

Missing And Runaway Persons

316.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Sahuarita Police Department (SPD) is committed to thoroughly investigating and documenting incidents of missing or runaway persons. This policy provides guidance and mandatory actions by personnel for handling missing or runaway person investigations. No specific time period is required to have passed in order to report a missing or runaway person.

316.2 DEFINITIONS

- A. **At-risk** - Missing or runaway person (MRP) includes persons who:
1. Are 13 years of age or younger, unless circumstances clearly demonstrate there are no safety issues associated with them being a MRP. This determination requires sergeant or a higher ranking approval. Without such approval, the MRP shall be considered at risk if they are age 13 or younger.
 2. Regardless of age, are believed or determined to be experiencing one or more of the following circumstances:
 - (a) Unable to perform mental or physical tasks for his/her chronological age, expected maturity level, or developmental stage.
 - (b) Seriously physically ill or injured, or the person is mentally, emotionally, or behaviorally ill, challenged, or disabled.
 - (c) Has been using drugs, or is drug dependent, including prescribed medication and/or illegal substances, and the use, dependency, or need to take medicine or drugs could be potentially life-threatening or cause serious illness.
 - (d) Absent or missing for more than 24 hours before being reported to law enforcement as a MRP. This defines an, "at risk," MRP. Remember, no specific time period is required to have passed in order to report a missing or runaway person.
 - (e) Are in a life-threatening situation.
 - (f) Are in the company of others who could endanger his/her welfare.
 - (g) Absent in a way that is inconsistent with established patterns of behavior and that cannot be readily explained.
 - (h) Involved in a situation or set of circumstances that would cause a reasonable person to conclude the person should be considered at risk.
 3. Qualify for a state AMBER Alert or Silver Alert™. Criteria for these alerts are detailed on the DPS website: www.azdps.gov
- B. **Missing person** - Any person who is reported missing to law enforcement when that person's location is unknown. This includes a person under the age of 18 whose location has not been determined and who has been reported missing, abducted, lost

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or is a runaway (ARS § 15-829; ARS § 36-339). No specific time period is required to have passed in order to report a missing or runaway person.

- C. **Missing person networks** - Databases or computer networks that are available to law enforcement and are suitable for storing and obtaining information related to missing person investigations. These includes the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and the Arizona Crime Information Center (ACIC).

316.3 POLICY

The Sahuarita Police Department does not consider any report of a MRP to be routine and assumes that the MRP is in need of prompt assistance until investigation reveals otherwise. The Sahuarita Police Department gives MRP cases priority over property-related cases and does not require a specific amount of time to have passed before beginning a missing person investigation.

316.4 REQUIRED FORMS

- A. The on-duty supervisor shall ensure the following forms are utilized whenever reasonably possible:
 - 1. SPD Missing/Runaway Person Supplemental Questionnaire (MRPSQ) is mandatory for all MRP cases regardless if the person is found during the initial reporting or search process. When a member has completed the "horsepower" portion of the MRPSQ and the missing/runaway person has been located or returned, the officer or member does not have to complete the full MRPSQ. However, the member will need to turn in the MRPSQ and indicate in the narrative of the RMS report that the missing or runaway person returned during reporting.
 - 2. SPD Attempt to Locate (ATL) bulletin form is mandatory in all MRP cases and should be completed and issued as soon as possible and always within the first three hours of the investigation. However, if the MRP has been found prior to the ATL being issued, the ATL does not have to be completed after the fact.
 - 3. Medical & Dental Records Authorization for Disclosure of Protected Health Information form. Officers and members, at the time of reporting, are required to request this form be completed and signed by an appropriate family member whenever the person is at risk.

316.5 ACCEPTANCE OF REPORTS

- A. Any member encountering a person who wishes to report a MRP shall render assistance and complete the appropriate report and associated forms without delay.
- B. A report shall be accepted in all cases and regardless of where the person was last seen, known to be, where the person resides or any question of jurisdiction.
 - 1. Members dealing with out of jurisdiction MRP cases shall complete any and all SPD MRP reports or applicable forms (section 316.4) and cause the complete report to be promptly sent to the appropriate jurisdictional law enforcement agency the person was reported to be missing or runaway from.

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316.6 INITIAL INVESTIGATION

- A. Officers or other members conducting the initial investigation of a missing or runaway person should take the following investigative actions as applicable:
1. Respond as soon as practicable.
 2. Interview the reporting party and any witnesses to determine whether the person qualifies as a MRP, and if so, whether the person may be at-risk.
 3. Promptly brief a supervisor about the MRP regardless if the person is, or is not at-risk as soon as possible. Determine if the incident qualifies for a law enforcement or public alert (Nixle, social media-Facebook, Amber Alert, Silver Alert, ATL, Spillman Alert, NCIC, ACIC, etc.). Public notification of an at risk MRP can greatly aid in locating them.
 4. Broadcast a *radio* transmitted law enforcement "Attempt To Locate" (ATL) bulletin if the person is under 16 years of age, or a person of any age, is at-risk. The alert should be broadcast as soon a possible and always within 30 minutes after determining the missing person is under 16 years of age or may be at risk.
 5. Complete a SPD ATL form, which should include a photo of the MRP, whenever such photo is available. The ATL shall be turned in with the police report and distributed promptly to agencies or organizations that may help in locating the person.
 6. Initiate and coordinate an appropriate search applicable under the facts and information available. If a person is missing from a home, building, facility or immediate location (park, roadway, etc.) the home, building, facility or immediate location shall be searched twice and by different officers or members when possible.
 7. For at risk MRPs, members shall cause to be issued, as soon as reasonably possible, and always within the first 30 minutes of learning that the MRP is at risk, a public Nixle alert, and shall also consider a social media posting, traditional media release, etc., or a combination of these types of alerts whenever such an alert to the public will reasonably help locate the at risk MRP. An exception to issuing a mandatory Nixle alert is a runaway juvenile who's only at risk factor is that the parent(s) of the juvenile waited by choice not to report the juvenile as missing until after 24 hours had passed, believing there was no at risk issue. While not mandatory, members may still choose to issue a Nixle alert dependent upon the totality of the circumstances. In these cases, all other applicable alerts, social media postings, ATLs, and MRP system entries, shall be completed in accordance with this policy.
 8. Request Terminal Operations makes entries into the appropriate MRP networks, as follows:
 - (a) Immediately, or as soon as practicable, when the MRP is at-risk.
 - (b) In all other cases, as soon as practicable, but no later than two hours from confirming the person is an actual MRP.
 9. Complete the appropriate report forms accurately and completely.

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10. Collect and/or review if available:
 - (a) A photograph and fingerprint card of the missing person.
 - (b) A voluntarily provided biological sample of the missing person (e.g., toothbrush, hairbrush).
 - (c) Any documents that may assist in the investigation, such as court orders regarding custody, notes, communications, social media postings, etc.
 - (d) Any other evidence that may assist in the investigation, including personal electronic devices (e.g., cell phones, computers, social media accounts, etc.).
11. When circumstances permit and if appropriate, attempt to determine the missing person's location through his/her telecommunications carrier.
12. Contact the appropriate agency if the report relates to a missing person case previously made to another agency and that agency is actively investigating the case. When this is not practicable, the information should be documented in a report to be sent to the appropriate agency.

316.7 REPORT PROCEDURES AND ROUTING

- A. Members should complete all MRP reports and forms promptly and advise the appropriate supervisor as soon as a MRP report is ready for review.
- B. At risk MRP reports shall be completed prior to an officer or member completing their shift which will include all related forms, (ATL, MRPSQ, etc.).
- C. If a case does not involve an at risk MRP, and the officer or member has completed and turned in all required forms (ATL, MRPSQ, etc.), a sergeant may allow the report to be held over one day (24 hours).

316.8 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The responsibilities of the supervisor shall include, but are not limited to:
 1. Ensuring resources are deployed as appropriate.
 2. Initiating a command post and search efforts as needed. Search efforts may include using foot, bicycle, and vehicle patrols, UAVs, ATVs / UTVs, K-9s or Bloodhounds, Air assets, assistance from allied agencies, etc.
 3. Ensuring applicable command staff notifications and public alerts are made and documented. An at risk MRP requires a member of command staff be notified, starting at the lieutenant level.
 4. Ensuring that MRPs have been entered into the appropriate MRP networks.
 5. Taking reasonable steps to identify and address any jurisdictional issues to ensure cooperation among agencies.
 6. Sergeants are responsible for reviewing and approving MRP reports and all associated forms upon receipt and before they go off duty. All MRP reports shall

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go through the report second review process; however, that process shall not delay the ATL, search efforts, entry of the MRP into a MRP system, or processes to help locate the MRP.

- B. Completed reports shall be promptly sent to the Records Bureau.

316.9 RECORDS BUREAU RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The responsibilities of the Records Bureau receiving member shall include but are not limited to:
 - 1. In cases involving a missing or runaway resident from another jurisdiction, records staff shall forward a copy of the report to the MRP's local law enforcement agency.
 - 2. Notifying and forwarding a copy of the complete report to the law enforcement agency in whose jurisdiction the missing person was last seen or was known to be.
 - 3. Notifying and forwarding a copy of the report to the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the missing person's intended or possible destination, if known.
 - 4. Forwarding a copy of the report to the Detective Bureau. If the case involves an at risk MRP, forward all available reports and forms to the detective bureau as soon as possible, but always within 72 hours of receiving the report or forms.
 - 5. Double check that MRPs have been entered into the appropriate missing persons networks as indicated in the report. If this has not been done, immediately contact a sergeant or lieutenant and advise them of the issue to have it corrected
 - 6. Note to Records Bureau staff: All MRP reports shall go through the report second review process prior to finalization.

316.10 DETECTIVE BUREAU FOLLOW-UP

- A. The detective sergeant shall review or cause another person to review and report back on the status of all MRP cases to determine what type of follow up investigation may be required. The detective sergeant will assign a detective or other member to conduct follow up in conjunction with the subsequent investigative processes:
 - 1. Ensure that the MRP's school is notified as soon as practicable if the MRP is a juvenile (ARS § 15-829).
 - (a) The notice shall be in writing and may be in the form of a properly redacted ATL form, unless the department or school district requires a different form. The form should also include a photograph if possible.
 - (b) The investigator should meet or communicate with school officials as appropriate to stress the importance of including the notice in the child's student file, along with the investigator's contact information and if the

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school receives a call requesting the transfer of the missing child's files to another school.

2. Coordinate with the NCIC Terminal Contractor for Arizona to have the missing person record in the NCIC computer networks updated with additional information obtained from and during the missing person investigation (34 USC § 41308).
3. Shall notify the state registrar in the state of the child's birth. This notification shall include the child's name, date of birth and county of birth (ARS § 36-339).
4. Assertively attempt contact with the reporting person and/or other appropriate witnesses within 3 days of being assigned the case to determine the status of the MRP and any new information associated with the case. Repeat these efforts with the reporting party and/or other appropriate witnesses or organizations every 30 days thereafter, until 90 days have passed, to determine if any additional information has become available.
5. Consider contacting other agencies or organizations involved in the case to determine if any additional information is available.
6. Shall verify and update NCIC, ACIC, and any other applicable missing person networks within 30 days of the original entry into the networks and every 30 days thereafter until 90 days have passed from the original entry date, or until the missing person is located (34 USC § 41308). This responsibility may be reassigned to the records bureau after 90 day from the original entry date.
7. Should continue to make reasonable efforts to locate the MRP and document these efforts at least every 30 days.
8. Shall maintain a close liaison with state and local welfare systems and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) if the missing person is under the age of 21 and shall promptly notify NCMEC when the person is missing from a foster care family home or childcare institution (34 USC § 41308).
9. Should make appropriate inquiry with the Medical Examiner and local area hospitals.
10. Should obtain and place into evidence, or cause to be a report attachment, medical and dental records, photos, X-rays and biological samples, as applicable, if these steps have not been completed.
11. Shall attempt to obtain the most recent photograph for persons under 18 years of age, if it has not been obtained previously, and forward the photograph to the Department of Public Safety (DPS) and enter the photograph into applicable missing person networks (34 USC § 41308).
12. Should consider making appropriate entries and searches in the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as well as reissuing an SPD MRP ATL.
13. In the case of an at-risk MRP or a person who has been missing for an extended time (90 days), the assigned member should consult with a detective sergeant

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regarding seeking federal assistance from the FBI and the U.S. Marshals Service (28 USC § 566).

316.11 WHEN A MISSING PERSON IS FOUND

- A. When any MRP is found, the assigned officer or member shall document the location of the MRP in an appropriate report, notify the relatives and/or reporting party, as appropriate, and other involved agencies and refer the case for additional investigation if warranted.
- B. A detective sergeant should ensure, and may do so through their staff, unless these tasks have been completed that, upon receipt of information that a missing person has been located, the following occurs:
 - 1. Notification is made, or confirm it has been done, to NCIC, ACIC, and DPS within 24 hours of becoming aware of the found missing person
 - 2. A missing juvenile's school is notified within 48 hours of becoming aware of the found MRP. If the case involves a deceased MRP juvenile who went to a public or private school, promptly notify command staff to help with logistics associated with how the school may need to address the issue (grief counselors, etc.).
 - 3. The state registrar in the state of the child's birth is notified (ARS § 36-339).
 - 4. Entries are made in the applicable missing person networks.
 - 5. Notification shall be made to any other law enforcement agency that took the initial report or participated in the investigation.

316.12 UNIDENTIFIED PERSONS

- A. SPD officers or members investigating a case of an unidentified person who is deceased or a living person who cannot assist in identifying him/herself shall:
 - 1. Document the incident via an Alpha report
 - 2. Obtain a complete description of the person.
 - 3. Enter the unidentified person's description into the NCIC or ACIC Unidentified Person File.
 - 4. Use available resources, such as those related to MRPs, to identify the person using fingerprints (use Live Scan or other digital devices where practicable), DNA, scars, marks, tattoos, etc.).

316.13 CASE CLOSURE

- A. A detective bureau sergeant is the only sergeant authorized to close a MRP case after considering the following:
 - 1. Closure is appropriate when the missing person is confirmed returned or evidence matches an unidentified person or body.

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2. If the missing person is a resident of Sahuarita or this department is the lead agency, the case should be kept under active investigation for as long as the person may still be alive. Exhaustion of leads in the investigation may be a reason for suspending a case.
3. If the department takes a courtesy missing or runaway person report for another agency, the report disposition should be, "closed" as the report will be forwarded to the appropriate jurisdictional agency for followup.

316.14 POLICY ISSUANCE OR REVIEW

06/13/2024 - Reviewed by Chief John D. Noland - SP#002