions influencing response (continued)	Contributing Factor	Considerations
	Social, family, or living conditions (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mental, physical, or sexual abuse,</li> <li>- adverse family relationships,</li> <li>- level of parental/family discipline,</li> <li>- disorganized, dirty, or unfavorable surroundings,</li> <li>- step parents, foster home, group home,</li> <li>- parental custody status, or</li> <li>- long term illness or disability creating stressful conditions for a care giver in the home.</li> </ul>
	Length of time the person has been missing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of risk may escalate over time.</li> <li>• Amount of time the person has been missing should be considered when estimating the distance the person may have traveled.</li> </ul>
	Parental custody status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who has lawful custody of the minor? (Shared custody, sole custody, etc.)</li> <li>• Any circumstance which may have caused the court to award sole custody to one parent (e.g. abusive, addiction etc).</li> </ul>

### Examples

Example: Parents reported that their 15-year-old daughter was missing and might have run away from home. In interviewing the parents, the officers learned that the girl had an argument with her mother that morning and did not return home after school. On further investigation, the officers learned that this was the first time the girl had not come home, that she was a good student, and had no history of drug or alcohol use. Because the teen had no pattern of running away, the peace officers decided to treat this as an at-risk case.

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## Conditions Influencing Response, Continued

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### Examples (continued)

Example: A 51-year-old man with Alzheimer's disease, but appearing to be alert and in full possession of his faculties, visited an amusement park with his family. The man entered a restroom while his daughter waited outside. After about 10 minutes when the man didn't come out of the restroom, his daughter became concerned. She questioned several men who exited the restroom and other bystanders and realized that her father had walked out of another exit. She immediately contacted park authorities to report that her father was missing. When police were notified, the responding officers categorized the missing man as at-risk because of his physical impairment.

Non-example: Continuing with the second example, a patrol officer in a neighboring jurisdiction located the man walking on the shoulder of a busy city street. The man told the officer that he needed to call his daughter but could not remember his daughter's address or phone number. The officer took the man to the nearest law enforcement station. Because of the man's otherwise normal appearance and behavior, the officer briefly left him in the reception area. When the officer returned the man had left. Because the man did not fit the description of the dependent adult, the officer relaxed his vigilance and left him on his own.

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## Chapter Synopsis

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**Learning need** Peace officers need to know how to obtain sufficient and accurate preliminary information from the reporting party.

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**Accepting missing person reports [27.02.EO1]** Priority shall be given to accepting the report over less urgent activities.

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**Initial report of missing person [27.02.EO10]** Law enforcement personnel must use good judgement and common sense when assessing a missing person report. Enough initial information must be obtained from the reporting party to verify that the incident is a missing person case (rather than someone expressing concern about another person).

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**Conditions influencing response [27.02.EO11]** Along with the missing person classification and mandated evidence of risk, the initial law enforcement response to a missing person report can be influenced by a number of other contributing factors.

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# Workbook Learning Activities

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## Introduction

To help you review and apply the material covered in this chapter, a selection of learning activities has been included. No answers are provided. However, by referring to the appropriate text, you should be able to prepare a response.

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## Activity questions

1. Describe the similarities and differences between the following pairs of missing person classifications.

	<b>Similarities</b>	<b>Differences</b>
Stranger Abduction and Suspicious Circumstances		
Catastrophic Missing and Lost		
Voluntary Missing Adult and Dependent Adult		

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*Continued on next page*







## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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**Activity  
questions**  
(continued)

6. What types of evidence might suggest that an adult is voluntarily missing?

7. Why do officers' responsibilities to locate a missing teen continue even after the teen is determined to be voluntarily missing (i.e., she left home of her own free will)?

## Workbook Corrections

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Suggested corrections to this workbook can be made by going to the POST website at: [www.post.ca.gov](http://www.post.ca.gov)

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# Chapter 3

## Preliminary Investigations

### Overview

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**Learning need** Peace officers must know that a thorough preliminary investigation improves the chances of a missing person being located quickly and safely.

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**Learning objectives** The chart below identifies the student learning objectives for this chapter.

<b>After completing study of this chapter, the student will be able to...</b>	<b>E.O. Code</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• discuss areas that should be included in an initial search for a missing person</li></ul>	27.03.EO8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• describe how search considerations for a child might vary from those for an adult.</li></ul>	27.03.EO3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• explain a peace officer's primary responsibilities when responding to an abduction of a child by a parent/family member.</li></ul>	27.03.EO4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• describe circumstances related to custody dispute situations when an officer may take a child into protective custody.</li></ul>	27.03.EO5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• discuss penal code notification requirements when peace officers locate a missing person.</li></ul>	27.03.EO7

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## Overview, Continued

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**In this chapter** This chapter focuses on law enforcement actions when making field contacts and conducting a preliminary investigation of a missing person. Refer to the chart below for specific topics.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>See Page</b>
Initial Searches	3-3
Cases Involving Parent/Family Abduction	3-10
Missing Person Located	3-18
Chapter Synopsis	3-20
Workbook Learning Activities	3-21

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# Initial Searches

[27.03.EO3, 27.03.EO8]

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## **Introduction**

Peace officers should not assume that a search done by a parent, guardian, care-giver, etc. was sufficient. Officers should conduct their own thorough investigation.

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## **Reasons to search**

Officers should conduct a thorough and systematic search of surrounding areas, even if that person was last seen or reported missing from a different location.

Home searches may allow officers to determine if :

- other individuals may have overlooked an area where the person could be hiding, playing, or has inadvertently fallen asleep,
  - the missing person has returned home without the reporting party's knowledge,
  - after being reported as missing the missing person returned home to obtain personal possessions,
  - there is any evidence left by the missing person that could indicate their present location,
  - the person reported missing is actually being concealed by a parent, care giver, etc., or
  - there are signs of suspicious circumstances or criminal acts.
- 

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## Initial Searches, Continued

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### Initial searches

All searches must be thorough and undertaken in a logical and systematic manner. Officers should search not only for the missing persons themselves, but also for information or evidence that could pertain to the case.

The following table identifies a number of areas that may be searched by officers conducting preliminary investigations:

Area	Considerations
Missing person's home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All rooms (even those not usually occupied by the person)</li><li>• Basements</li><li>• Attics</li><li>• All closets, enclosures, and containers large enough for the missing person to fit in</li></ul>
Yard/ immediate surrounding area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Swimming pools, ponds, etc.</li><li>• Exterior entrances to basements</li><li>• All structures (e.g., garage, tool shed, barns, etc.)</li><li>• Vehicles (used or abandoned)</li></ul>
Neighborhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Door-to-door canvasses to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- gather information regarding both routine as well as unusual occurrences that might have taken place,</li><li>- identify potential witnesses or additional areas to search or individuals to question,</li><li>- check for consistent as well as conflicting information related to the case</li></ul></li><li>• If neighbors are not home during the initial search, officers should return at a later time or document the fact for later follow up investigators.</li></ul>

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*Continued on next page*

## Initial Searches, Continued

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**Initial searches**  
(continued)

Area	Considerations
Area(s) where person frequents or was last seen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="695 415 1382 520">• Homes and property of close friends and/or family members the missing person may visit or seek assistance from</li><li data-bbox="695 527 1279 594">• Areas often frequented by the person (e.g., neighborhood bars, playgrounds, etc.)</li></ul>

NOTE: All areas searched and findings should be carefully documented by the searching officer. Names, addresses, and phone numbers of all individuals spoken to should also be noted.

NOTE: If the officer has reasonable suspicion to believe that the missing person is being hidden in a residence or on private property, that officer should consult with the local district attorney regarding the need for a search warrant. For additional information pertaining to search warrants, refer to LD 16: *Search and Seizure*.

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## Initial Searches, Continued

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### **Additional resources**

If circumstances merit, officers should not hesitate to ask for and use other resources to aid in the search for a missing person. Additional resources may include but are not limited to:

- other law enforcement agencies to follow-through on leads (e.g., check suspected residences or locations)
- specialized investigative forces from the district attorney's office (e.g., child abduction, etc.)
- Department of Justice Missing/Unidentified Person Unit for production of fliers (available if the missing person is considered to be at risk)
- specialized search and rescue operations or other agencies with specialized resources (e.g., canine units, helicopters, dive teams, mounted units, snowmobiles, all terrain vehicles, etc.)
- other county, state, and federal agencies (e.g., county welfare investigators, mental health response teams, chaplains, FBI, etc.)
- volunteer groups (e.g., scouts, service organizations, etc.)
- help lines and information from nonprofit organizations (e.g., *Safe Return* program offered by local Alzheimer's Associations, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children)
- Adult Protective Services

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## Initial Searches, Continued

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### Protecting potential crime scenes

The missing person's home, any room within the house, vehicles, the area surrounding the house, the neighborhood, could all contain potential evidence. Any location where physical evidence may be located should be considered a potential crime scene by officers conducting preliminary investigations.

NOTE: Home computers, especially those belonging to children and young adults, may also be a source of valuable information.

NOTE: For additional information regarding preservation of crime scenes and evidence collection, refer to LD 30: *Preliminary Investigation*.

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### Searching large areas

A **grid search** may be required when large areas must be searched. (e.g., campgrounds, shopping malls, etc.)

NOTE: When establishing a perimeter, officers should consider the area a person could have reasonably covered in the set amount of time. Also, the physical, mental, or emotional conditions of the missing person may limit the area covered or suggest possible hiding places.

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### Multiple searchers

When searches are undertaken by teams of individuals (law enforcement personnel or volunteers), the officer coordinating the search should:

- brief the individuals with all information needed to conduct a thorough search (e.g., name, age, condition, etc., of the missing person),
  - log the names and affiliations of all searchers along with the areas of their search assignments,
  - instruct searchers not to touch or disturb any found items but rather to immediately notify the investigating officers,
  - have searchers work in teams, and
  - restrict all nonsearchers from the area.
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*Continued on next page*

## Initial Searches, Continued

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### Missing children

Officers must be extra diligent when searching for a missing child in any designated area. Children may have access to small areas or be enticed to areas where adults would not normally be able to fit in. Small children may become trapped or may simply fall asleep, totally unaware that they have been reported missing.

When conducting a search for a missing child, officers should check in all areas large enough for a child to fit in. Examples may include but are not limited to:

- kitchen or bathroom cabinets,
- refrigerators/freezers,
- luggage/trunks,
- closet shelves,
- crawl spaces,
- washing machines/dryers,
- doghouses,
- inside sofa beds,
- storage boxes and containers,
- vehicle trunks, etc.

### Natural draws for children

Children tend to have a “safety zone” they seldom stray from on their own (e.g., their own backyard, their immediate neighborhood, homes of friends, etc.). Officers should consider areas the child would feel safe in based on the child’s age and maturity.

Inquisitive children may be drawn to unusual areas to play or create their own “hide-outs.” Natural draws for children may include, but are not limited to:

- vacant buildings,
- wells,
- tunnels,
- culverts,
- wood areas or areas with high brush,
- large trees,
- abandoned appliances,
- bodies of water (e.g., swimming pools, creeks, drainage ponds, etc.),
- empty crates or boxes,
- equipment vehicles (e.g., construction equipment, trucks, etc.), or
- family vehicle or other unlocked vehicles in the neighborhood.

**NOTE:** If the child is not located during the initial search, a second search of the same area may be undertaken by different officers.

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## Initial Searches, Continued

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### **Adult vs. child**

Searches for adults are different from those for a child. Adults usually have the ability to travel a farther distance on their own and may leave a note or notify someone that they have left. Children may plan to leave but usually stay within their “safety zone.” Children who leave their safety zone usually do not do so by choice.

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### **Examples**

**Example:** A 3 year-old-child was reported missing by her mother. The mother told interviewing officers that her daughter had disappeared from the backyard when she went into the house to answer the telephone. The mother stated that she and her neighbor had searched the house and yard thoroughly before calling the police. The officers conducted their own search of the premises anyway and discovered the little girl asleep in the clothes hamper located in the laundry room, near the back door of the home.

**Example:** An officer responded to a report of a 16-year-old boy, missing overnight, who appeared to have run away from home after a quarrel with his father. After interviewing the parents and searching the house, the officer began canvassing the neighborhood. One neighbor said she had seen the boy going into another neighbor’s garage late the night before. The officer received the other neighbor’s permission to search the garage and located the boy and a friend hiding in there. By conducting a door-to-door canvass the officer obtained vital information on the boy’s whereabouts.

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# Cases Involving Parent/Family Abduction

[27.03.EO4, 27.03.EO5]

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## **Introduction**

With the rise in domestic violence, child abuse, divorce rates, and “child-snatching” related to custody disputes, the public is more tolerant of law enforcement intervention to ensure protection of the child.

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## **High priority**

Responding to missing person reports involving parent/family abduction of a child should be a high priority for peace officers. Officers must take each case seriously and intervene quickly and effectively to prevent the child from being taken not only out of the jurisdiction but out of the state or country by the parent/family member.

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## **Child safety and well being**

Officers should recognize that parent/family abduction is not a harmless offense involving two people who are arguing over who “loves the child more” or who “has the right” to the child.

Abduction, even at the hands of someone the child knows and trusts, is a form of *child abuse*. Children can be deeply and permanently affected. Children may become pawns or a means of “getting back at” the other parent, or if abducted, they may be required to live a life of deception.

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## Cases Involving Parent/Family Abduction, Continued

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### **Child abduction**

Any number of factors may lead to parent/family abduction of a child. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- separation,
- divorce,
- a contested visitation schedule,
- domestic violence,
- sibling difficulties,
- differences in child rearing strategies, and/or
- conflicts over support payments.

Officers should be prepared to recognize that the left-behind parent may be experiencing feelings not only of fear and panic but also frustration, anger, and aggression toward a perceived “unresponsive system” that may have contributed to the situation.

Under such circumstances, officers should attempt to reassure the person of law enforcement’s commitment to swiftly take all necessary actions to locate the child.

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### **Law enforcement responsibilities**

When called to conduct a preliminary investigation regarding a parent/family abduction, it is *not* the officer’s responsibility to convene “court” in the field and determine who has what rights over a child.

Officers must recognize that their primary responsibility is to **protect the safety and well being of the child**, and to uphold the law if a criminal act has taken place.

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## Cases Involving Parent/Family Abduction, Continued

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### Related terms

In order to appropriately respond to missing person reports involving parent/family abduction, peace officers need to understand the statutory definitions of the following terms.

A **lawful custodian** is the person, guardian, or public agency that has a right to custody of a child. (*Penal Code Section 277(d)*)

A **right to custody** means the right to the physical care, custody, and control of a child pursuant to a custody order. (*Penal Code Section 277(e)*)

A **custody order** is a custody determination decree, judgement, or order issued by a court of competent jurisdiction, whether permanent or temporary, initial or modified, that affects the custody or visitation of a child. (*Penal Code Section 277(b)*)

**Visitation** means the time for access to the child allotted to any person by custody order. (*Penal Code Section 277(h)*)

To **abduct** means to take, entice away, keep, withhold, or conceal. (*Penal Code Section 277(k)*)

To **withhold** means to retain physical possession of a child whether or not the child resists or objects. (*Penal Code Section 277(g)*)

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## Cases Involving Parent/Family Abduction, Continued

**Crimes related to child custody**

There are two felony criminal acts that officers should be aware of that deal with issues of lawful child custody.

<b>Crime</b>	<b>Crime Elements</b>	<b>Crime Classification</b>	<b>Penal Code Section</b>
Detainment or concealment of a child from a legal custodian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every person, <i>not</i> having a <i>right to custody</i>,</li> <li>• who maliciously               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- takes,</li> <li>- entices away,</li> <li>- keeps,</li> <li>- withholds, or</li> <li>- conceals any child</li> </ul> </li> <li>• with the intent to detain or conceal that child</li> <li>• from the <i>lawful custodian</i>.</li> </ul>	felony	278
Deprivation of custody of child or right to visitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every person, having a right to custody</li> <li>• who:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- takes,</li> <li>- entices away,</li> <li>- keeps,</li> <li>- withholds, or</li> <li>- conceals a child, and</li> </ul> </li> <li>• maliciously deprives</li> <li>• a <i>lawful custodian</i> of the right to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- custody or</li> <li>- visitation.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	felony	278.5

*Continued on next page*

## Cases Involving Parent/Family Abduction, Continued

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### Crimes related to child custody

(continued)

NOTE: The laws noted above also apply to persons who are not residents of the State of California or present in the state at the time of the offense. (*Penal Code Section 279*)

NOTE: For additional information regarding these crimes and others involving kidnapping, refer to LD 7: *Crimes Against Persons*.

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### Officer actions

In order to determine whether or not a crime has taken place in an incident involving a parent/family abduction, peace officers may be called upon to deal with custody orders handed down in civil court.

When faced with a custody dispute officers should:

- take control of the situation in order to ensure the child is on “neutral ground,”
  - determine the relationship of the parties to the child,
  - determine if either of the parties have “legal standing” in court (i.e., lawful custody),
  - take necessary action(s) to locate the child (if location is unknown), and
  - protect the safety and well being of the child.
- 

### Custody disputes

Officers may find that lawful custody is not clear (e.g., both parties have conflicting custody orders), or they have insufficient knowledge or facts to interpret court documents. Under such conditions, officers should *freeze the situation* by taking some form of emergency intervention until the matter can be determined by the courts.

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## Cases Involving Parent/Family Abduction, Continued

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**Custody disputes**  
(continued)

**It is not the officer's role to take sides or to determine who should have a right to custody. The officer's role is to ensure the safety and well being of the child.**

NOTE: Inappropriate or unauthorized actions on the part of an officer can not only jeopardize the well being of the child but also bring about liability concerns for the officer and the officer's agency.

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**Emergency intervention**

California law authorizes a law enforcement officer to take a child into protective custody under certain circumstances.

<b>A law enforcement officer may take a child into protective custody if:</b>	<b><i>Penal Code Section</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it reasonably appears to the officer that one of the involved parties is likely to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- conceal the child,</li> <li>- flee the jurisdiction with the child, or</li> <li>- by flight or concealment, evade the authority of the law.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	279.6(a)(1)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there is no lawful custodian available to take custody of the child.</li> </ul>	279.6(a)(2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there are:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- conflicting custody orders, or</li> <li>- conflicting claims to custody, <b><i>and</i></b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• the parties cannot agree which party should take custody of the child.</li> </ul>	279.6(a)(3)

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## Cases Involving Parent/Family Abduction, Continued

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### Emergency intervention (continued)

<b>A law enforcement officer may take a child into protective custody if:</b>	<b><i>Penal Code Section</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the child is the victim of an abduction.</li></ul>	<i>279.6(a)(4)</i>

**NOTE:** Often once it is explained that the officer has the legal authority to take the child into protective custody if necessary, the disputing parties may become more acceptable to coming to a neutral resolution until the matter can be handled by the court.

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### Issues of custody and abuse

One of the involved parties in a custody dispute may attempt to convince the responding officer that the child is being exposed to a harmful environment or abused by the other party.

Under such conditions, officers should separate the issue of custody from the issue of abuse. The officer must reasonably attempt to determine, based on observations, interviews, and other evidence, whether or not the claims are valid.

**Reminder:** **The officer's primary responsibility is to protect the safety and well being of the child.**

**NOTE:** For additional information regarding the investigation of possible child abuse, refer to LD 9: *Crimes Against Children..*

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## Cases Involving Parent/Family Abduction, Continued

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### Examples

Example: A patrol officer was dispatched to a disturbance call involving two parents who were arguing over custody of their 10-year-old daughter. The mother showed the officer an order from the State of California, giving her custody while the father had a custody order from Germany. Both parents stated that their custody order was the legal and current order. The officer determined that the best option was to take custody of the child until a clear court order could be obtained.

Example: An officer responded to a possible child abduction call. The reporting party, a father with lawful custody, informed the officer that he had gone to his ex-wife's residence to pick up his son after a weekend visit with his ex-wife. When he arrived he found the house vacant and was told by neighbors that his ex-wife and son had left in a rented moving van three days previously. The officer took a missing persons report on the mother and child, made appropriate notifications, and referred the case to his supervising officer for further action.

Non-example: Officers responded to a disturbance call in which divorced parents were arguing heatedly over custody of their child. Both parents had conflicting custody orders from different states. After listening to both parties and examining the court orders, the officers decided the father had the lawful custody and let the father take the child. The father immediately left the country with the child and has never been located. The officers' role in this dispute was to ensure the safety of the child, not to determine who should have custody.

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# Missing Persons Located

[27.03.E07]

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## **Introduction**

Upon notification of a missing person, a preliminary investigation is conducted. The responding officer conducts a preliminary investigation and notifies dispatch and other automated systems. Once the missing person has been located those same entities must be notified and deactivated.

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## **Other notifications**

When a missing person is found, alive or dead, the law enforcement agency locating that person should also:

- cancel any automated systems entries that were previously made (e.g., CJIS, MPS/UPS), and
- relay the information to:
  - the reporting party, and
  - all other agencies who were involved in the investigation.

NOTE: Individual agency policies and procedures for notifying the reporting party, family members, next of kin, etc. may vary.

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## **Continued investigations**

Under certain circumstances, law enforcement investigations may continue even when the missing person has been located. Before closing a case officers should consider:

- why the person left (e.g., physical, sexual, or verbal abuse),
  - the conditions involved (e.g., drug or alcohol abuse, physical or mental illness, family dispute, etc.),
  - criminal activity that may have been involved (e.g., kidnapping, parental/family abduction, etc.) and/or
  - circumstances the person experienced while gone (e.g., assault, rape, robbery, etc.).
- 

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## Missing Persons Located, Continued

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**Penal  
code  
section**

*Penal Code Section 14207* states: when a person reported missing has been found, the sheriff, chief of police, coroner, medical examiner, or the law enforcement agency locating the missing person shall immediately report that information to the Attorney General's office.

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# Chapter Synopsis

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**Learning need** Peace officers must know that a thorough preliminary investigation improves the chances of a missing person being located quickly and safely.

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**Initial searches**  
[27.03.EO2] Interviewing officers should obtain enough information from the reporting party (or other involved parties) to initiate appropriate law enforcement actions for locating the missing person.

All searches must be thorough and undertaken in a logical and systematic manner. Officers should search not only for the missing persons themselves, but also for information or evidence that could pertain to the case.

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**Searches involving children**  
[27.03.EO3] Officers must be extra diligent when searching for a missing child in any designated area. Children tend to have a “safety zone” within which they seldom stray on their own (e.g., their own backyard, their immediate neighborhood, homes of friends, etc.). Officers should consider areas the child would feel safe in based on the child’s age and maturity.

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**Parent/family abduction**  
[27.03.EO4] Officers must recognize that their primary responsibility is to protect the safety and well being of the child, and to uphold the law if a criminal act has taken place. It is *not* the officer’s responsibility to convene “court” in the field and determine who has what rights over a child.

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**Protective custody**  
[27.03.EO5] *Penal Code Section 279.6(a)* states that a law enforcement officer may take a child into protective custody under certain circumstances.

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**Locating the missing person**  
[27.03.EO7] *Penal Code Section 14207* identifies a number of actions that shall be taken when a person previously reported missing is located, alive or dead.

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# Workbook Learning Activities

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## Introduction

To help you review and apply the material covered in this chapter, a selection of learning activities has been included. No answers are provided. However, by referring to the appropriate text, you should be able to prepare a response.

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## Activity questions

1. A mother calls law enforcement personnel when her 12-year-old son fails to return home after soccer practice in time for dinner. The woman is visibly upset and tells officers that she is afraid her ex-husband may have abducted the child since he was dissatisfied with court-decreed visitation. She is not certain of this, however, and has been unable to reach her former husband by phone at either work or home. Write out a set of questions the responding officers might ask in order to try to obtain the best possible initial information from the mother. How does the fact that the mother suspects her ex-husband affect the initial information officers should try to gather, if at all?
  
2. Since her parents' separation a month earlier, 11-year-old Brittany has lived with her father, but has visited her mother every weekend. There has been no formal filing with the court and custody has not been established. Sunday evening, just before the father had expected Brittany's mother to return her, the mother phoned and said that she and Brittany would be "taking a little vacation" and wouldn't be back for a "few days." Afraid the mother was abducting Brittany, the father called peace officers. Officers located Brittany and her mother at an aunt's home within the hour. The father also arrived on the scene and began to argue with the mother about the rights each had toward Brittany. How should officers proceed at this point? Has a crime been committed? With whom should Brittany leave the scene and why?

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## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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### Activity questions (continued)

3. A peace officer is interviewing a distraught parent who called peace officers when she discovered that her 7-year-old daughter had left a supervised playground area with a stranger who asked for help in finding his missing dog. In these circumstances, what actions could the officer take to help the parent remain focused during the interview to obtain the best possible information? Given this situation, what actions should have been taken by the first responding officer?
  
4. Visualize the house or apartment in which you currently live. List all the places and furnishings in your home that should be included in an initial search for a missing 5' 10" adult. Then, repeat the activity, considering the missing person to be a two-year-old child.



## Supplementary Material

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**In this section** Refer to the following table for specific reference documents included in this section.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>See Page</b>
Resource Agencies and Organizations	S-2
Interactions with Persons with Alzheimer's Disease/ <i>Safe Return Program</i>	S-7

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## Resource Agencies and Organizations

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### International agency

	Description	Phone/Address
<b>International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Point of contact for law enforcement authorities seeking criminal investigative assistance abroad</li> <li>Assistance in tracking an identified abductor</li> </ul>	202-616-9700  US National Central Bureau US Department of Justice Bicentennial Building Washington, DC 20530

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### National agencies

	Description	Phone/Address
<b>Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assistance in cases of suspected child abduction (even with no ransom demands or interstate travel)</li> <li>Provides certain resources and technical capabilities that may not be available at local agency level</li> <li>Access to services of the Child Abduction and Serial Killer Unit (CASKU) through the Violent Criminal Offender Program (VICAP)</li> </ul>	202-324-3000  935 Pennsylvania Ave, NW Washington, DC 20535  (or contact nearest regional office within the state)

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## Resource Agencies and Organizations, Continued

**National agencies**  
(continued)

	<b>Description</b>	<b>Phone/Address</b>
<b>National Crime Information Center (NCIC)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nationwide, on-line computer/telecommunications system</li> <li>• Maintained by the FBI</li> <li>• Specialized information files and data retrieval programs including, but not limited to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Missing Person File (MPF)</li> <li>- Unidentified Person File (UPF)</li> <li>- Wanted Person File (WPF)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Accessible via California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS)</li> </ul>	304-625-3000  Criminal Justice Information Services Attn: NCIC 1000 Cluster Hollow Road Clarksburg, WV 26306
<b>US Department of State, Child Custody Division</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central authority for providing assistance regarding international parent/family abduction</li> <li>• Welfare and whereabouts check by US Embassy personnel in foreign countries</li> </ul>	202-736-7000  Bureau of Consular Affairs CA/OCS/CCS Room 4817 US State Department Washington, DC 20520

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## Resource Agencies and Organizations, Continued

**National agencies**  
(continued)

	<b>Description</b>	<b>Phone/Address</b>
<b>US Department of State, Office of Passport Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authority to revoke passports of citizens who are subject to federal warrants</li> <li>• Suspects become undocumented aliens and may be deported back to the United States</li> </ul>	202- 955-0307  Officer of Passport Services US State Department Room 300 1425 K Street, NW Washington, DC 20524
<b>US Postal Service</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to databases that contain the names of all individuals within the nation who filed Change of Address forms</li> <li>• Will provide law enforcement agencies with return address and postmark information on mail destined for a specific address</li> </ul>	202-268-4267  US Postal Service Inspection Division Room 3100 475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW Washington, DC 20260
<b>US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) as a part of DHS Department of Homeland Security</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revocation of existing visas or work permits</li> <li>• USCIS "Look-Out Book" notices at border checkpoints</li> </ul>	202-282-8000  US Citizenship and Immigration Department Homeland Security Washington, DC 20528

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## Resource Agencies and Organizations, Continued

### National agencies (continued)

	Description	Phone/Address
<b>US Department of Defense</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information about current and past assignments of active duty members of the Armed Forces</li> <li>Assistance also available from the Office of Family Policy, Support, and Services</li> </ul>	1-800-336-4592  Officer of Family Policy, Support, and Services 4015 Wilson Boulevard Suite 903 Arlington, VA 22203
<b>US Office of Personnel Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address information about retired members of Armed Forces or retired federal civil service employees</li> <li>Addresses where retiree's federal pension payments are mailed</li> </ul>	202-606-2424  US Office of Personnel Management 1900 E Street, NW Washington, DC 20415

### Organizations

	Description	Phone/Address
<b>National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Registration of missing/exploited children</li> <li>Offers advice, analysis, technical assistance, information, and other services to law enforcement agencies responsible for case investigations</li> <li>Also provides photo distribution and age-progressions imaging services</li> </ul>	1-800-843-5678  699 Prince Street Alexandria, VA 22314

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## Resource Agencies and Organizations, Continued

Organizations (continued)	Description	Phone/Address
<b>Alzheimer's Association</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nationwide <i>Safe Return</i> identification, support, and registration program</li> <li>• 24-hour hotline service</li> <li>• Provides names, photographs, identifying characteristics, and emergency contact information</li> <li>• Information on recognition and handling of persons with Alzheimer's disease designed specifically for law enforcement</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Safe Return Hotline:</i></b> <b><i>1-800-572-1122</i></b></p> <p><i>Safe Return Program</i> registration information: 1-888-572-8566</p> <p>General information: 1-800-660-1993 (California) 1-800-272-3900 (National)</p> <p>Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Association, Inc. 919 North Michigan Avenue Suite 1000 Chicago, IL 60611</p>

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## Resource Agencies and Organizations, Continued

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**Organizations**  
(continued)

	<b>Description</b>	<b>Phone/Address</b>
<b>Federal Parent Locator Service</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unit of the US Department of Health and Human Services, Officer of Child Support Enforcement</li> <li>• Access to parent/family abduction case information recorded with:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social Security Administration</li> <li>- Internal Revenue Service</li> <li>- National Personnel Records Center</li> <li>- Department of Veterans Affairs</li> <li>- Selective Service System</li> <li>- State Employment Security Agencies</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	202-401-9267  Federal Parent Locator Service 370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW Fourth Floor Washington, DC 20447

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# Interactions with Persons with Alzheimer’s Disease/Safe Return Program

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## Definition

Alzheimer’s disease is a progressive, irreversible disease which gradually damages and destroys nerve cells in the brain. Although it is not the only form of dementia, it is the most common.

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## Onset

Alzheimer’s disease affects both men and women, and crosses all social economic, and racial boundaries. It is currently the fourth leading cause of death in adults – after heart disease, cancer, and stroke.

Although often associated with the elderly, Alzheimer’s disease can also appear in persons in their 50s, 40s, or younger.

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## Symptoms

*There may not be any recognizable physical characteristics of Alzheimer’s disease.* Many mildly or moderately impaired individuals will seem as alert and as physically fit as anyone else their age. Not all people with the disease exhibit the same symptoms and behaviors because the disease progresses at different rates in different people. Some individuals become quite adept at hiding or denying their own symptoms.

The 10 warning signs of Alzheimer’s disease include:

- loss of recent memory that affects day-to-day skills,
  - difficulty performing familiar tasks,
  - problems with finding the right words,
  - disorientation,
  - poor or decreased judgment,
  - problems with abstract thinking,
  - misplacing things,
  - changes in mood or behavior,
  - changes in personality, and
  - loss of initiative.
- 

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## Interactions with Persons with Alzheimer's Disease/Safe Return Program, Continued

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### **Treatment**

The cause of Alzheimer's disease is unknown and there is no cure available at present. The progress of the disease cannot be stopped or reversed; however, its symptoms can be managed to provide a reasonable measure of comfort and dignity for the person. Eventually, the individual will require round-the-clock care and supervision.

A person with Alzheimer's can live an average of eight years and as many as 20 years from the onset of the symptoms. This can lead to financial difficulty as well as great physical and emotional stress on the individual's family, loved ones, and care giver(s).

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### **Officer interactions**

Alzheimer's disease destroys the part of the brain where memory is stored. Afflicted persons lose their ability to determine situations which may be dangerous to them. They also may not be able to comprehend the seriousness of a situation. In all cases, officers should attempt to identify the individual, locate care giver(s), and take appropriate action(s) to secure the person's safety and well being.

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## Interactions with Persons with Alzheimer’s Disease/Safe Return Program, Continued

**Officer interactions**  
(continued)

The following table identifies a number of typical behaviors officers may witness when encountering an individual with Alzheimer’s or who is memory impaired.

Behavior	Description	Possible Officer Interactions
Poor communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty expressing themselves and understanding others</li> <li>• Communication skills become more inhibited as disease progresses</li> <li>• Unable to properly identify or express their feelings</li> <li>• May appear restless, stubborn, angry, combative, suspicious, and attempt to run away or cry inconsolably</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approach from the front and get the person’s attention.</li> <li>• Speak slowly, softly, and in a low-pitched reassuring voice.</li> <li>• Communicate calm, confidence, and control.</li> <li>• Maintain eye contact.</li> <li>• Ask only one question or give only one command at a time.</li> <li>• Use short sentences and familiar words.</li> <li>• Ask questions that can be answered with a “yes” or “no.”</li> <li>• Give positive instructions (e.g., “Let’s go here” instead of “Don’t go there”).</li> <li>• Repeat questions or information using the same words.</li> <li>• Use gestures as well as words.</li> <li>• Do not talk in front of the person as if the individual was not there.</li> <li>• Do not argue, confront, or try to rationalize.</li> </ul>

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## Interactions with Persons with Alzheimer’s Disease/Safe Return Program, Continued

Officer interactions (continued)

Behavior	Description	Possible Officer Interactions
Wandering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals can become lost along routes that have been traveled routinely in the past</li> <li>• Can happen any time of day or night</li> <li>• May be in form of continual pacing within small area or over large distances</li> <li>• Can bring on panic attacks when person is unable to recall familiar landmarks</li> <li>• Person may not be able to recall name or address</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approach person calmly, preferably from the front.</li> <li>• Assure the person.</li> <li>• Check for injury or exposure.</li> <li>• Do not leave the person alone. (The person may wander away again.)</li> <li>• Check for identification, and <i>Safe Return</i> jewelry.</li> <li>• If care givers cannot be located, find emergency shelter.</li> </ul>
Bizarre actions/reactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavior may lead an officer to believe the person is intoxicated (i.e., slurred speech, unsteady gait, slow reflexes)</li> <li>• Situations that are mildly distressful for others can easily grow out of proportion</li> <li>• Rapid mood changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce distractions.</li> <li>• Keep individuals away from crowds and noise.</li> <li>• Assume a nonaggressive posture.</li> <li>• Avoid sudden movements.</li> <li>• Avoid use of restraints (could not only lead to a catastrophic reaction but also bone or joint injury in a frail person).</li> </ul>

*Continued on next page*

## Interactions with Persons with Alzheimer's Disease/Safe Return Program, Continued

**Officer interactions**  
(continued)

Behavior	Description	Possible Officer Interactions
Erratic driving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May forget the rules of the road</li> <li>• May drive too fast or too slow</li> <li>• If involved in an accident, may attempt to leave the scene unaware of injuries or the mishap itself</li> <li>• May forget when car is parked or report car as stolen</li> <li>• May get lost, even in own neighborhood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notify care giver(s) of driving problems.</li> <li>• Request driver be re-examined by licensing facility.</li> <li>• Offer suggestions on how care giver(s) can make the person's vehicle inoperable.</li> </ul>
Shoplifting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May forget to pay for items (without criminal intent)</li> <li>• Lose track of wallet or handbag</li> <li>• Unaware of how much money they have or have already spent</li> <li>• Can cause catastrophic reaction if confronted abruptly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use appropriate communication techniques.</li> <li>• Identify self and explain purpose for being there.</li> <li>• Include individual in all conversations to avoid arousing the person's suspicions.</li> <li>• Attempt to locate care giver(s).</li> </ul>

*Continued on next page*

## Interactions with Persons with Alzheimer’s Disease/Safe Return Program, Continued

<b>Officer interactions (continued)</b>	<b>Behavior</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Possible Officer Interactions</b>
	Victimization/false reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can become easy targets for con artists</li> <li>• May report lost or misplaced items as stolen</li> <li>• May think neighbors or family members are burglars or strange intruders</li> <li>• May accuse family members or care givers of stealing from them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize that to that person, the beliefs and fears are very real.</li> <li>• Use appropriate communication techniques.</li> </ul>
	Indecent exposure/sexual behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Societal norms can be forgotten</li> <li>• Loss of impulse control; unable to recognize a behavior as unsuitable</li> <li>• Judgement is impaired</li> <li>• Can leave their home improperly attired</li> <li>• Repetitive behavior such as fidgeting with zippers or buttons may be misinterpreted as deviant behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approach the person calmly (preferably from the front).</li> <li>• Provide a distraction to keep the person’s hands and mind busy (e.g., holding a cup of coffee).</li> <li>• Avoid scolding, lecturing, or making an issue of attire or lack of it.</li> <li>• Maintain a sense of humor.</li> </ul>

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## Interactions with Persons with Alzheimer's Disease/Safe Return Program, Continued

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### Safe return program

Wandering behavior along with memory loss and an inability to reason can cause individuals with Alzheimer's disease to become separated from care givers. This can not only be stressful for everyone, but potentially dangerous.

The Alzheimer's Association *Safe Return Program* is a nationwide identification, support, and registration program. It was created to reunite those who become lost with their loved ones and care givers.

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### Registry

The *Safe Return Program* registry includes:

- names of memory impaired individuals,
  - their photographs,
  - identifying characteristics, and
  - emergency contact information.
- 

### Hotline

Program participants wear bracelets or necklaces, carry identification cards or key chains, wear pins, have labels in their clothing, or use other identification products. Each form of identification provides the person's first name, the fact that they are memory impaired and a 24 hour toll-free hotline number.

*Safe Return Program* Hotline:

**1-800-572-1122**

When a participant is found, local law enforcement agencies can call the crisis number to obtain critical information and assistance regarding emergency contact information.

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## Interactions with Persons with Alzheimer's Disease/Safe Return Program, Continued

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### **Additional information/materials**

The Alzheimer's Association, founded in 1980 by care givers, is the only national voluntary organization dedicated to conquering Alzheimer's disease through research, and to providing information and support.

The Alzheimer's Association also provides information and materials specifically designed for peace officers who may become involved with persons with memory impairments in the course of a missing person investigation.

In certain parts of the state, the local chapters provide a 24 hour response network designed to increase the chances of finding the missing person. Services provided as part of the network include but are not limited to aid in contacting hospitals and other facilities, providing support for the family of the lost individual, compiling data for law enforcement use, etc.

For more information regarding the *Safe Return Program*, to obtain materials, or to locate the nearest local chapter, law enforcement agencies can call ***1-800-272-3900***.

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## **Interactions with Persons with Alzheimer's Disease/Safe Return Program, Continued**

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# Glossary

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**Introduction**      **The following glossary terms apply only to Learning Domain 27: Missing Persons.**

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**abduct**              To take, entice away, keep withhold, or conceal (*Penal Code Section 277(k)*)

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**AMBER alert**              The timely dissemination of information utilizing the Emergency Alert System (EAS) regarding abducted children

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**“Be-on-the-lookout” (BOLO)**      A bulletin regarding a reported missing person considered to be at risk and/or under 16 years of age which is broadcast locally without delay within the jurisdiction (*Penal Code Section 14205(a)*)

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**California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS)**      A computer system that provides all law enforcement user agencies with the capability of obtaining information directly from federal and state computerized information files

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**child**                      Any person under the age of 18 years

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**custody order**              A custody determination decree, judgement, or order issued by a court of competent jurisdiction, whether permanent or temporary, initial or modified, that affects the custody or visitation of a child (*Penal Code Section 277(b)*)

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**grid search**              A search that may be required when large areas such as campgrounds, shopping malls, etc., must be searched

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**lawful custodian**              Person, guardian, or public agency that has a right to custody of a child (*Penal Code Section 277(d)*)

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## Glossary, Continued

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**missing person**

Any adult or child who is reported missing to a law enforcement agency (*Penal Code Section 14213*)

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**Missing/  
Unidentified  
Persons  
System  
(MPS/UPS)**

A file of records which catalogs reports of missing or unidentified persons according to a variety of physical and dental characteristics; a component of the Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS)

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**National  
Crime  
Information  
Center  
(NCIC)**

A nationwide computerized information system that serves all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, and Canada

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**public  
safety  
dispatcher**

A nonsworn employee of a law enforcement agency who is trained to receive calls and dispatch officers or other designated personnel based on the facts collected

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**right to  
custody**

The right to the physical care, custody, and control of a child pursuant to a custody order (*Penal Code Section 277(e)*)

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**visitation**

The time for access to the child allotted to any person by custody order (*Penal Code Section 277(h)*)

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**voluntary  
missing  
person**

An individual who has left on that person's own free will

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**withhold**

To retain physical possession of a child whether or not the child resists or objects (*Penal Code Section 277(g)*)

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