

	KENOSHA POLICE DEPARTMENT			
	POLICY AND PROCEDURE			
	44.2 Handling of Missing Persons			
Effective Date:	3/1/1978	Revision Date:	11/11/2003	
Action:	O-161		Number of pages:	4

PURPOSE

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

II. POLICY

The Kenosha Police Department will investigate reports of missing persons to the fullest extent possible, with the intent to locate the person as soon as possible.

III. PROCEDURES

A. Reporting

1. There is no waiting period for reporting a missing person. Missing person reports shall be taken in-person, by telephone or at the front counter of the Kenosha County Safety Building. Those reports shall be taken in conformity with the criteria of this policy and the criticality of the incident.
2. A person may be declared “missing” when his/her whereabouts is unknown and unexplained for a period of time and that absence is highly unusual or suspicious in consideration of the subject’s normal behavior patterns, plans or routines. The following criteria should be considered in determining the course of the investigation:
 - a. Is the subject a victim of foul play;
 - b. The age of the subject and their ability care for themselves;
 - c. Does the subject suffer from a diminished mental capacity or medical conditions that are potentially life threatening;
 - d. Is the subject a resident of a care facility and may be a danger to themselves or others;
 - e. Has the subject demonstrated the potential for suicide;
 - f. Has the subject been involved in a boating, swimming or other sporting accident;
 - g. Has the subject been involved in a man-made or natural disaster?
3. Reports of juveniles who have voluntarily left home (i.e., “runaways”) should be classified as such only after thorough investigation.

44.2 Handling of Missing Persons

4. Based on the outcome of initial inquiries, a decision shall be made concerning the potential danger to the missing person and the urgency of the police response.

B. Initial Report Taking

1. The initial report taker must gather as much pertinent information as possible in order to properly classify the missing person report and initiate a response. This includes but is not limited to the following information:
 - a. Name, age and physical description of the subject and relationship of the reporting party to the missing person;
 - b. Last known time and place of the missing person and who they may have been with;
 - c. The extent of any search for the missing person;
 - d. Whether the missing person has been missing before and the degree to which the absence departs from established behavior patterns, habits or plans;
 - e. Whether the missing person has been involved in:
 - ◆ a recent domestic incident,
 - ◆ suffered emotional trauma or life crisis,
 - ◆ demonstrated unusual, uncharacteristic or bizarre behavior,
 - ◆ is dependent on drugs or alcohol,
 - ◆ has a history of mental illness,
 - ◆ the current physical condition of the subject and whether the person is currently on prescription medication.
2. If the missing person is a child, inquiry should also determine:
 - a. If the child is or may be with any adult who could cause them harm;
 - b. If the child may have been the subject of a parental abduction;
 - c. If the child as previously run away from home, has threatened to do so or has a history of explainable or unexplainable absences for extended periods of time.
 - ◆ AMBER ALERT
 - a. An investigating officer who has reason to believe a child is abducted will verify the details with a supervisor on duty.
 - b. The supervisor will determine if the criteria for an Amber Alert has been satisfied and if so, shall activate the Wisconsin Amber Alert system. That criteria includes:
 1. The child is 17 years of age or younger.
 2. The child is in danger of serious bodily harm or death.
 3. There is enough descriptive information about the child, the suspect and/or the suspect vehicle to believe an immediate broadcast alert will help locate the child.

C. Preliminary Investigation

1. The preliminary investigation is intended to gather additional information and to take steps that will aid in the search for and location of a missing person. Information to be gathered includes but is not limited to:

44.2 Handling of Missing Persons

- a. A complete description of the missing person and a recent photograph;
 - b. Details of any physical or emotional problems;
 - c. Identity of the last person(s) to have seen the missing person as well as friends, relatives, coworkers or associates who were or may have been in contact with the missing person prior to disappearance;
 - d. Plans, habits, routines and personal interests of the missing person including places frequented or locations of particular significance;
 - e. Indications of missing personal belongings, money and other valuables;
 - f. Any suggestions of foul play or accident;
 - g. In the case of missing children, officers shall be particularly cognizant of information that may suggest the potential for parental abduction or the possibility of stranger abduction. Information to be considered includes but is not limited to:
 - ◆ The presence of behavioral problems;
 - ◆ Past instances of running away;
 - ◆ Signs of an abusive environment or dysfunctional family situation;
 - ◆ Whether the child is believed to be with adults who may pose a danger;
 - ◆ The name and location of the school attended by the child and any persons who may be responsible for transportation to and from the location.
 - h. When possible, officers should gain permission to search a missing child's home and school locker.
 - i. Upon verification of a missing person the information shall be entered into state and national information databases in accordance with established procedures (e.g.: NCIC and The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children).
- D. Ongoing Investigation
1. Ongoing investigations of missing persons should include but should not be limited to the following actions and activities:
 - a. Request release of dental records and any fingerprints available;
 - b. Contact hospitals and the coroner's office as appropriate for injured or deceased persons fitting the description of the missing person;
 - c. Thoroughly check the location at which the missing person was last seen and conduct interviews as appropriate with persons who were with the individual or who may work in or frequent the area;
 - d. Conduct interviews with any additional family, friends, work associates, schoolmates and teachers as well as school counselors and case workers, as appropriate, to explore the potential for foul play, voluntary flight, or, in the case of juveniles, parental kidnapping or running away;
 - e. Provide identification and related information from other law enforcement agencies;
 - f. Use local media as needed;
 - g. Maintain contact with the reporting person, i.e. parent, guardian, spouse, etc.
- E. Recovery of Missing Persons and Case Closure
1. Competent adults, having left home for personal reason, cannot be forced to return home. Officer locating such individuals shall:

44.2 Handling of Missing Persons

- a. Advise them that they are the subject of a missing person investigation;
 - b. Ask if they desire the reporting party or next-of-kin to be notified of their whereabouts;
 - c. Make provisions for the notification of this information to the reporting person as appropriate.
1. Missing persons shall be questioned to establish the circumstances surrounding their disappearance and whether criminal activity was involved.
2. In cases involving juveniles, officers shall ensure that:
 - a. The juvenile receives medical attention if necessary;
 - b. Referral is made to appropriate social agencies;
 - c. The parents, guardians and/or the person reporting the missing youth are notified.
3. Upon location of a missing person, a cancellation of the missing person report will be made and notification made to all agencies and information systems previously contacted.
5. Where indicated, criminal charges shall be filed with the prosecutor's office.