



# **TALLAHASSEE POLICE DEPARTMENT**

## **GENERAL ORDERS**

 Proudly Policing Since 1826	<b>SUBJECT</b>  Missing Adult Investigations		 Nationally Accredited 1986
	<b>CHIEF OF POLICE</b>  <i>Signature on File</i>		
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### **AUTHORITY/RELATED REFERENCES**

CID10, Case Management  
CID12, Follow-up Investigations  
CIRC 2.11, Missing Person Response  
CIRC 7, Follow Up Investigations  
FDLE Criminal Justice Systems Manual  
FS Chapter 937, Missing Person Investigations  
General Order 12, Radio Communications  
General Order 18, Criminal Investigations  
General Order 43, Missing Juveniles/Interference with Custody  
RCD 9, Validations

### **ACCREDITATION REFERENCES**

CALEA Chapter 41  
CFA Chapter 18

### **KEY WORD INDEX**

**Annual Review**  
**Investigative Follow-up**  
**Missing Adult Investigations**  
**Missing/Endangered Adult Investigations**  
**Project Lifesaver**  
**Purple Alert Activation Protocols**  
**Recovery and Cancellation Procedures**  
**Silver Alert Activation Protocols**  
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## **POLICY**

Officers are responsible for adhering to legal mandates and policy protocols in investigating missing adult incidents.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**A Child Is Missing:** A non-profit organization that operates a call center 24 hours a day, designed to assist law enforcement in locating missing children, elderly persons, and disabled individuals. A Child Is Missing utilizes a phone bank, determined by the zip code of the search area, to disseminate information on the missing individuals in a timely manner (referred to as a “neighborhood call alert”). Contact number: 1-888-875-2246; website: [www.achildismissing.org](http://www.achildismissing.org).

**Adult:** A person 18 years of age or older.

**Dynamic Message Sign:** A programmable traffic control device that displays messages composed of any combination of letters, symbols, and graphics, used to provide information to motorists about changing highway conditions, special events, or safety alerts.

**MEPIC:** Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse. A Florida Department of Law Enforcement program that provides liaison among citizens, private organizations, and law enforcement agencies regarding missing children information.

MEPIC services are available 24 hours a day and can be accessed at 1-888-356-4774 (1-888-FL-MISSING).

**Missing Adult:** a person 18 years of age or older whose temporary or permanent residence is in, or is believed to be in, this state, whose location has not been determined, and who has been reported as missing to a law enforcement agency.

**Missing/Endangered Adult:** An adult whose location is unknown and is considered endangered based upon specific criteria (see section II below).

**Project Lifesaver Program:** A nationwide program that helps locate people with cognitive disorders who may wander away, such as those with Alzheimer’s, autism, dementia, or other cognitive disorders. Participants wear a tracking device that emits a signal.

**Purple Alert System:** A State of Florida program which broadcasts information to the public in a timely manner regarding missing adults suffering from a mental or cognitive disability that is not Alzheimer’s disease or a dementia-related

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disorder; an intellectual disability or a developmental disability; a brain injury; other physical, mental or emotional disabilities that are not related to substance abuse; or a combination of any of these and whose disappearance poses a credible threat of immediate danger or seriously bodily harm.

**Reporting Person:** The parent, legal guardian, next of kin, physician, friend, or neighbor of the missing adult, or other authoritative source with a relationship with the missing adult.

**Silver Alert System:** A State of Florida program that broadcasts information to the public in a timely manner regarding missing/endangered adults who suffer from irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties (e.g., dementia). The alert may be for a local/regional area or a statewide broadcast.

### PROCEDURES

#### I. MISSING ADULT INVESTIGATIONS

- A. Upon being dispatched or otherwise made aware of a report of a missing adult, officers are responsible for responding to the call for service without delay.
- B. When investigating a missing adult incident, officers shall meet with the reporting person and confirm:
  - 1. The missing person is an adult (if not, refer to General Order 43, Missing Juveniles/Interference with Custody), and
  - 2. The missing adult was last seen in the City of Tallahassee, in order to establish proper jurisdiction. If not, refer the reporting person to the appropriate law enforcement agency with jurisdiction.
- C. When investigating a missing adult incident, officers shall be mindful of the following:
  - 1. A report may be taken at any time after the reporting person notifies the Department, regardless of the amount of time the person has been missing, and
  - 2. The fact that the missing adult lives outside of the city limits of Tallahassee does not have any bearing on whether or not the Department will complete a missing adult report or conduct a follow-up investigation.

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- D. When investigating a missing adult incident, officers are responsible for adhering to the applicable protocols of General Order 18 (Criminal Investigations), and shall:
1. Determine if the absence is a significant deviation from the adult's established patterns of behavior that cannot be explained.
  2. Assess if the missing person should be considered a missing/endangered adult (see section II A below), and
  3. Obtain pertinent biographical data and other appropriate information about the missing adult to include, at a minimum:
    - a. Full name,
    - b. Date of birth,
    - c. Use of aliases or other names (including maiden name),
    - d. Place of birth by city, county, and state,
    - e. Physical description to include all aspects of appearance (including scars, marks, tattoos), and clothing worn when last seen,
    - f. Mental and physical history/condition (e.g., suicide risk),
    - g. Current financial situation, to include:
      - 1) Bank name(s),
      - 2) Account number(s),
      - 3) Any recent suspicious banking transactions, and
      - 4) The availability of cash or credit/debit cards,
    - h. Place(s) of employment and/or university/college attending,
    - i. Vehicle description(s) to include license plate number(s),
    - j. Social Security Number, and

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- k. Names and contact information for family members and friends who might be contacted by the missing adult or may assist the Department with any follow-up investigation.
- E. In addition to the information described in subsection D above, officers investigating a missing adult incident should obtain a recent photograph of the adult.
- F. The primary officer is responsible for coordinating with the Consolidated Dispatch Agency (CDA) to broadcast a radio/teletype BOLO (Be On the Look Out) for the missing adult.
  - 1. The BOLO should include the missing adult's name, description, vehicle description (if applicable), and possible destination (if known).
  - 2. The circumstances of the incident information should determine the broadcast area of the teletype BOLO.
- G. The primary officer is responsible for ensuring the missing adult's identifying information is entered into FCIC/NCIC within two (2) hours of receipt of the report:
  - 1. The offense report does not have to be complete and approved prior to FCIC/NCIC entry.
  - 2. An SVU designee will ensure the adult's identifying information has been entered into NamUs within 90 days of the agency receiving the report that the adult is missing.
  - 3. The missing adult's identifying information may be called into the CDA Shift Supervisor for FCIC/NCIC entry.
  - 4. If the missing adult is not considered missing/endangered, the FCIC/NCIC entry should be "missing adult – other."
  - 5. Alert the CDA when the offense report is complete so the report may be electronically accessed for data entry verification and filing into the CDA Missing Persons File.
  - 6. If a photograph of the missing adult is available, the primary officer should provide the photo to the CDA to be scanned into the FCIC/NCIC database, making note of when the photo was taken.

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- a. The primary officer should also ensure the Special Victims Unit (SVU) Detective receives a copy of the photograph.
  - b. If the photo is provided electronically, the primary officer should e-mail the image to the CDA Shift Supervisor and the SVU Detective/Supervisor.
- H. Officers should conduct checks at the following locations:
  - 1. Places frequented by the missing adult,
  - 2. Hospitals (including the morgue) and mental health facilities,
  - 3. Jails,
  - 4. Residences of friends and relatives,
  - 5. Homeless shelters, and
  - 6. Place(s) of employment.
- I. When possible, officers should respond to the last known location of the missing/endangered adult to canvass the area, interview witnesses, and conduct any further investigation necessary.
- J. In situations when the SVU does not respond to assist or assume the investigation, the primary officer is responsible for sending an email to the "TPD CID On-Call Notifications Group." The following information should be included in the message:
  - 1. Case number, name, and age of the missing adult, and
  - 2. Any additional information deemed necessary by the officer.
- K. The primary officer is responsible for the timely completion of the original offense report, documenting the information obtained and actions taken as described in this section, to include any leads for investigative follow-up.

## II. MISSING/ENDANGERED ADULT INVESTIGATIONS

- A. When any of the following criteria are met regarding the missing adult or the circumstances involved in the disappearance, the person is considered a missing/endangered adult:

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1. The adult has a documented physical/mental disability or is senile, thereby subjecting themselves or others to personal and imminent danger (meet the criteria for activation of the Silver or Purple Alert).
  2. The adult is in the company of another person under circumstances which places the adult in physical danger.
  3. There are circumstances indicating the adult's disappearance is not voluntary (e.g., kidnapping).
  4. The adult is missing after a man-made or natural catastrophe.
  5. The adult is declared unemancipated as defined by the laws of their state of residence.
  6. A missing adult younger than 26 years of age.
- B. When investigating a missing/endangered adult incident, officers shall ensure (in addition to the protocols of section I above), that the following procedures are adhered to:
1. Ensure the missing adult's identifying information (and their vehicle information if applicable) is entered into FCIC/NCIC as "missing/endangered."
  2. Activate A Child Is Missing as soon as possible in incidents where the adult has possibly wandered away (due to being elderly, senile, suffering a medical condition, or other reason).
  3. If A Child Is Missing is utilized, the officer making the call should be able to answer all operator questions and have the following information readily available:
    - a. Location, zip code(s), and search area,
    - b. Description of the missing adult, and
    - c. Telephone number for the public to call.
  4. Consider utilizing the Silver or Purple Alert System in incidents where the missing/endangered adult is traveling in a vehicle (see sections III and IV below).

5. Documenting the information obtained and actions taken as described in this subsection in the original or a supplemental offense report.
- C. When investigating a missing/endangered adult incident, the primary officer is responsible for promptly notifying the appropriate first-line supervisor, and:
1. Providing a status briefing to the supervisor,
  2. Determining whether any additional law enforcement resources are needed (e.g., canine, air support, dive team, investigative staff),
  3. Ascertaining what additional investigative steps, notifications, or precautions should be taken, and take such actions without delay, and
  4. Obtaining supervisory approval to notify the on-call SVU Detective.
- D. Based upon the circumstances of the incident, a supervisor may approve or direct an area or neighborhood search in an attempt to locate the missing/endangered adult.
1. Large-scale searches requiring activation of additional members or requesting personnel from other agencies must first have approval of the watch commander or higher Department authority.
  2. In the event the missing adult is located in a situation that would require a rescue operation, the watch commander or designee is responsible for coordinating the operation with other agencies (e.g., Tallahassee Fire Department, Leon County Sheriff's Office) in adherence to established Incident Command System protocols.

### **III. SILVER ALERT ACTIVATION PROTOCOLS**

- A. The Silver Alert System should be activated as soon as possible when the missing/endangered adult investigation meets the following criteria:
1. Officers believe the activation and utilization of dynamic message signs will aid in the safe recovery of the missing/endangered adult.
  2. The missing/endangered adult is either:



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- a. Sixty (60) years of age or older, and there is a clear indication that the individual has an irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties (e.g., Alzheimer's disease or dementia), or
    - b. Eighteen (18) to 59 years of age, and officers have determined the adult has an irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties, and officers believe the utilization of dynamic message signs may be the only way to rescue the missing/endangered adult, and
  3. All of the tasks in subsection D below have been completed.
- B. Officers shall determine if the Silver Alert will be a local/regional or state activation based on the following circumstances:
1. State Activation
    - a. The missing/endangered adult is traveling in a vehicle (with an identifiable license plate or other vehicle information).
  2. Local/Regional
    - a. The missing/endangered adult is believed to be traveling on foot in a recognized area.
- C. Officers may be able to determine if the missing/endangered adult has irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties by asking the reporting person if any of the following apply to the missing/endangered adult:
1. Diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or a related disorder,
  2. Has significant memory loss,
  3. Has experienced significant changes in their ability to make decisions and conduct life affairs, or
  4. Prescribed medications for memory problems or Alzheimer's disease.
- D. Officers are responsible for ensuring the completion of the following tasks before contacting the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) for a Silver Alert System activation:
1. The missing adult's information is entered into FCIC/NCIC and disseminated in a statewide BOLO message.

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2. If available, the vehicle description and license plate number are available and verified by law enforcement officials.
  3. The missing person's information has been disseminated to the media or the Public Information Office (i.e., media alert), and
  4. A Department sworn supervisor authorizes the activation.
- E. To activate the Silver Alert System, the officer making the request shall:
1. Contact MEPIC at 1-888-356-4774, and
  2. Provide the following information to the operator:
    - a. The adult's name and other information requested,
    - b. The verified vehicle description and license plate number, and
    - c. Notification of the completion of the:
      - 1) Statewide BOLO issuance, and
      - 2) A local media alert.
- F. If the SVU (on-call Detective and/or Sergeant) has not been notified before a Silver Alert System activation, the primary officer is responsible for making such notification contemporaneous to the activation.

#### **IV. PURPLE ALERT ACTIVATION PROTOCOLS**

- A. Officers shall determine if the Purple Alert will be a state or local/regional activation based on the following circumstances:
1. State Activation
    - a. All criteria in subsection B below are met.
  2. Local/Regional
    - a. All criteria in subsection B below are met, except the known vehicle requirement.
    - b. The missing/endangered adult is believed to be traveling on foot in a recognized area, or the method of travel is not known.

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- B. The Purple Alert System should be activated as soon as possible for a missing/endangered adult if the following criteria are met:
1. Officers believe the activation and utilization of dynamic message signs will aid in the safe recovery of the missing/endangered adult.
  2. The missing/endangered person is an adult:
    - a. Does not meet the criteria for a Silver Alert
    - b. Has an intellectual disability or a developmental disability, brain injury, or other physical, mental, or emotional disability that is not related to substance abuse and does not have Alzheimer's disease or a dementia-related disorder;
    - c. Disappeared in a manner which indicates there is a credible threat of immediate danger or serious bodily harm to the missing person, and
    - d. Cannot be returned to safety without law enforcement intervention; and
    - e. There is a detailed description of the missing person suitable for distribution,
    - f. There is a description of a vehicle and a verified tag number to display on the Florida Department of Transportation dynamic highway signs. (Required for State activation).
  3. All of the tasks in subsection D below have been completed.
- C. Officers may be able to determine if the missing/endangered adult meets the requirements of the Purple Alert by asking the reporting person if any of the following apply to the missing/endangered adult:
1. Diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or a dementia-related disorder (would disqualify them),
  2. Diagnosed with an intellectual disability or a developmental disability,
  3. Had a brain injury,
  4. Diagnosed with another physical, mental, or emotional disability that is not related to substance abuse.

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5. Has experienced significant changes in their ability to make decisions and conduct life affairs, or
  6. Prescribed medications for memory problems or Alzheimer's disease (may disqualify them).
- D. Officers are responsible for ensuring the completion of the following tasks before contacting the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) for a Purple Alert System activation:
1. The missing adult's information is entered into FCIC/NCIC and disseminated in a statewide BOLO message.
  2. The vehicle description and license plate number are available and verified by law enforcement officials.
  3. The missing person's information has been disseminated to the media or the Public Information Office (i.e., media alert), and
  4. A Department sworn supervisor authorizes the activation.
- E. To activate the State Purple Alert System, the officer making the request shall:
1. Contact MEPIC at 1-888-356-4774, and
  2. Provide the following information to the operator:
    - a. The adult's name and other information requested,
    - b. The verified vehicle description and license plate number, and
    - c. Notification of the completion of the:
      - 1) Statewide BOLO issuance, and
      - 2) A local media alert.
- F. To activate a Local/Regional Purple Alert, the officer making the request shall ensure the following are completed:
1. Contact media outlets in the affected area or surrounding jurisdictions;

2. Inform all on-duty law enforcement officers of the missing adult report; and
  3. Communicate the report to any other law enforcement agency in the county of jurisdiction.
- G. If the SVU (on-call Detective and/or Sergeant) has not been notified prior to Purple Alert System activation, the primary officer is responsible for making such notification contemporaneous to the activation.

**V. PROJECT LIFESAVER**

- A. The Tallahassee Police Department recognizes the advantages of technology. The Project Lifesaver program is an officially endorsed technological resource of the Agency. All Project Lifesaver certified search technicians will be trained in the use of the Project Lifesaver Mobile Locator equipment, installation and maintenance of client transmitter equipment, and response/search procedures.
- B. The administration, registration, and maintenance of the Project Lifesaver Program shall fall under the Special Victims Unit.
- C. When responding to the scene of a missing person, the officer should determine if the subject is an active member in the Project Lifesaver program and currently wearing a tracking bracelet. This can be determined by:
  1. Notification from the Consolidated Dispatch Center that the subject is flagged as a member of the Project Lifesaver program.
  2. Notification by the caller/reporting person.
  3. Existing LERMS report related to membership in Project Lifesaver. If there is reason to believe the subject may be a member of the Project Lifesaver program, but it cannot be determined by these means. The patrol supervisor shall contact the on-call Special Victims Unit (SVU) detective to access the Project Lifesaver registration portal for confirmation.
- D. Upon determination that the missing person is an active member of the Project Lifesaver program, the on-call SVU detective shall be called to the scene to assist.

- E. It will be the responsibility of the responding detective to determine if more search officers are required based on the circumstances of the scene. If this is the case, they shall contact the on-call criminal investigations bureau sergeant and request additional assistance.
- F. All usage of the Project Lifesaver equipment shall be documented in the report associated with the event and reported to the SVU Sergeant for documentation in the Project Lifesaver Portal.

**VI. INVESTIGATIVE FOLLOW-UP**

- A. The SVU Sergeant shall ensure a Detective is assigned to conduct a follow-up investigation on all recently occurred and unresolved missing adult incidents initially investigated by the Department.
- B. When Department investigative follow-up is requested or required in missing adult incidents initially investigated by another agency, the SVU Sergeant will coordinate those efforts with the affected agency.
- C. In the course of the missing adult follow-up investigation, the assigned Detective shall:
  - 1. Ensure the adult's identifying information (and their vehicle information if applicable) has been entered into FCIC/NCIC.
  - 2. Maintain contact with family members to provide frequent updates on the investigative progress.
  - 3. Whenever an adult is missing for more than 30 days, request the family or next of kin to provide written consent to contact the dentist of the missing person to request dental records and ensure their dental records are entered into FCIC/NCIC Dental File.
  - 4. Whenever an adult is missing for more than 90 days, attempt to obtain a biological specimen of the adult and submit it to the FDLE for DNA analysis.
  - 5. When appropriate, contact the news media, via the Public Information Office, for the release of information to the public regarding the missing adult or investigative efforts in the case.
  - 6. When appropriate, arrange to have the adult's information published in the FDLE Criminal Activity Bulletin.

**VII. RECOVERY AND CANCELLATION PROCEDURES**

- A. In missing adult incidents investigated by the Department where the missing adult has returned or is located, the assigned officer or Detective shall adhere to the following:
1. If possible, contact the adult to verify the return.
    - a. Ensure the adult is safe, and assess the need for medical attention.
    - b. Interview the adult to obtain additional information regarding the incident, and
    - c. When the incident is a criminal offense (e.g., abduction), ascertain additional information regarding the offense and the possibility of additional offenses committed against the adult.
  2. If the adult is located and is safe, but does not want their whereabouts made known to others:
    - a. Do not inform anyone of the adult's location, and
    - b. Advise the reporting person of the safety and welfare of the missing adult.
  3. If appropriate, ensure a cancellation BOLO is issued and make any needed cancellation notifications:
    - a. FCIC/NCIC (if initiated by the Department),
    - b. A Child is Missing,
    - c. Silver Alert,
    - d. Purple Alert,
    - e. Project Lifesaver, and
    - f. Media Alert (via the Public Information Office).
  4. If applicable, return the adult's photograph to the appropriate person.

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5. Complete a supplemental report under the original Department case number to document the return/recovery, to include:
  - a. The adult's activity while missing, if known,
  - b. The reason for their absence, if known, and
  - c. Removal from FCIC/NCIC.
- B. In missing adult incidents investigated/originated by another agency, generate a new Department case number and:
  1. If possible, interview the adult about the reason for the disappearance.
  2. Complete an original offense report entitled "Missing Person Recovered," and
  3. Ensure the originating agency is notified by teletype that the missing adult has been located.

### **VIII. VALIDATION PROCEDURES**

- A. The Department is responsible for determining whether or not missing person information should be maintained in the FCIC/NCIC databases.
- B. This validation process shall occur monthly and is the responsibility of the SVU sergeant.

### **IX. ANNUAL REVIEW**

On an annual basis, the CIB Commander shall oversee an annual review of each case entered into NamUs to determine whether the entry should remain in the database. The annual report shall include the missing person's name, entry date, and whether the entry should be maintained in the database. This report will be submitted to the Deputy Chief.

History: previous title (*missing/endangered adults*) – issued 01/12/1996, revised 10/15/2001, 12/22/2008 (*change of title – missing adult investigations*), 07/21/2011, 08/01/2013, 07/15/2022, and 11/15/2024.