

What to Do if Your Child is Missing

The Child Lures Early Response System

While statistically rare, abduction puts a child's life in extreme danger. 74% of abducted children who are murdered are killed within three hours of the abduction. Therefore it is essential to determine as quickly as possible whether or not a child has been abducted. Since most missing kids are runaways who return home within three days, police often assume that even very young missing children are mere runaways. Sometimes it is up to parents to convince the authorities otherwise.

If Your Child is Missing:

1. Try not to panic, but act swiftly.
2. Search your home (under beds, in closets, etc.) and its immediate area thoroughly, including your child's favorite hangouts.
3. Call neighbors, relatives, your child's friends – anyone who may have seen him/her or have an idea where s/he may be.
4. Ask yourself the following questions:
 - Y / N** Has the child ever run away from home (or threatened to)?
 - Y / N** Are any of the child's clothes missing?
 - Y / N** Is money missing? (yours or the child's)
 - Y / N** Are any of the child's favorite possessions (diary, doll, photos, music) missing?
 - Y / N** Is the child older than age 10?
 - Y / N** Has the child been recently depressed, withdrawn, or moody?
 - Y / N** Are there unhappy circumstances at home? (Pending/recent divorce, physical violence, alcoholism, sexual abuse, etc.)
 - Y / N** Has the child lost enthusiasm for activities once considered important?
 - Y / N** Have the child's grades dropped recently?
 - Y / N** Has the child suddenly withdrawn from favorite family members or friends?
 - Y / N** Has the child acquired new friends of whom you disapprove?
 - Y / N** Does the child have a history of substance use/abuse?

If the answer to most of these questions is "No", a runaway situation is *highly unlikely*, and you should **CALL THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY**.

5. Be prepared to give the police:
 - Recent photograph
 - Physical description: height, weight, identifying marks, what they were last seen wearing
 - Child's dental records, DNA and/or fingerprints
 - Where child was last seen/going/coming from
 - Be thorough, but brief

6. Limit access to your home until law enforcement arrives.
7. Be completely honest with law enforcement - including any problems at home.
8. Explain why you feel your child is not a runaway by reviewing the questions in #4.
9. Request police activate AMBER Alert for your child
10. Ask for a copy of the police report and name of investigating officer; check back to obtain status of case.
11. Notify the media.
 - Television (Assignment Editor/Producer)
 - Radio Stations (Station Manager)
 - Newspaper (City Desk Editor)
12. Be sure your child's name and identifiers are immediately entered into NCIC (National Crime Information Center) missing person file. If the local agency will not enter your child, contact the nearest FBI office, who must enter the child according to the Federal Missing Children Act (Public Law 97-292).
13. Call the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) at 1-800-THE-LOST.
14. Mobilize relatives, neighbors, your child's friends and their families, clergy, etc.
 - Ask everyone to immediately call their VIP community contacts (i.e. police chief, principal, district attorney, district representative, mayor)
 - Go door-to-door (there is nearly always somebody who has seen something)
15. Post someone at the home phone.
 - Keep the line open at all times (contact phone company for emergency call-waiting)
 - Keep incoming calls brief
16. Stress the 3-hour life expectancy of the criminally abducted child.
 - Urge police and media cooperation.
 - Share new information immediately with police.



Consider sharing this criteria with your local police. Many do not have this type of plan in place.

NOTE: The plan above should be executed only in an emergency. For the sake of all involved, don't "cry wolf" needlessly.

Helpful Websites & Numbers

Internet Amber Alerts: codeamber.org
 Natl. Sex Offender Public Registry: nsopr.gov
 Child Help USA: childhelpusa.org
 Natl. Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-4-A-CHILD