

## Procedure

# 3.11

**EFFECTIVE  
DATE  
1-15-02**

# Eugene Police Department



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## Child Abductions

### 3.11.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide a standard protocol to follow in the event a child is abducted by a stranger. Statistics show that in cases where abducted children are killed by their captors, 44% are killed within the first hour, and 91% within 24 hours. Activation of this protocol is extremely resource and personnel intensive, and should be used only when abduction by a stranger is strongly suspected. However, it is important that this protocol be implemented as soon as possible when appropriate.

#### PART I - Responsibilities and Procedures for All Personnel

- A. Evaluation of incident
- B. Initiation of Child Abduction Protocol
  - 1. Communications
  - 2. Primary officer
  - 3. Assisting officer(s)
  - 4. Liaison VCU detective
  - 5. Primary and secondary VCU detectives
  - 6. Additional EPD detectives
  - 7. FEU
  - 8. Investigative support personnel
  - 9. Outside agency personnel and resources

#### PART II - Responsibilities and Procedures for Supervisors and Command Personnel

- A. Patrol supervisor
- B. Watch Commander
- C. Investigations Captain
- D. Investigations Support Sergeant
- E. VCU Supervisor
- F. Media

### 3.11.2 RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURES ALL PERSONNEL

- A. Evaluation of Incident
  - 1. If Communications receives a call with information that a child abduction was

witnessed by a reliable witness, or there are any other indications that would lead one to believe it probable a child has been abducted:

- a. Immediately dispatch an officer to contact the complainant.
  - b. Dispatch an officer to the area where the abduction is believed to have occurred.
  - c. Notify a patrol supervisor immediately.
2. If the child is missing under circumstances other than those listed above, refer to Policy 332.
  3. If the child appears to be a runaway, refer to General Order 305.2. (*Converted to Procedure 3.12 - Runaway and Missing Juveniles.*)
  4. If the child has been abducted by a parent, investigate the incident as a Custodial Interference or Kidnapping.

B. Initiation of Child Abduction Protocol

1. Communications
  - a. Notify surrounding police agencies with any pertinent information, such as victim, suspect, and involved vehicle descriptions.
  - b. Send out updated information to our officers and area agencies as often as deemed necessary.
  - c. For time-sensitive information, ensure local and other appropriate agencies are contacted via phone.
  - d. Refer all calls of possible leads to the "hotlines" at the Command Post once those lines are in working order.
2. Primary officer
  - a. Ensure the victim residence and surrounding property, vehicles, and outbuildings are thoroughly searched. (If the child is not located after a short period of time, a second thorough search should be conducted by a different officer.)
  - b. Keep the house as secure and undisturbed as possible, as it may be a crime scene.
  - c. Remain with the family and gather as much information about the victim as possible. Obtain such information as the location the child was last seen, the child's last known activity and accompanying associates, the time the child was last seen and the time she or he was noticed missing, the child's hobbies, friends, habits, hangouts, recent behavioral changes, mental state, relationship with family and friends, diaries,

addresses of friends and relatives in the area, and any prior runaway or missing person history.

- d. As soon as possible, once you have confirmed that this appears to be a child abduction, or that the child is missing under suspicious circumstances and/or that the child is in a potential life-threatening situation, notify Records with information they need to make NCIC computer entries, after obtaining verbal authorization from a supervisor. Information needed includes:
  - name, DOB, and description of child
  - name and vehicle information on suspects(s), if known
  - telephone number which people can call with information (hotline number, if one is established, or 541-682-5111.)
  - officer contact name (normally you or the assigned investigator)

3. Assisting officer(s)

- a. Begin an area/neighborhood canvas using the standardized Child Abduction Canvas Form. Use a form for each location where contact is attempted, whether anyone is contacted or not.
- b. If the location of disappearance is a residence or similar location, thoroughly search and re-search inside and out. Remember that children can hide in places that adults easily overlook.
- c. Continually provide updates of pertinent information to other assisting personnel.

4. Liaison VCU detective

- a. Relieve the primary officer with the victim's family and de-brief him or her for all pertinent information.
- b. Remain with the victim family as liaison between the family and the investigation. Be as honest and informative as possible, consistent with the needs of the investigation.
- c. If the victim is missing from the family residence, you will be responsible to ensure that the house and property have been secured and thoroughly searched and re-searched for the victim and/or evidence.
- d. Regardless of where the abduction is suspected to have taken place, ensure the residence and property is processed completely (searched, photographed, and videotaped).
- e. Oversee evidence collection at the residence by FEU.
- f. Collect evidence that may assist the investigation in the future, such as victim fingerprints, dental and medical releases, and victim DNA samples (e.g., hair, toothbrush).

- g. Screen and record all incoming calls to the family residence.
  - h. Establish a trap trace on the family residence phone(s).
  - i. Ensure that a photo of the missing child is provided to Records, and coordinate with Records personnel to ensure they have received the necessary information and made the appropriate NCIC entries on the missing child.
5. Primary and secondary VCU detectives
- a. Monitor the area searches and canvas for potential immediate leads.
  - b. Consider the use of the Community Emergency Notification System (CENS) to request information from persons in the immediate vicinity of the location where the abduction is believed to have occurred. If its use would be beneficial, contact the Watch Commander or Incident Commander for authorization, and prepare the text of the message you wish to have broadcast *Procedure 11.8 – Community Emergency Notification System, CENS*.
  - c. Consider the use of the Amber Alert system to broadcast information about the abduction, refer *Policy 334 – Amber Alerts*.
  - d. Coordinate abduction scene and other processing with FEU.
  - e. If important witnesses are located, you should be present during those critical interviews.
  - f. Obtain any search warrants or similar instruments necessary during the initial stages of the investigation.
  - g. Conduct suspect or potential suspect interviews arising during the investigation.
6. Additional EPD detectives
- a. You will be assigned responsibilities for searches and canvasses.
  - b. You may be assigned to assist the primary/secondary detectives if necessary.
  - c. You may be assigned to assist outside agency representatives if staffing allows.
  - d. You may be assigned to organize and supervise civilian and volunteer groups who offer assistance and which may be useful to the search. (LCSO may assume this responsibility if their Search and Rescue team becomes involved in the search.)

7. FEU

Respond immediately and report to the VCU Supervisor for scene processing and evidence collection as needed.

8. Investigative support personnel

The Investigations Crime Analyst is to report directly to the designated command post to initiate the "Lead Tracking System" for use by the investigators monitoring the "hot line" phones.

### **3.11.3 RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURES FOR SUPERVISORS AND COMMAND PERSONNEL**

A. Patrol Supervisor

1. If you believe that the Child Abduction Protocol should be activated, make that recommendation to the Watch Commander as soon as possible.
2. Deploy adequate personnel needed for the initial perimeter search and neighborhood canvas.
3. Assume responsibility for the search.
4. Regardless of where the suspected abduction occurred, treat the family residence as a crime scene. It is recommended an area such as the living room area be cleared and maintained as an area for the primary officer to remain with the family. It is necessary for someone to remain in the residence with access to the phone in the event the case is a kidnap for ransom.
5. Once the Child Abduction Protocol has been activated, a command post should be established and Investigations Command notified. When choosing a site for the command post, you would normally select a site with these characteristics:
  - close to the suspected abduction location
  - able to accommodate the anticipated personnel and equipment from EPD and assisting agencies
  - out of sight of the victim family residence
6. Ensure canvassing officers use the standardized Child Abduction Canvas Form and that they have clear direction as to the parameters of the area to be searched or canvassed.
7. Depending on the time delay and location, consider roadblocks and/or observation posts at the appropriate locations.
8. Consider contacting LCSO concerning use of their helicopter.

9. Contact the Public Information Officer (PIO) for response to coordinate immediate media assistance and ongoing inquiries.
- B. Watch Commander
1. Determine whether to activate the Child Abduction Protocol.
  2. If you activate the protocol, notify the Investigations Captain.
- C. Investigations Captain
1. Assume overall command of the search and investigation.
  2. Assign an Investigations Sergeant as the Support Sergeant.
- D. Investigations Support Sergeant
1. Ensure all needed EPD detectives are called to the scene to report to the VCU Supervisor.
  2. Ensure FEU is called out to report to the VCU Supervisor.
  3. Ensure command bus and other logistical needs (e.g., food, drinks) are met.
  4. Maintain liaison with outside agencies for requests for assistance (e.g., air support, search dogs, personnel.)
  5. Coordinate information to be released to the media via the PIO. Investigators should not be directly involved with the press.
  6. Designate one or more phone line(s) to be given out as “hot lines” for information regarding the case. These lines should be monitored by sworn personnel, preferably detectives, at all times during the initial stages of the investigation at a location as close to the command post as possible.
  7. Coordinate with other EPD command personnel.
  8. Assist the VCU supervisor as needed.
- E. VCU Supervisor
1. Directly supervise the search and investigation from the command post.
  2. Assign a primary and secondary case detective as well as a “liaison” detective to remain with the family.
  3. Ensure immediate FEU call-out and FBI notification.
  4. Assign and coordinate any outside agency personnel and resources.

5. Maintain direct and constant contact with a District Attorney's Office representative.
6. Assist with information dissemination via the PIO and Investigations Captain.
7. Hold short and concise briefings as necessary to keep all personnel apprised of the status of the case.
8. Ensure appropriate information is disseminated to patrol and other involved personnel as necessary.

F. Media

1. A media staging area should be established away from both the family residence and the command post.
2. If available, the PIO or other designated person should be the contact for the media during the initial stages of the investigation.
3. The media should be utilized as soon as possible to disseminate necessary information for public assistance.
4. Update the media regularly to dissuade them from attempting to gather information on their own which may interfere with, or otherwise jeopardize, the investigation.
5. Release only details of investigative activity deemed essential to the recovery of the child. Always consider the risk to the child created by releasing information, and remember that the abductor may be in the audience.
6. All media releases should be cleared with investigative command personnel prior to release.
7. All media releases should contain EPD phone number(s) that will be monitored 24 hours a day as well as the toll free number for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children® (1.800.843.5678) once a report has been filed with that agency.