

# Team Adam<sup>SM</sup>

MISSING-CHILD, RAPID-RESPONSE SYSTEM



# What Is Team Adam?

Team Adam, a program of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC), immediately deploys Consultants to the sites of critical child-abduction and missing-child incidents. Team Adam Consultants are former and retired law-enforcement professionals selected for their career experience and specialized knowledge of cases involving abducted or missing children. The Team Adam “rapid-response” capabilities place invaluable resources immediately into the hands of the responsible law-enforcement agency, increasing the likelihood of recovering the abducted or missing child. Team Adam serves a support role only under the direction of and at no cost to the lead investigative agency.

“Time is the enemy in missing-child cases. If the investigating agency hasn’t experienced a child abduction, they might not know how to react, and that is why Team Adam is so important. **These specialists will be there to provide resources — from their own years of experience and extensive knowledge and access to NCMEC’s 24-hour search network.**”

ERNIE ALLEN, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, NCMEC

## How Does Team Adam Help?

Team Adam Consultants provide investigative advice, search, analysis, technical support, equipment, and other resources to the lead law-enforcement agency. Team Adam can also assist victim families by connecting them with a network of support through Team HOPE, a group of specially trained parents and family members who have experienced a missing-child incident in their own family.

### Team Adam helps law enforcement with

- Search and Rescue (SAR)
- Technology-Facilitated Crimes Committed Against Children
- Technical Support
- Investigation and Analysis
- Equipment and Resources

### Team Adam helps families by providing

- Family Advocacy Services
- Personal Assistance
- Child-Safety Education
- Resources for Stress Management

## Team Adam’s Efforts in the Field

The primary mission of Team Adam is to assist law enforcement in locating and recovering critically abducted and missing children. Team Adam Consultants’ unbridled access to all of NCMEC’s resources, coupled with their years of command-post and multijurisdictional experience, provides lead law-enforcement agencies with the tools they need to handle the most complex and difficult cases of abducted and missing children.

One of law enforcement’s most powerful tools used in investigating critically abducted- and missing-children cases is engaging the public by sharing information and the most up-to-date images of the missing child. Team Adam Consultants have the ability to distribute and share images of missing children to wide audiences anywhere in the country through a vast network of NCMEC partners, both private and public. Most recently Team Adam acquired the ability to post billboard-sized images of critically abducted and missing children along interstate highways and in high-trafficked areas. With the growing availability of “digital” billboards in many communities these images may be posted almost immediately. Additionally NCMEC partners with the United States Postal Service (USPS) on the Deliver Me Home® program, which distributes posters of abducted and missing children directly to every home in a targeted zip-code area focusing on communities where the child was last seen or may be located.

## Specialized Knowledge and Experience

Team Adam is comprised of more than 70 former and retired law-enforcement investigators selected for their vast career experience and specialized knowledge of critical child-abduction and missing-child cases. Team Adam Consultants receive extensive training at NCMEC in the most up-to-date investigative techniques and best practices from around the country, innovations, and NCMEC resources.

## Search and Rescue Help

Team Adam provides support and consultation to search and rescue operations involving lost, injured, or abducted children. Several Team Adam Consultants have extensive search and rescue training and experience after managing and/or being directly involved with numerous searches for missing children. In addition to their personal expertise, Team Adam Consultants are able to provide a wide array of resources including comprehensive search planning and strategies, secure terrain mapping capabilities, and recommendations of other outside resources such as certified SAR K9s.

## Landfill Search Assistance

Team Adam Consultants with highly specialized expertise and technical skills in landfill-recovery efforts are available to assist law-enforcement agencies. Team Adam developed and employs comprehensive guidelines and protocols in the search for human remains and evidence in response to recent cases where the remains of murdered children were discarded in trash receptacles and later taken to landfills. The complexities and hazards associated with landfill-recovery efforts require a high level of expert experience, which is now available through Team Adam Consultants. In one search in which Team Adam lent assistance, a child's remains were recovered that had been buried in a landfill for more than two years.

## Technology-Facilitated Crimes

Team Adam also provides on-site assistance in technology-facilitated crimes committed against children. Team Adam Consultants with forensic-technology backgrounds are well-versed in preserving and capturing forensic evidence especially in cases involving a child who travels to meet in person with an adult first met online.



**"I cannot think of anything that would improve the quality of Team Adam's service to this office.... All the members [who] responded were very professional and easy to work with. They were able to provide us with expertise that we did not have...."**

**A SHERIFF FROM VIRGINIA**

## Response to Katrina: An Exceptional Effort

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall as a Category 3 storm, causing severe destruction and loss of life. An unprecedented 411,000 people were evacuated among 48 states. As a result, many families were separated. Within hours, at the request of the U.S. Department of Justice, NCMEC established a Hotline to receive calls regarding missing adults and children. Thirty Team Adam Consultants were deployed to Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas to help locate displaced children and reunite them with their families. Later the U.S. Department of Justice requested NCMEC expand their Katrina Hotline to include families displaced by Hurricane Rita. As a result of NCMEC's efforts, in conjunction with local and state agencies, the last of the 5,192 children reported missing or displaced as a result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita was reunited with her mother and siblings in Houston, Texas, in March 2006.

# INVESTIGATIVE CHECKLIST FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

This Checklist is meant to provide a framework of actions, considerations, and activities that may assist in performing competent, productive, and thorough missing/abducted-children investigations.

## FIRST RESPONDER

- Activate patrol-vehicle-mounted video camera, if circumstances warrant, when approaching the scene to record vehicles, people, and anything else of note for later investigative review.
- Interview parent(s)/guardian(s)/person who made the initial report.
- Confirm the child is in fact missing.
- Attempt to verify the child's custody status.
- Identify the circumstances of the missing episode.
- Determine when, where, and by whom the missing child was last seen.
- Interview the individuals who last had contact with the child.
- Identify the child's zone of safety for his or her age and developmental stage.
- Make an **initial assessment**, based on the available information, of the type of incident whether nonfamily abduction; family abduction; runaway; or lost, injured, or otherwise missing.
- Obtain a **detailed** description of the missing child, abductor, and any vehicles used.
- Secure photos/videos of the missing child/abductor, and don't forget photos that may be available on cell phones.
- Evaluate whether the circumstances meet **AMBER Alert™** criteria and/or other immediate community-notification protocol if not already activated. Discuss plan activation with supervisor.
- Evaluate whether the circumstances warrant requesting the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children®'s (NCMEC) Team Adam. If a Child Abduction Response Team (CART) is in the area, does the child's case meet their activation criteria?
- Relay detailed descriptive information to communications unit for broadcast updates.
- Determine need for additional personnel including investigative and supervisory staff.
- Brief and bring up-to-date all additional responding personnel.
- Identify and separately interview everyone at the scene. Make sure their interview and identifying information is properly recorded. To aid in this process, if possible, take pictures or record video images of everyone present. Video cameras affixed to patrol vehicles may be helpful with this task.
  - Note name, address, home/business phone numbers of each person.
  - Determine each person's relationship to the missing child.
  - Note information each person may have about the circumstances surrounding the missing episode.
  - Determine when/where each person last saw the child.
  - Ask each one, "What do you think happened to the child?"
  - Obtain names/addresses/phone numbers of the child's friends/associates and other relatives and friends of the family.
  - Determine if any suspicious activity or people were seen in the area.
  - Determine if any people were seen who seemed unusual, strange, or out-of-place.
- Continue to keep communications unit apprised of all appropriate developing information for broadcast updates.
- Obtain and note permission to search home or building where incident took place **even if the premises have been previously searched by family members or others.**
- Conduct an immediate, thorough search of the missing child's home **even if the child was reported missing from a different location.**
- Seal/protect scene and area of the child's home, including the child's personal articles such as hairbrush, diary, photos, and items with the child's fingerprints/footprints/teeth impressions, so evidence is not destroyed during or after the initial search and to help ensure items that could help in the search for and/or to identify the child are preserved. Determine if any of the child's personal items are missing. If possible, photograph/take videos of these areas.
- Evaluate the contents and appearance of the child's room/residence.
- Inquire if the child has access to the Internet and evaluate its role. Do not overlook activity on social-networking websites and teen chatlines.
- Ascertain if the child has a cell phone or other electronic communication device and obtain the most recent records of their use.
- Extend search to surrounding areas and vehicles, including those that are abandoned, and other places of concealment such as abandoned appliances, pools, wells, sheds, or other areas considered "attractive nuisances."
- Treat areas of interest as potential crime scenes including all areas where the child may have been or was going to be located.
- Determine if surveillance or security cameras in the vicinity may have captured relevant information. This information may be used to help locate the child and/or corroborate or refute witness statements.

- Interview other family members, friends/associates of the child, and friends of the family to determine
  - When each last saw the child.
  - What they think happened to the child.
  - If the child had complained about being approached by anyone.
- Review sex-offender registries to determine if registered individuals live/work in the area or might otherwise be associated with the case. Call NCMEC toll-free at 1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678) to request assistance with this step.
- Ensure information regarding the missing child is entered into the National Crime Information Center's (NCIC) Missing Person File no more than two hours after receipt of the report and any information about a suspected abductor is entered into the NCIC Wanted Person File. Carefully review NCIC categories before entering the case, and be sure to use the Child-Abduction flag whenever appropriate.
- Prepare flier/bulletin with the child/abductor's photo and descriptive information. Distribute in appropriate geographic regions. Call NCMEC toll-free at 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678) for assistance with this step.
- Prepare reports/make all required notifications.

#### **SUPERVISORY OFFICER**

- Obtain briefing and written reports from the first responding officer and other personnel at the scene.
- Decide if circumstances meet the protocol in place for activation of an **AMBER Alert** and/or other immediate community-notification systems if not already activated.
- Determine if additional personnel are needed to assist in the investigation.
- Establish a command post away from the child's residence.
- Determine if additional assistance is necessary from
  - State/Territorial Police.
  - Missing-Children Clearinghouse.
  - Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).
  - Specialized Units.
  - Victim-Witness Services.
  - NCMEC's Project ALERT®/Team Adam.
  - CARTs.
- Confirm all the required resources, equipment, and assistance necessary to conduct an efficient investigation have been requested and expedite their availability.
- Ensure coordination/cooperation among all law-enforcement personnel involved in the investigation and search effort.
- Verify all required notifications are made.
- Ensure all agency policies and procedures are in compliance.
- Be available to make any decisions or determinations as they develop.
- Use media including radio, television, and newspapers to assist in the search throughout the duration of the case.

#### **INVESTIGATIVE OFFICER**

- Obtain briefing from the first responding officer and other on-scene personnel.
- Verify the accuracy of all descriptive information and other details developed during the preliminary investigation.
- Initiate a neighborhood canvass using a standardized questionnaire.
- Obtain a brief, recent history of family dynamics.
- Correct and investigate the reasons for conflicting information offered by witnesses and other individuals.
- Collect article(s) of the child's clothing for scent-tracking purposes.
- Review and evaluate all available information and evidence collected.
- Secure the child's latest medical and dental records.
- Contact landfill management and request they delay or at least segregate garbage and dumping containers from key investigative areas in cases where it is suspected there may be imminent danger to the missing child.
- Develop and execute an investigative plan.
- Conduct a criminal-history background check on all principal suspects, witnesses, and participants in the investigation.
- Determine what additional resources and specialized services are required.
- Ensure details of the case have been reported to NCMEC.
- Prepare and update bulletins for local law-enforcement agencies, missing-children clearinghouse, FBI, and other appropriate agencies.
- Establish a phone hotline for receipt of tips and leads. Consider establishing an e-mail address and other methods of electronically receiving leads as well.
- Establish a leads-management system to prioritize leads and help ensure each one is reviewed and followed up on.
 

**Note:** NCMEC has developed software, named the Simple Leads Management System, designed to manage and prioritize leads associated with missing-child investigations. It is available at no cost by calling NCMEC's Missing Children Division toll-free at 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678).

This "pocket guide" is adapted from and to be used as a supplement to *Missing and Abducted Children: A Law-Enforcement Guide to Case Investigation and Program Management*. That guide contains additional investigative Checklists and materials. To request a free copy or technical assistance for specific cases, call NCMEC at 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678). This project was supported by Grant No. 2011-MC-CX-K001 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. This document is provided for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice or professional opinion on specific facts. Information provided in this document may not remain current or accurate, so recipients should use this document only as a starting point for their own independent research. If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice. Copyright © 2004, 2006, and 2011 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. All rights reserved. National Center for Missing & Exploited Children®, 1-800-THE-LOST®, and Project ALERT® are registered trademarks of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. NCMEC Order #88.



Former First Lady Laura Bush and NCMEC President and Chief Executive Officer Ernie Allen visit the Hotline set up in response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Named for the abducted and murdered son of NCMEC cofounders, John and Revé Walsh, Team Adam was launched in January 2003 with a grant from the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation. Since 2005 Team Adam has received generous support from the U.S. Department of Justice and corporate partners.

COVER PHOTO CREDITS

Top center: Lee Reed, Team Adam; Lower right law-enforcement officer: Matthew Jordan Smith.



If you need Team Adam's assistance, call NCMEC's toll-free, 24-hour Hotline at 1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678) or contact

Team Adam Program Manager  
National Center for Missing & Exploited Children  
Charles B. Wang International Children's Building  
699 Prince Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314-3175

[www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)

NCMEC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. NCMEC's CyberTipline®, a reporting mechanism for child sexual exploitation, has received more than 1.2 million leads since its establishment in March 1998 through September 2011. Since NCMEC's establishment in 1984 through September 2011, NCMEC has assisted law enforcement with more than 182,800 missing-child cases and assisted in the recovery of more than 169,800 children. For more information about NCMEC call 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678) or visit [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com).

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