



OJJDP Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Shay Bilchik, Administrator

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The Missing and Exploited Children's Program

by Michael Medaris

Title IV of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, as amended, directs the Administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to coordinate the Federal Government's response to missing and exploited children and establishes a Missing and Exploited Children's Program (MECP) within OJJDP. In addition to authorizing assistance for research, demonstration, and training programs, Title IV authorizes the use of Federal resources to establish and support a national resource center and clearinghouse dedicated to missing and exploited children issues. MECP efforts generally fall within the areas of technical assistance, training, research and demonstration, and coordination. This Fact Sheet provides information on OJJDP programs and activities addressing missing and exploited children issues under those four categories.

Technical Assistance

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) serves as the national resource center and clearinghouse for missing and exploited children issues. Since 1984 NCMEC, which is funded by OJJDP, has handled more than 1 million calls to its 24-hour hotline; assisted in the recovery of more than 34,000 children; distributed millions of publications; and provided advice and technical assistance to thousands of parents, prosecutors, law enforcement officers, and child services professionals. NCMEC's online access to the FBI's National Crime Information Center Missing and Wanted Person Files, the Federal Parent Locator System, the Interstate Law Enforcement Telecommunications Network, and other data bases enhances its efforts to provide technical assistance to law enforcement officers. NCMEC is electronically linked with 49 State-level missing children clearinghouses and is able to instantly transmit photographs and case information.

Under a tripartite agreement with the U.S. Department of State and OJJDP, NCMEC assists the Department of State in carrying out its responsibilities under the Hague Convention of the Civil Aspects of International Parental Abduction. NCMEC facilitates U.S. Hague visitation access or the return of children wrongfully retained in the United States. With additional OJJDP funding, NCMEC is helping American parents whose children have been

wrongfully removed to other countries with translation assistance, poster dissemination, legal advice pertaining to the Hague Convention, liaison with international law enforcement organizations and missing children advocacy groups, and other assistance. For further information about NCMEC and its services, call NCMEC at 800-843-5678.

OJJDP also provides technical assistance through publication dissemination. The *Portable Guides* series are intended for professionals involved in investigations of crimes against children. Each guide contains practical references and recommendations for police officers, detectives, prosecutors, social workers, physicians, and psychologists. For further information about the *Portable Guides*, call the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse (JJC) at 800-638-8736.

Training

Fox Valley Technical College (FVTC) is responsible for the delivery of OJJDP's training courses on missing and exploited children. In partnership with MECP, FVTC develops and delivers training courses for law enforcement officers investigating missing and exploited children cases. These courses integrate current research and include modules pertaining to investigative techniques, interview strategies, comprehensive response planning, media relations, lead and case management, and other topics to assist law enforcement.

Several new courses have recently become available. "Child Sexual Exploitation Investigations" examines child predator behavior in terms of motivation and luring strategies and covers specific investigative techniques necessary for successful prosecution of offenders. "Responding to Missing and Exploited Children Cases" (REMAC) is a 5-day class with modules that focus primarily on investigative techniques for cases involving runaways, nonfamily kidnappings, and noncustodial parental abduction. It also provides information on Federal resources that can assist State and local law enforcement officers in investigating these cases. For further information about FVTC and its training programs, call FVTC at 800-648-4966.

MECP is also responsible for program oversight and implementation of the Jimmy Ryce Law Enforcement Training Center at NCMEC, a national training program that targets both law enforcement executives and investigators. The 2-day Chief Executive Officer Seminar offers information on response planning, Federal resources, policy development, and other management issues pertaining to missing children. The REMAC course complements the CEO seminar and targets investigators. Instructors are from State and local law enforcement, NCMEC, and the FBI Child Abduction and Serial Killer Unit.

Research and Demonstration

MECP funds research projects that promote understanding and provide practical recommendations and information for policymakers, legislators, parents, and law enforcement and other professionals working on missing children issues.

- ◆ Under a recent OJJDP grant, the American Bar Association is conducting research that will identify effective community programs for missing and exploited children and their families. Core components from these programs will be identified for use in training and replication.
- ◆ The Washington State Attorney General's Office recently completed a 3-year OJJDP study that analyzed solvability factors pertaining to missing children homicides. The research determined the most effective investigative strategies and forensic techniques that law enforcement officers can use to identify, arrest, and prosecute homicidal pedophiles. This information will be made available for law enforcement training programs.

- ◆ The Temple University Institute for Survey Research has begun work on the second National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children (NISMAART II). This project will build on and enhance the experience of NISMAART I to produce meaningful information for professionals working on missing children issues. Temple University has assembled a team of experts in the field of child victimization and survey research capabilities, particularly surveys involving children and families concerning sensitive topics. Preliminary results are projected to be available in early 1999.

Coordination

The Federal Agency Task Force for Missing and Exploited Children seeks to identify gaps and duplications in service delivery to missing and exploited children and their families by Federal agencies. Chaired by MECP, the task force focuses on coordination and policy issues and has compiled a directory that provides information on and access points to the broad array of Federal services for parents and law enforcement, child services, and other professionals. Call JJC to obtain the task force directory.

For Further Information

For further information about the Missing and Exploited Children's Program, call OJJDP at 202-616-3637.

Michael Medaris serves as Program Manager of OJJDP's Missing and Exploited Children's Program.

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