MISSING PERSONS INVESTIGATION

DEFINITIONS

- MISSING ADULT – A person 18 years of age or older who is unaccounted for, when the reason for, and/or cause of the absence is unknown.

- MISSING CHILD - A person who is:
  1. Under the age of 18 years; and
  2. The subject of a Missing Persons Report filed with a law enforcement agency and whose whereabouts is unknown. (Family Law Article, Sec. 9-401)

- CRITICAL FACTORS - Any factors or unusual circumstances that lead the investigating deputy to believe that a missing person may be in danger. A missing person is considered critically missing by the existence of one or more critical factors, which include:
  1. A missing child who is believed to be out of the zone of safety for his/her age and developmental stage.
  2. A missing person who is drug dependent and the dependency is potentially life threatening.
  3. The missing person has been missing for more than 24 hours before being reported to the police.
  4. Based on available information it is believed that a missing child is in the company of adults who would endanger his/her welfare.
  5. The absence is inconsistent with the missing person’s established patterns of behavior and the deviation cannot be readily explained.
  6. Any circumstances that would cause a reasonable person to conclude that a missing child should be considered “at risk”.
  7. A child whose residence is in the proximity of a known child sex offender.

MISSING CHILD

- Upon receipt of a report regarding a missing child by the Harford County Sheriff’s Office (HCSO), the investigating deputy shall immediately determine if:
  1. The missing child has not been the subject of a prior Missing Persons Report;
  2. The missing child suffers from a mental or physical handicap or illness;
  3. The disappearance of the missing child is of a suspicious or dangerous nature;
  4. The person filing the report of a missing child has reason to believe that the missing child may have been abducted;
  5. The missing child has ever previously been the subject of a child abuse report filed with the State or a local law enforcement agency; or
  6. The missing child is under 14 years of age. (Family Law Article, Sec. 9-402)
REPORT PROCESS

INITIAL REPORTS
• Deputies shall respond promptly and initiate an investigation.
• Once it has been determined the person is unaccounted for, the investigating deputy shall complete a Missing Person Report Form (State of Maryland Form #MPR-1).
• The investigating deputy shall attempt to obtain a recent photograph of the missing person and attach it to the Missing Persons Report.
• The complainant shall be given the Complainant Copy (gold copy) of the Missing Persons Report.
• The investigating deputy shall inform the Duty Officer of all critical cases (classifications other than C/M and A/M).
• Deputies shall provide Dispatch with updated information for broadcast as it becomes available.
• The investigating deputy shall complete the Missing Persons Report prior to the end of his/her shift and forward same to the Duty Officer for approval.
• Upon review by the Duty Officer, the PIO and CID shall be notified if deemed necessary.
• The Duty Officer shall complete the Missing Persons Log Book when approving the Missing Persons Report.
• The Duty Officer shall immediately forward the approved Missing Persons Report to Central Records for immediate entry into MILES and NCIC.
• Original reports and supplements shall be retained in Central Records. Copies shall be retained by the investigating deputy.

FOLLOW-UP INVESTIGATION
• The investigating deputy shall conduct a follow-up investigation within 48 hours after the initial report. Additional follow-ups shall be conducted at least every 5 days. After 30 days a follow-up shall be conducted on a monthly basis.
• If the investigating deputy is unable to meet a follow-up deadline due to a scheduling conflict (training, extended leave, sick leave, etc.) it shall be the responsibility of the deputy to notify his/her supervisor of the conflict. The case shall then be assigned to another deputy for follow-up by the Duty Officer/Supervisor.
• Patrol deputies will generally be assigned follow-ups on all C/M and A/M cases.
• Deputies are required to follow up and document all leads.
• Deputies shall forward completed follow-up reports to the Duty Officer/Supervisor for review. The Duty Officer/Supervisor shall update the Missing Persons Log when approving follow-up reports.
• The investigating deputy shall be responsible for the investigation unless otherwise notified by his/her supervisor.
• If a case is upgraded beyond C/M or A/M classifications, a CID supervisor shall be notified by the Duty Officer. The CID supervisor shall, after review of the case, determine if the case will be assigned to
CID for follow-up. The CID supervisor shall immediately notify the investigating deputy and his/her supervisor of his/her decision.

- Confirmation of returned persons shall be made **in person** by a deputy, unless otherwise authorized by the Duty Officer.
- Deputies shall conduct a return interview with the missing person to verify the condition of the person and to ascertain the reason for his/her disappearance. This information shall be documented in the follow-up report and a copy shall be forwarded to the investigating deputy.
- A Missing Persons Supplement (Form SO-068) shall be utilized in follow-up investigations when the missing person has returned or been located.
- Confirmation (reports) of returned persons shall be immediately faxed by the Duty Officer to Central Records for immediate removal from MILES and NCIC.

### CLASSIFICATION CODES

#### CHILDREN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C/K</td>
<td>A missing child who is reasonably believed to have been kidnapped or abducted by someone other than a parent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPC</td>
<td>A missing child who is reasonably believed to have been abducted by a parent or guardian who has legal custody. Include all cases where there is no formal custody agreement to the contrary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPW</td>
<td>A missing child who is reasonably believed to have been abducted by a parent or guardian who does not have custody. Include only those cases where it has been reported that a formal custody agreement to the contrary exists.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C/C</td>
<td>A missing child who is considered critically missing by the existence of one or more critical factors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C/M</td>
<td>A missing child 14 years of age or older for whom no critical factors are known to exist.</td>
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#### ADULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A/D</td>
<td>A missing adult documented as suffering from a mental or physical disability or is senile.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A/E</td>
<td>A missing adult documented as being in the company of another person under circumstances indicating his/her physical safety is in danger.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A/I</td>
<td>A missing adult under circumstances indicating the disappearance was not voluntary, i.e. kidnap or abduction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A/M</td>
<td>A missing adult in which no critical factors are known to exist.</td>
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“A CHILD IS MISSING” PROGRAM

PURPOSE
• To establish an orderly and uniform process for the use of A CHILD IS MISSING program.
• The first several hours after a child, elderly, or disabled person is reported missing can be critical to the successful outcome of the case. A CHILD IS MISSING (ACIM) is a valuable tool for law enforcement if used properly. ACIM provides timely information to the public about the missing person. ACIM will generate telephone calls to local residents or businesses after initiation by law enforcement.
• ACIM is an additional tool for law enforcement. It does not replace or preclude a thorough investigation and/or search by law enforcement personnel or other public safety agencies in the field.

POLICY
• It shall be the Policy of the Harford County Sheriff’s to utilize the ACIM only for missing children, elderly and disabled persons, whenever the criteria of the following procedures are met.

MISSING PERSONS
• Whenever a deputy receives a report of a missing person, the case shall be investigated without delay.
• If the missing person is a child (2-6 years of age), an elderly person (with Alzheimer’s) or a disabled person (in danger), the investigating deputy may immediately notify ACIM.
• All other circumstances would require approval of a supervisor for the use of ACIM.

FACTORS FOR DETERMINING THE USE OF ACIM
• Juveniles:
  1. The juvenile should be 18 years or younger (age depends on state regulations).
  2. The reporting person must be an adult family member, teacher or another adult who is responsible for the child.
  3. All runaway children.
  4. Stranger abduction prior to calling the Amber Alert.
  5. College students.
• Senior Citizens:
  1. The person must be sixty-five (65) years of age or older, unless the person has Alzheimer’s.
  2. Being missing must be out of character for the elderly person.
  3. ACIM shall be used even if an elderly person is a frequent walkaway from a nursing facility.
• Disabled Persons:
  1. There is no age stipulation for a disabled person.
  2. Caution must be used when determining whether a person is truly disabled. There are many definitions of a disabled person. For
purposes of this policy, a disabled person shall fall into one of the following categories:

a. The person has a physical or mental impairment that severely limits self care.

b. The person is disoriented or unable to respond to simple questions regarding personal information, such as name and address.

c. The person is dependent upon life sustaining medication.

d. The approving supervisor may take into account other circumstances that may influence using ACIM even if the person is a habitual runaway or walkaway. (Examples of these circumstances are: suspected foul play, imminent severe weather, etc.).

**USING ACIM**

- Prior to calling ACIM the approving supervisor shall determine what phone number will be supplied to ACIM for the public to contact the HCSO with information concerning the missing person. This number would normally be the Duty Officer’s phone number at the respective precinct. The approving supervisor shall also contact the EOC supervisor to make them aware that ACIM will be working on the case with the HCSO in the event they should receive any calls.

- When the decision to use ACIM has been made, the investigating deputy or his/her supervisor shall immediately call ACIM (24 hours/day, 7 days/week, 365 days/year) at 1-888-875-ACIM (2246) or page the operator at 1-954-492-4778.

**INVESTIGATIVE INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM ACIM**

- Information received from a citizen concerning the missing or a possible sighting of the missing person shall be relayed to the supervisor in charge of the investigation. After evaluation, the supervisor, detective or deputy shall take the appropriate action.

- If a sighting of the missing person is confirmed, the supervisor may want to consider utilizing ACIM again. The second telephone alert would use the most recent known location in the notification of residents. This is particularly important if the sighting location is in a different ZIP Code than the original report.

- If ACIM is used more than once in the same case, there is no need to fill out additional paperwork. A notation of each instance shall be written on the existing report. The notation shall include each subsequent use by date, time and the location the missing person was last seen.

**FOLLOW-UP INVESTIGATION**

- If the missing person is found, the deputy/supervisor on the scene shall call ACIM.

- A “Case Follow-Up Report” (Utilized by ACIM) will be faxed to the HCSO and shall be completed by the deputy/supervisor in charge of the investigation. Upon completion, the report shall be faxed to ACIM at 1-954-763-4569. A copy of this report shall also be attached to the original incident report.
If the missing person is not found within twenty-four (24) hours, the supervisor shall pass the information on to the next shift and make them aware that ACIM is working with them.

If additional calls are necessary, ACIM will know what areas have been called and can assist in further searches.