



# OJJDP FACT SHEET

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## The Missing and Exploited Children's Program (Update)

by Cathy Girouard

Title IV of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, as amended, the Missing Children's Assistance Act of 1984, authorizes 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 to establish a Missing and Exploited Children's Program (MECP). MECP is administered by OJJDP's Child Protection Division. Title IV authorizes funding for a variety of activities designed to meet the needs of missing, exploited, runaway, and throwaway children and their families. Activities include direct services, research and demonstration programs, and training and technical assistance for law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, schools, and communities. This Fact Sheet highlights new and updated MECP information, including programs and activities funded by OJJDP in the areas of direct services, training and technical assistance, capacity building, research, and interagency coordination.

### Direct Services

**The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).** This OJJDP-funded national resource center and clearinghouse helps locate and recover missing children and prevents the abduction, molestation, sexual exploitation, and victimization of children. NCMEC operates a 24-hour toll-free telephone hotline for callers to report the location of missing children or obtain assistance when a child is missing. The hotline averages 587 calls a day. NCMEC also operates the CyberTipline, an online resource where people can report leads and tips about child sexual exploitation. To date, 2,612 cases have been referred to local law enforcement agencies via the hotline and CyberTipline. NCMEC also provides case management, analysis, and computer-enhanced age progression services to families and law enforcement agencies and collects and disseminates information regarding missing children cases.

**The Association of Missing and Exploited Children's Organizations (AMECO).** This alliance of 42 nonprofit organizations was created in 1994 through an OJJDP grant. Its purpose

is to support the efforts of groups that serve missing and exploited children, their families, and the community. AMECO has developed standard intake forms to report missing children and has created an interactive Web site with information on missing children.

**Project H.O.P.E.** The Help Offer Parents Empowerment (H.O.P.E.) project makes accessible mentoring and support services to parents whose children are missing, including runaways, those abducted by strangers, and victims of domestic or international parental abductions. OJJDP funds support services provided by parent volunteers who have experienced the disappearance of a child. Since the project began in 1998, approximately 50 parent volunteers have been trained to provide services, and more than 2,400 families and 2,600 children have been served.

### Training and Technical Assistance

**Fox Valley Technical College (FVTC).** In partnership with NCMEC and OJJDP, FVTC provides training and technical assistance to State and local agencies that serve missing and exploited children. Each year, FVTC trains more than 6,000 professionals in investigative techniques, interviewing strategies, comprehensive response planning, and case management. The training prepares participants to handle cases involving missing and exploited children, child abuse and neglect, and child fatalities.

**School Resource Officer Standards, Training, and Technical Assistance.** The Comprehensive School Safety Leadership Initiative, a new program designed and implemented by FVTC and NCMEC, trains school resource officers, superintendents, chiefs of police, and social service providers in the latest techniques for responding to incidents involving school safety, child exploitation, and child abductions.

**Law Enforcement Technology Assistance.** In Fiscal Year (FY) 2000, Congress appropriated funds for NCMEC to provide computers, modems, color printers, scanners, and digital video cameras to local law enforcement agencies to enable them to access the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI's) Law Enforcement

Online (LEO) Web-based communication resource. This technological support is intended to facilitate law enforcement's ongoing efforts to prevent abductions and intervene successfully in missing and exploited children cases.

## Capacity Building

**Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force Program.** In FY 1998, Congress funded OJJDP to create "State and local law enforcement cyber units to investigate child sexual exploitation." Currently, 30 regional task forces, supported by more than 110 law enforcement agencies, participate in this program, which provides forensic, prevention, and investigative assistance to law enforcement professionals, educators, prosecutors, families, and others concerned with child victimization issues. Training in the investigation and prosecution of online child pornography and child enticement cases is an integral part of the program. The ICAC Task Force Program Investigative Satellite Initiative (new in FY 2001) awards small, one-time grants to agencies that need training and equipment to fully investigate and prosecute such cases.

## Research

**FBI/Behavioral Characteristics of Offenders Who Abduct and Murder Children.** OJJDP provides funds to the FBI to interview offenders incarcerated for abducting and murdering children. Information provided by this research will help law enforcement better understand these offenders and develop strategies to prevent abductions, recover abducted children, and bring offenders to justice.

**Case Management of Abduction Murder Investigations.** OJJDP also funds the Washington State Office of the Attorney General to interview investigators, review case files in child abduction homicides, and identify the most effective investigative strategies and forensic techniques for these cases. To date, information from 44 States for 577 cases involving 419 killers and 621 victims has been assessed and entered into a searchable database available to law enforcement agencies.

**National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children (NISMAART II).** Under the Missing Children's Assistance Act, OJJDP sponsors national research on the problem of missing children. The first study, NISMAART I, was conducted in 1988 with results published in 1990. Through NISMAART II, the Temple University Institute for Survey Research will determine how many children are reported missing, victimized by strangers, abducted by parents, and recovered in any given year. The NISMAART II results are scheduled to be released by the end of 2001.

## Interagency Coordination

**Federal Agency Task Force on Missing and Exploited Children.** In May 1995, the Federal Agency Task Force on Missing and Exploited Children was created to identify gaps and overlaps in Federal resources and services for missing and exploited children and their families, and to recommend ways to improve services. This Task Force of 16 Federal agencies and NCMEC addresses broad coordination and policy issues and seeks to improve communication among Federal agencies.

## For Further Information

For further information about the Missing and Exploited Children's Program, call 202-616-3637 or visit the Internet at [www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/missing/index.html](http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/missing/index.html). To access NCMEC's 24-hour hotline or CyberTipline, call 800-843-5678 or visit [www.cybertipline.com](http://www.cybertipline.com). To learn more about AMECO's interactive Web site, visit [www.amecoinc.org](http://www.amecoinc.org).

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*The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, and the Office for Victims of Crime.*

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