

“MY CHILD IS MISSING!”



## A guide to help you survive

From the:

The Groveport Police Department

655 Blacklick Street

Groveport, Ohio 43125

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Chief of Police

A parent's worst nightmare would be that their child is missing. Everyday children are missing from homes throughout the United States, as well as other countries.

Why do kids run away? Why do non-custodial parents abduct their children? Why do perpetrators steal babies from hospitals? These questions pose a serious threat to our children. That is why we, the Grovesport Police Department, want to let you know **WE CARE!**

This guide will help you understand what to do if you encounter the crisis of a missing child.

According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, nearly 800,000 children are reported missing annually. NCMEC states that the “rising awareness of crimes against children – and of missing children in particular – has left many families feeling vulnerable.”

NCMEC tells us that the most important key to child safety is effective communication with your child and not to count on fancy gadgets and gimmicks to protect your child.

In most cases, our officers are parents and grandparents. This is one of the reasons that *any* missing child case is the most important case that we can possibly respond to.

As soon as you are aware that your child is missing you should **immediately call the police.** Don't waste time by calling neighbors and friends. Call us right away. After you make the call, start your immediate search but be ready to talk to an officer.

The first few moments of any missing child call is the most overwhelming. Try and stay as calm as possible.

Although many police agencies have special bureaus and specially assigned officers handling such calls, the Grovesport Police Department is small but we have the resources to contact many other agencies. More importantly we have the desire and drive to complete the task of locating your missing child and returning them home to you!

It is extremely important that you and the police department cooperate. Please ensure that all the immediate family members are available for us to interview. Unfortunately there is always some type of circumstance or information that other members of the family may have that will be useful in resolving this matter.

Familial abductions are not unusual. They happen, everyday. It is important to let us know if there have been any new or existing developments within the family that might help us understand what has taken place.

As hard as it is to understand, we encourage you to remain as calm as possible. Rational decision making is important and we need you to be rational. There is always something you forgot to tell us. By the same token, there is always something we forgot to ask, so tell us!!!

### ***Guidelines – “National Center for Missing and Exploited Children”***

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children offers a few guidelines to help families if their child becomes missing. In Central Ohio, The Mid Ohio AMBER Alert, a board of members made up of various agencies, support these guidelines. Remember that ONLY you should maintain the following information so personal information can not be used to lure a child away from you.

#### **Child Safety Kit**

- 1) Keep a complete description of your child and keep it updated. Color photographs are extremely useful when information is passed on to other agencies. Digital image photos can be sent via email and other electronic media easily. Other descriptors such as eyeglasses, teeth and dental work, marks, scars, tattoos and surgical scars help identify your child, as well as body piercings.
- 2) Have your dentist prepare dental charts and prints for your child. Many pediatric dentists already provide such a program, some free of charge, as their way of assisting law enforcement agencies.
- 3) Maintain all of your child’s medical and dental records but remember where they are located. Safe deposit boxes can be a good place but are not accessible 24 hours a day.
- 4) Many local law enforcement agencies provide child fingerprint kits and you should have your child fingerprinted. Keep this with you medical file and your child’s personal file.
- 5) Some areas may be able to provide you with taking a DNA sample.
- 6) Keep a sample of hair – including the root.
- 7) Make a small box where you can keep all of these things and provide this tool to your responding law enforcement agency.

***What should you do?***

- 1) **Call the police. Don't wait. This should always be first.**
- 2) Have a complete description of the missing child available. Have a recent picture (color is best for agency dissemination) available.
- 3) Tell the police if you suspect foul play or if there is a possibility that your child may be placed in a serious physical harm or even death situation. Be sure to be able to explain why. If your child is known to be with adults, be sure to provide that information to the police.
- 4) Be sure to tell the officer about any scars, tattoos or surgical marks that may be able to be used for an immediate identification. This should include if the child is mentally incapacitated or physically handicapped. Even if the child has drug and alcohol abuse problems or other mental behavior problems, tell the police. Now is not the time to worry about "image."
- 5) Don't touch anything that the missing child may have touched.
- 6) Don't let anyone enter his or her room, game area or living area.
- 7) Leave computers and email alone and be sure to check phone messages.
- 8) Keep off of the phone. An important phone call can easily be missed.
- 9) Have a list of friends and their phone numbers available for the police.
- 10) Tell the officer about any favorite hang outs, including favorite fast foods and amusement places.
- 11) Be sure to ask the officer who is going to be assigned to handle your case. You should never have to go through multiple officers to get your answers!
- 12) Tell the officer about new residents that have moved into the neighborhood.
- 13) Tell the officer about any predator information you may have received – they may not have the information yet.
- 14) Keep a log of the investigation for future reference.

***What happens if your child becomes missing while shopping?***

The same rules apply as before but the first thing you want to do is notify the shopping center, mall or store security force **and** the police.

***What can you expect from the Groveport Police?***

- 1) We will take all the appropriate action required to help locate your missing child. The Groveport Police Department will ask help from other agencies and make all of the appropriate notifications to other law enforcement agencies, State agencies and Federal agencies.
- 2) We will set up search parameters and rules for all those helping.
- 3) We will set up a command center and set up a crime scene.
- 4) We will actively search the area and go door to door, as well as check out all of the friends and hang outs, based on the information you give us.
- 5) We will enter all of the information into our **LOCATER** program as well activating the AMBER Alert and send the information to the National Crime Information Computer (NCIC).
- 6) We will activate every resource possible to include the Central Ohio Child Abduction Team (CART.)

**The LOCATER Program- Lost Child Alert Technology Resource**

The Groveport Police Department installed the **LOCATER** program system, which was awarded to the department by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. This unique system allows us to immediately create a poster of the missing child and forward it to local and state agencies, to assist us in returning your child.

### AMBER Alert:

The AMBER Plan was created in 1996 as a powerful legacy to 9 year old Amber Hagerman. She was abducted while riding her bicycle near her home, in Arlington, Texas. This very innovative and fast system, the AMBER Plan, is a voluntary partnership between law-enforcement agencies and broadcasters to activate an urgent bulletin in the most serious child-abduction cases. Broadcasters use the Emergency Alert System (**EAS**), formerly called the Emergency Broadcast System, to air a description of the missing child and suspected abductor.

AMBER Alert criteria must be met in order to activate the alert.

- 1) The child must be under 18 years of age.
- 2) There must be a credible threat of immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death to the child.
- 3) There is sufficient descriptive information about the child, the suspect, and/or the circumstances surrounding the abduction to believe that activation of the alert will help to locate the child.
- 4) A law enforcement agency determines that the child is not a runaway and has not been abducted as a result of a family abduction, unless the investigation determines that the child is in immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death.

The Columbus area does have the highway sign system to help alert drivers of the missing child during an AMBER Alert.

According to many sources, **time** is the child's greatest enemy. Unfortunately, facts tell us that most children are seriously injured or killed within 3 hours of the abduction and generally within 25 miles of the abduction point.

This is why it is so important that you call right away.

The City of Groveport, the Groveport Police Department and many other agencies will work together in a cooperative effort to find your child.

**The Missing Children Act of 1982:**

The Missing Children Act of 1982 enables parents to guarantee that their missing child is properly entered into the National Crime Information Computer. If you have any doubts about whether the Groveport Police Department taking the missing child report has entered the information, you have the right to ask the Federal Bureau of Investigation to make the entry for you.

It is the intent of our department to see that your child is returned home safely. With your help and the **LOCATER** program system and the availability to access AMBER alert plus our own desire will be our tools to see that you and your child are re-united!

Many say that there is no better tool than faith and hope. The return of your child is our first and foremost priority. By working together, as partners, we will work hard on finding your missing child.

Although no one wants to think about the abduction of a child, the best prevention is for you and your children to be informed and aware. Below is a list of child safety tips to prevent abductions:

- < Teach your children their full name, address and telephone number.
- < Teach your children how to make a long distance call (both directly to you using the area code and by dialing "O" for operator).
- < Know the routes your child takes to and from school and other activities.
- < Be involved in your child's activities by volunteering at school, clubs, and sporting events.
- < Participate in a neighborhood watch program.
- < Before leaving your child in the care of a day-care, preschool, baby-sitter, or youth organization, check their references and qualifications. Ask if they conduct pre-employment background checks.
- < Teach your child what to do if approached by anyone. Common approaches are offering a ride, gifts, or candy, asking the child look for a lost pet, or claiming that the child's parent has asked them to bring the child home because of an emergency.
- < Listen to your child; don't disregard their fears. Instead, let them know you take their fears and concerns seriously.

Phone Numbers:

The Police Department:

Missing Children Clearinghouse (OAG)

Child Abduction and Serial Killer Unit -FBI

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

**9-1-1**

800-325-5604

614-466-8226

540-720-4700

1-800- THE-LOST

(1-800-843-5678)