



**Polly Klaas® Foundation**  
**P. O. Box 800, Petaluma, CA 94953**  
**707 769-1334 or 800 587-4357**

**GUIDELINES FOR RECOVERY OF MISSING CHILDREN**  
**Includes Suggestions for Runaways**

The following list is not intended to be followed step-by-step. It is intended as a guide to assist parents in recovering their child.

- Report your child's disappearance to the police. Obtain a case number. Ask who will be handling the investigation. Ask that your child be immediately entered into the National Crime Information Computer (NCIC). Obtain this number, which is a nine digit number proceeded by the letter "M". It is important to note that no time delay is required for an entry to be accepted in the Missing Persons file. This includes runaways. This is mandated by the National Child Search Assistance Act of 1990 (attachment A).
- Keep a notebook recording the calls you make and information you get from agencies, friends, relatives, police, etc. Keep the notebook by the phone at all times. Keep another notebook to record information you receive while out of the house. This notebook could possibly help law enforcement agency with its investigation.
- Provide law enforcement with a current photograph of your child, and fingerprints, if available. Never give away your last photograph.
- Make sure you have a thorough description of the clothing your child wore when last seen.
- Obtain call waiting on your phone. Attempt to have someone by the phone at all times.
  - ⇒ Purchase or borrow an answering machine or sign up for an answering service such as voicemail. Leave an outgoing message for the missing child. You might also leave a message on your answering machine/voicemail saying that you will accept collect calls from your child or leads on the whereabouts of your child.
  - ⇒ If you have a cellular phone, obtain call forwarding and forward any calls to your cellular phone when you have to leave the house.

- Report your child's disappearance to the Polly Klaas Foundation (PKF) (800-587-4357), the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) (800-843-5678), and your State Clearinghouse (California Clearinghouse 800-222-3463).
- If your child is a runaway, call the National Runaway Safeline (800-786-2929) and the Covenant House Nine Line (800-999-9999). Ask for advice and assistance from all.
- Notify law enforcement of any special circumstances that indicate clear risk to your child. These circumstances include but are not limited to:
  - ⇒ special medical or mental conditions of the child
  - ⇒ substance abuse issues
  - ⇒ an abusive caregiver
  - ⇒ previously documented abuse or violence against the child or threats of violence against the child.
  - ⇒ Any indication that the child was corresponding with or had been lured by someone they met online.
  - ⇒ a companion who could endanger the child's welfare
  - ⇒ abnormal behavior
- If your child has taken an automobile, request that the police list that information with state police and highway patrol. If the automobile belongs to someone other than the child, discuss with law enforcement whether or not you should report the car as stolen.
- If your child is missing under suspicious circumstances, request assistance from the FBI, either directly or through the investigating law enforcement agency. If a victim is held more than 24 hours, the law creates a reputable presumption that he or she has been taken across state lines, which allows the FBI and other federal authorities to investigate
- Search your child's room, pockets of clothing and school locker (including PE locker) for telephone numbers, addresses, etc. which may be useful in determining whom they might have called or where they might have gone.
- Check child's attendance and those of close friends at school.
- If your child has a bank account, check the account activity.
- Request and review phone records from your home phone and any cell phone to which your child may have had access. Call any numbers you do not recognize to see if that party has heard from your child.
- Call hospitals and clinics to see if your child has been treated recently.

- Call all of your child's friends and any phone numbers you find during your search. Speak to both friends and their parents, if possible. The following is a list of possible questions to ask during the conversation:
  - ✓ Have they seen your child?
  - ✓ Do they know where he or she might have gone?
  - ✓ Had he or she talked about running away?
  - ✓ Who do they think would help conceal your child?
  - ✓ Have you ever seen anyone suspicious in the neighborhood?
  - ✓ Do they have knowledge of any problems your child may have been experiencing? Express your concern for your child's safety.
  - ✓ Ask them to please call you immediately if they hear from your child.
  - ✓ Ask them to please have your child call you if they hear from him or her.
  - ✓ Give them the number of the runaway hotlines to give to your child if for any reason he/she is fearful of calling home. Express that you want to know that he or she is safe.
- Re-contact friends on a regular basis.
- Call out-of-town friends, relatives, absent parents, etc., to determine if they have heard from your child.
- Talk to school teachers, counselors and administrators. Find out if your child is having any problems of which you are not aware. Try to determine who your child's friends are at school and ask to interview these students.
- After obtaining flyer templates from the PKF, make flyers and distribute to local law enforcement officials, law enforcement officials in areas where you believe your child might be headed, and locally in appropriate locations (e.g.: fast food places, truck stops, convenience stores). Make sure law enforcement has flyers available.
- Go to places where your child "hangs out", show your child's picture and/or flyer and talk to people to determine whether he or she has been seen since going missing.
- Check runaway shelters, soup kitchens, coffee houses, movie theaters, malls and teen hangouts in areas where you believe your child might be. Ask these businesses for permission to post flyers.
- Ask family, friends, groups to which you belong, friends of your child, or anyone else you can find to help you post flyers. If money is a problem, ask your bank, employer, church or friends to make copies at their places of business. Also, civic groups such as Rotary, Kiwanis, etc., may help with

funding and distribution of flyers. Some print shops will make a limited number of copies of your flyer without charge. Ask if they can assist you.

- Ask local media to become involved by broadcasting child's picture and information. Identify the radio stations your child listens to and request the station run a personal message to them. Most radio stations have request lines and you could compose a personal message requesting the child call home. It can't hurt to ask!
- Again, keep concise records of everything you do, including all expenses and receipts.

Further information for the prolonged case:

- Review all information obtained from the initial investigation.
- Re-interview family, friends and classmates.
- Consider planning events such as a candlelight vigil, safety fair, or ride-a-thon to remind the public your child is still missing. Notify the media about the event. Consider holding these events on the missing date anniversary or the child's birthdate.
- Arrange for periodic media coverage.
- Compare and critique information you have received with the appropriate law enforcement agency.
- Consider offering a reward for information leading to the safe return of your child. Contact the PKF for guidelines. Notify the media if and when a reward is established.
- Consider creating a website and/or social media page (Facebook) containing the circumstances of your disappearance, your child's picture and descriptive information and news and event updates.

PUBLIC LAW 101-647 - NOV.29, 1990  
Public Law 101-647  
101st Congress

Attachment "A"

**TITLE XXXVII - NATIONAL CHILD SEARCH ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1990****42 USC 5779. SEC 3701. REPORTING REQUIREMENT.**

- (a) In General - Each Federal, State, and local law enforcement agency shall report each case of a missing child under the age of 18 reported to such agency to the National Crime Information Center of the Department of Justice.
- (b) Guidelines - The Attorney General may establish guidelines for the collection of such reports including procedures for carrying out the purposes of this Act.
- (c) Annual Summary - The Attorney General shall publish an annual statistical summary of the reports received under this title.

**SEC 3702 STATE REQUIREMENTS****42 USC 5780**

Each State reporting under the provisions of this title shall ---

- (1) Ensure that no law enforcement agency within the State establishes or maintains any policy that requires the observance of any waiting period before accepting a missing child or unidentified person report;
- (2) Provide that each such report and all necessary and available information, which, with respect to each missing child report, shall include ---
  - (A) the name, date of birth, sex, race, height, weight, and eye and hair color of the child;
  - (B) the date and location of the last known contact with the child; and
  - (C) the category under which the child is reported missing; is entered immediately into the State law enforcement system and the National Crime Information Center computer networks and made available to the Missing Children Information Clearinghouse within the State or other agency designated within the State to receive such reports; and
- (3) Provide that after receiving reports as provided in paragraph (2), the law enforcement agency that entered the report into the National Crime Information Center shall ---
  - (A) No later than 60 days after the original entry of the records into the State law enforcement system and National Crime Information Center computer networks, verify and update such record with any additional information, including, where available, medical and dental records
  - (B) institute or assist with appropriate search and investigative procedures; and
  - (C) maintain close liaison with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children for the exchange of information and technical assistance in the missing children.

Approved November 29, 1990