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THE POLICE AND MISSING CHILDREN: FINDINGS FROM A NATIONAL SURVEY

by

James J. Collins
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Section</u>		<u>Page</u>
1	INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....	1
2	RATIONALE AND LITERATURE REVIEW.....	5
	A. Characteristics and Prevalence of Missing Children Cases.....	5
	1. Runaways.....	6
	2. Parental Abductions.....	8
	3. Other Abductions.....	10
	B. Relevance of Police to Missing/Homeless Cases.....	11
	1. Departmental Policy.....	12
	2. Departmental Organization and Resources.....	13
	3. Case Characteristics.....	14
3	METHODOLOGY.....	17
	A. Questionnaire Development.....	17
	B. National Sample of Law Enforcement Agencies.....	18
	1. Sampling Frame.....	19
	2. Sample Design.....	20
	3. Screening for Eligibility.....	21
	4. Weighting the Data.....	23
	C. Data Collection Procedures.....	25
	D. Editing and Data Processing.....	31
	E. Goals of Analysis and Key Variables.....	35
	1. Definition of Case Types.....	36
	2. Police Organizational Variables.....	36
	3. Investigative Priorities and Obstacles.....	37
	4. Legal Factors.....	37
	5. Investigative Actions.....	39
4	POLICE HANDLING OF MISSING CHILDREN AND YOUTH CASES.....	41
	A. Characteristics of Missing Child/Youth Cases.....	41
	B. Initial Procedures for Handling Reports of Missing Children/Youth.....	46
	C. Organization of Departments for Handling Missing Child/Youth Cases.....	50
	1. Existence and Placement of Juvenile Unit.....	50
	2. Responsibility for Investigating Missing Child/Youth Cases.....	52
	3. Investigative Actions and Responsibility.....	53
	D. Reported Factors That Affect Investigative Priorities.....	55
	1. Investigative Priority Factors in Runaway Cases..	56
	2. Investigative Priority Factors in Parental Abduction Cases.....	59
	3. Investigative Priority Factors in Stranger Abduction Cases.....	60
	4. Investigative Priority Factors in Unknown Missing Child/Youth Cases.....	61

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
E. Investigative Actions.....	62
1. Actions by Case Types.....	62
2. Followup Case Actions and Closeout Procedures....	65
3. Variation in Investigative Actions by Department Size and Type.....	66
4. Followup Actions Department Size and Type.....	68
5. Investigative Action Intensity.....	68
F. Obstacles to Successful Investigation of Missing Child/Youth Cases.....	70
G. Investigative Action Modeling.....	75
1. Introduction.....	75
2. Overall Investigative Action Intensity.....	79
3. Intensity of Investigative Action Types.....	83
H. Recovery Modeling.....	91
I. Summary of Modeling.....	99
 5	
POLICE HANDLING OF HOMELESS YOUTH CASES.....	101
A. Introduction.....	101
B. Characteristics of the Problem.....	101
C. Written Policy.....	106
D. Investigative Actions.....	106
E. Obstacles to Successful Handling of Cases Involving Homeless Youth.....	112
F. Modeling Actions Taken for Homeless Youth Cases.....	114
 6	
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS.....	119
A. Summary of Findings.....	119
1. Characteristics of Missing Child/Youth Cases.....	119
2. Initial Procedures for Handling Reports of Missing Children/Youth.....	120
3. Organization of Departments for Handling Missing Child/Youth Cases.....	121
4. Factors that Affect Investigative Priorities.....	122
5. Investigative Actions.....	124
6. Obstacles to Successful Investigation of Missing Child/Youth Cases.....	126
7. Modeling Missing Child/Youth Investigation and Recovery.....	127
8. Police Handling of Homeless Youth Cases.....	128
B. Implications of Multivariate Findings.....	129
C. Strengths and Limitations of Study.....	134
REFERENCES.....	137

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Number</u>		<u>Page</u>
3.1	Allocation of Phase 1 Sampling Among Sworn Size Groups...	22
3.2	Allocation of Eligible and Responding Sample Among Sworn Size Groups.....	23
3.3	Screening Results by Size of Agency.....	27
3.4	Response Rates.....	31
3.5	Fail Edit Rates by Fail Edit Question.....	32
4.1a	Reported Missing Child/Youth Cases by Case Type (Percentage of Departments).....	43
4.1b	Median Number of Reported Cases by Case Type and Department Size.....	43
4.2	Missing Child/Youth Cases Remaining Unclassified After 24 or 48 Hours (Percentage of Departments).....	45
4.3	Cases Closed Within 72 Hours by Case Type (Percentage of Departments).....	45
4.5	Written Reports of Calls (Percent of Departments).....	47
4.6	Waiting Period (Percentage of Departments).....	48
4.7	Written Policy for Missing Child Cases (Percentage of Departments).....	50
4.8	Department Sworn Force Size and Type by Presence and Organizational Placement of Juvenile Unit (Percentage of Departments).....	51
4.9	Organization of Juvenile Investigation and Missing Children Investigation Responsibility (Percentage of Departments).....	53
4.10	Selected Investigative Actions Always or Usually Taken by Organization of Responsibility for Investigating Missing Child/Youth Cases (Percentages of Departments Having a Case in the Last Five Years).....	54
4.11	Importance of Factors in Making Departments Assign High Investigative Priority to Missing Child/Youth Cases by Case Type (Percentage of Departments Having Such a Case Type in Past Five Years).....	57
4.12	Frequency of Investigative Actions by Case Type (Percentage of Departments).....	63
4.13	Followup and Closeout Procedures (Percentage of Departments).....	67
4.14	Investigative Action Intensity for Case Types by Department Size and Type: Percentage of Departments Having Such a Case in the Last Five Years.....	69
4.15	Obstacles to Successful Investigation of Missing Child or Youth Cases (Percentage of All Departments).....	72
4.16	Weighted Regression Coefficients and Significance Levels for Case Types: Total Investigative Actions.....	80
4.17	Statistically Significant Results for Investigative Action Categories: Runaways.....	85
4.18	Statistically Significant Results for Investigative Action Categories: Parental Abductions.....	87
4.19	Statistically Significant Results for Investigative Actions Categories: Stranger Abductions.....	89

LIST OF TABLES (continued)

<u>Section</u>		<u>Page</u>
4.20	Statistically Significant Results for Investigative Action Categories: Unknown Missing.....	90
4.21	Weighted Logistic Regression Coefficients and Significance Levels: Runaways.....	94
4.22	Weighted Logistic Regression Coefficients and Significance Levels: Parental Abductions.....	96
4.23	Weighted Logistic Regression Coefficients and Significance Levels: Stranger Abductions.....	98
5.1	Seriousness of Runaway/Homeless Youth Problem by Department Size and Type (Percentage of Departments That Ever Handle Cases).....	103
5.2a	Number of Police Contacts in 1986 with Runaway/Homeless Youth (Percentage of Departments That Ever Handle Cases).....	104
5.2b	Median Number of Police Contacts in 1986 with Runaway/Homeless Youth by Type of Contact for Departments Reporting 100 or More Contacts.....	105
5.3	Number of Police Contacts in 1986 by Type of Contact and Seriousness of Homeless Youth Problem Rating (Percentage of Departments).....	107
5.4	Written Policies Regarding Homeless Youth by Department Size and Type (Percentage of Departments).....	108
5.5	Actions Regarding Runaways or Homeless Youth by Contact Type--Walk-ins: All Departments.....	109
5.6	Actions Regarding Runaways or Homeless Youth by Contact Type--Youth Victimized: All Departments.....	110
5.7	Actions Regarding Runaways or Homeless Youth by Contact Type--Officer-Initiated Assistance: All Departments.....	111
5.8	Obstacles to Returning Homeless Youth: All Departments..	113
5.9	Weighted Regression Coefficients and Significance Levels for Case Types: Actions Taken for Homeless Youth.....	117

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Number</u>		<u>Page</u>
3.1	Letter from Verne L. Speirs.....	28
3.2	Letter to Police Chief.....	30
3.3	Followup to Question 39.....	33
4.1	Conceptual Model of Investigative Actions in Missing Child/Youth Cases.....	76
4.2	Case Outcomes Analytic Model (by case types).....	91

"The Police and Missing Children: Findings from a National Survey"

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The problem of missing children became prominent in the early 1980's after several dramatic cases captured the attention of the public and public officials. In 1984 President Reagan signed legislation mandating the commitment of federal resources to deal with the problem in several ways (Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, as amended). One section of the law [406(a)(5)] authorized the Administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to make grants to collect information on the investigative practices actually used by law enforcement agencies in missing children cases.

OJJDP announced a program in July 1985 and solicited proposals to conduct a "National Study of Law Enforcement Policies and Practices Regarding Missing Children and Homeless Youth." It was suggested that the study be conducted in three phases:

- a mail survey of a nationally representative sample of law enforcement agencies,
- on-site visits to law enforcement agencies to gather more detailed information on policies and practices than is possible with a mail survey, and
- interviews with parents who have reported a child or youth missing and with children or youth who have returned home.

A cooperative agreement was awarded to Research Triangle Institute (RTI) of Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, and the URSA Institute (UI) of San Francisco, California in August 1986 to conduct the study.

The various phases of the study integrate multiple methodologies and perspectives which, taken together, will provide a comprehensive understanding of (1) law enforcement's role in missing child and homeless youth cases, (2) the experience of missing children while they are away from home, (3) and the police policies and practices that are associated with successful case outcomes. A model program or programs for law enforcement will be developed at the completion of the various phases of the study.

The mail survey of law enforcement agencies, which is the focus of this report, was conducted in the spring and summer of 1987. The survey was

undertaken because there is little systematic evidence available about how the police handle missing and homeless children and youth cases, even though the police play a central role. Children who disappear are generally classified as runaways, throwaways (i.e., rejected by their families), victims of parental kidnapping, victims of stranger abductions, accident victims, or missing for unknown reasons. The mail survey gathered information primarily about four case types: runaways (the most prevalent case type), stranger abductions, parental abductions, and unknown missing. Data were collected about written departmental policies, investigative actions and factors affecting these actions, obstacles to successful investigation, case closeout procedures, and recovery. Information about the departments such as size and organizational complexity was secured. Contextual legal data such as legally mandated reporting requirements on missing children and the age limit for the status offense of running away were also gathered. Data describing the magnitude of the problem were collected. (Although the incidence of the missing child problem nationally cannot be estimated from the mail survey data, a separate National Incidence Study, currently being conducted under OJJDP sponsorship, will generate incidence and prevalence data for the various categories of missing children.)

Chapter Two of this report includes a review of the literature on missing children and the police. Chapter Three presents the study methodology, including questionnaire development, sampling, and data collection procedures. Findings for police handling of missing children and youth cases are presented in Chapter Four, and police handling of homeless youth cases is discussed in Chapter Five. These chapters each include descriptive and multivariate analyses to identify organizational, case characteristic, and legal factors associated with investigative actions and case outcomes. There are separate analyses for the four missing child/youth case types (runaway, parental abduction, stranger abduction, unknown), and for homeless youth (defined as unemancipated 14-17 year olds living on their own without adult supervision). The final chapter of the report summarizes findings and discusses implications.

Like any study, the research reported here has strengths and limitations. An important strength is its breadth of coverage. The few studies done of missing and homeless children that have included

consideration of the police role have been limited in breadth. Most have collected data from a single department (thus not allowing analysis of differences among departments) and have concentrated on only a few aspects of the police role. The mail survey reported here produced responses from a probability sample of 791 state and local law enforcement agencies nationwide on a wide range of topics. Using a mail survey to collect these data, on the other hand, limited the detail and complexity it was possible to capture. It was necessary that the questions asked be general ones with a range of check-box responses applicable to departments with a variety of policies and practices.

The mail survey data allow a broad, general description of the range of policies and practices used by law enforcement agencies nationally, and of departmental and case characteristics related to following different practices. This information has not been generally available before now. And it provides an important foundation for the research to be conducted in later phases of this study.

2. RATIONALE AND LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Characteristics and Prevalence of Missing Children Cases

There is little precise information on the incidence or prevalence of missing children. One widely circulated estimate is that approximately one and a half million children are reported missing each year (US Senate Committee on the Judiciary, 1984). Neither the accuracy of this estimate nor the reliability of the estimates of the number of unreported missing children is known, however. Estimates of the number of missing children vary widely; some have no scientific basis, and others are based on studies that differed substantially in methodology and scope.

The lack of consensus on the definition of missing children further complicates this issue, affecting both the methods of counting missing children cases and the policies for addressing this problem. The duration of the missing episode, for example, is a critical dimension. Would a child who is restrained by a stranger for several hours, sexually abused, and then released be counted as a kidnap victim? How long must a teenager be gone to be classified as a runaway?

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) has defined four categories of missing children case types: voluntary missing (including runaways and "throwaways"), parental kidnappings, abductions by unknown individuals or non-family members (commonly called stranger abductions), and unknown missing (NCMEC, 1985). The definitions used in this study were based on the NCMEC definitions (see Chapter 3, Section E.2).

Although these definitions help clarify conceptual distinctions between types of missing children cases, it is not currently possible to cite reliable estimates of the incidence or prevalence for each type of case. Previous studies have not used consistent definitions. Because police definitions of missing child cases and police record-keeping procedures vary across departments, it is not possible to aggregate police statistics to estimate the magnitude of the problem from law enforcement records. It is also impossible to gather data about different types of missing children cases directly from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) system, because kidnapping/abduction is included in the category of "other offenses" and states vary widely in their definitions

and procedures regarding runaways. In addition, for crime incidents which involve multiple types of offenses are reported in only one category--thus submerging an unknown number of abductions into homicide, rape, and other offense categories.

A few studies have examined police records in detail in order to access information about missing children cases. One study examined all of the missing person reports (541 juvenile and 322 adult cases) filed with the police department of Charlotte, N.C. during 1984 (Hirschel and Lab, 1984). Although the findings were not classified by case type, some information regarding the circumstances surrounding the disappearance is useful. A plurality of the juveniles (48.8 percent) were gone 1-3 days, with 19.9 percent gone less than one day, and 15.6 percent gone more than 7 days. Only 2.3 percent were described as "taken by a third party/in danger," while nearly 40 percent were described as "previous runaway." In all of the closed cases, the juvenile returned alive; 48.3 percent returned on their own. Only 2.4 percent of the juvenile cases remained open at the end of the study.

Other studies have examined the incidence, characteristics, and consequences of the different types of missing children cases. Runaways have been studied most extensively. Literature related to parental and other abductions is scarce.

1. Runaways

There have been several attempts to estimate the national prevalence of runaways. Three different studies yielded similar prevalence rates: 1.7 percent (National Opinion Research Corporation, 1976), 2.06 percent (Brennan et al., 1975), and 1.85 percent (Edelbrock, 1980). These rates indicate there are between approximately 700,000 and 1 million runaways in the U.S. at any given time. Some estimates are even higher; the National Network of Runaway and Youth Services, Inc. (1985) estimates there are approximately two million runaways and homeless youth each year.

There is extensive literature examining the characteristics of runaways. As noted by Edelbrock (1980), researchers have used two primary strategies for describing runaways. One strategy is to determine how they differ from non-runaways. The other strategy is to classify runaways into sub-groups. The aim of both strategies is to create typologies of runaway youth. Studies that have compared runaways to non-runaways have found that

runaways are more likely to have family conflicts, perform poorly in school, be abused, and have lower self-esteem (Englander, 1984; Edelbrock, 1980; Hartman, et al., 1987). Studies that attempted to identify sub-groups among runaways generally distinguish between runaways based on their personality types, family characteristics, and whether or not they have problems at home or school (Miller, 1984; Hildebrand, 1963; Dunford and Brennan, 1976; Roberts, 1982; English, 1973; Senior and Henry, 1977).

There also appears to be a large group of runaways from foster care, group homes, and other forms of institutional care. One study of runaways interviewed at a shelter in Toronto, Canada found that 40 percent of the youths were living in institutions or foster homes at the time of their last running incident (Burgess, 1986).

Another group of runaways are youths abandoned by parents or guardians. Very little is known about "throwaways" because many of them are not reported to the police as runaways and those who are reported are not distinguished from other runaways.

Juvenile prostitution is the most frequently studied form of runaway exploitation. Studies depict the links among runaways, juvenile prostitution, and exploitation, and a review of the literature reveals estimates that two-thirds to nearly all juvenile female prostitutes have run away at least once (Silbert and Pines, 1982; James, 1980; Silbert and Pines, 1981). Another study of street prostitutes (60 percent of whom were 16 years old or younger) found extremely high levels of victimization: physical abuse, rape, robbery, and forced perversion (Silbert and Pines, 1981). Poor nutrition, depression, venereal disease, drug use, and suicidal tendencies were found to be prevalent among both male and female juvenile prostitutes (Boyer and James, 1983; Weisberg, 1985; URSA 1982).

Runaways, even those who are not involved in prostitution, face several other dangers, including lack of food and shelter, harmful drug experiences, physical violence and rape, and attempted suicide (Phelps et al., 1982). Runaways appear to suffer other long-term consequences, although it is not possible to determine whether these are a result of the running incident or the factors which led to the runaway behavior. One follow-up study of runaway youth conducted 12 years after the running incidents found that those who ran away more than once showed greater personal and social dysfunction as adults (Olson et al., 1980).

Some argue that runaways require a different type of intervention than conventional law enforcement policies and practices. Others believe that law enforcement intervention in runaway cases is appropriate because of the potential for exploitation of runaways and because of the possibility of miscategorizing a case as a runaway when it is actually an abduction.

2. Parental Abductions

Parental abductions have gained attention only recently, and data on this category of missing children are particularly sparse. The estimates of parental abductions vary substantially; an NCMEC (1986) review of current literature found estimates ranging from 25,000 to 500,000 per year. A preliminary estimate of the incidence of parental abductions was developed by Gelles (1983) from a telephone survey of 3,745 adults. He derived a household incidence rate of 1.5 percent and, accounting for sampling error, estimated between 459,000 and 751,000 parental abductions per year.

Another approach to evaluating the scope of this problem is to gauge the potential for parental kidnappings. Although not every divorce results in an abduction, the rapidly rising divorce rate has increased the potential for child theft. Agopian (1981) estimated about one child-theft for every 22 divorces. He also noted the increased emphasis on paternal rights as a possible factor in this problem.

Agopian (1981, 1984) is one of the few researchers who has empirically examined parental abduction. In a 1981 study, he examined 91 cases of parental abduction in Los Angeles. He found that the 68 percent of the offenders were white and that 71 percent of the offenders were male. The age distribution of study participants indicated that both offenders and custodial parents were generally young and in the same age group, 36 years of age and younger. Participants were usually employed, 70 percent of the offenders and 48 percent of the custodial parents held jobs. His analysis of victim characteristics revealed that white children were most likely to be victims, that male and female children were equally likely to be abducted, and that younger children were most frequently taken. The mean age for child victims was 7 years.

Although there is significant literature on the effects of divorce on children, little is known about the effects of parental abduction. Parental abductions are thought to produce assaultive behavior, insomnia, weak

peer relations, and fear of personal attachments. Many children were reported to have been sexually or physically abused by the abducting parent. These findings are based primarily on newspaper reports and individual case histories, however, and there have been virtually no systematic assessments of parental kidnapping victims to verify these speculations (Pereira and Robertson, 1983; Davidson, 1981; Winoker, 1980; and Senior et al., 1982).

Agopian (1984) interviewed five parental abduction victims between 4 and 16 months after their recoveries. He distinguished between short-term and long-term abductions. In short-term abductions, the children were transported to a specific location and did not have to establish fugitive identities. In long-term abductions, the children's treatment and lifestyle were often controlled by the abductor's need to evade law enforcement detection. This study did not support the contention that sexual abuse is common in parental abductions, but it did find that common reactions among victims were fear, worrying, and crying.

As Agopian (1981) noted, it may be difficult for police to recover children since offenders generally desire to provide a stable, if clandestine, home environment and, because they tend not to commit other crimes, there is little chance of contact with the police. Tracing an abductor may also be difficult, especially if the custodial parent does not notify the police immediately. In the Agopian study, most custodial parents who had children returned (41 percent) notified the police within one week of the crime. The overall recovery rate for children in this study was less than 50 percent.

Perpetrators of parental abduction are usually not subject to criminal sanctions. Only 21 percent of the offenders in Agopian's study (1981) were arrested. Prosecutors apparently attempted to resolve the cases with a minimum degree of court action and declined to prosecute in 45 percent of the total 91 cases. The prosecution of these cases was also hampered by the inability to locate offenders and the custodial parent's withdrawal of charges when the child was recovered. It was also rare for offenders who were prosecuted to be found guilty, and the sentences usually consisted only of probation.

3. Other Abductions

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) (1986) examined the problem of stranger abductions using three sources: police records from three cities (269 cases); 212 cases reported to the NCMEC hotline between 1979-1980; and 818 cases reported in newspaper articles and by law enforcement and social service professionals between 1979 and 1985. This study illustrates one difficulty in using police records for determining the incidence of child abductions: cases which involve an abduction and a sexual assault are often subsumed under the classification of sexual assault. Of all the kidnapping cases identified in the records, the majority (61 percent) were classified as sexual assaults, while only 15 percent had classifications that included the words kidnapping, attempted kidnapping, or abduction.

This study showed that females were more likely to be kidnapped than males, and the mean age of victims was 10.5 years. In the law enforcement sample, 97.6 percent of the children were missing less than 24 hours. The study also found that children were most frequently kidnapped going between home and school and were most frequently taken to secluded areas. The findings also indicated that kidnapping was often precedent to another serious crime such as sexual assault or murder.

Hotaling and Finkelhor (1988) used several data bases, including the Supplementary Homicide Reports of the FBI, to estimate the annual number of stranger abduction homicides involving children. The estimates ranged from 52 to 158. The study indicated that girls, older adolescents, and racial minorities were at higher risk than their counterparts.

The only literature available on the effects of abduction on children is a series of articles by L. Terr (1979, 1981, 1983) that chronicles the short-term and long-term effects on the 23 children involved in the Chowchilla school bus kidnapping in 1976. The children were abducted by three masked men while riding a bus home from summer school and were held for 27 hours before escaping. All of the children showed post-traumatic stress reactions in the observation period, 5-13 months after the event (Terr, 1981). Reactions included hallucinations, reenactment, personality change, repeated dreams of death, fears of being kidnapped again, and fear of common experiences such as being left alone, and being in open or closed spaces. A four-year followup found that many of these symptoms persisted.

and that the victims also demonstrated pessimism about the future, shame, time skew, and repeated nightmares (Terr, 1983).

B. Relevance of Police to Missing/Homeless Cases

The police are usually the first agency to respond in missing child/youth cases, and the police response may be critical to the safe recovery of the child or youth. The key decisions made by the police include deciding what initial response should be taken following a report and what level of investigative effort should be expended. As will be reported later, virtually all departments take written reports for all missing children cases. There are rarely waiting periods for accepting these reports, an apparent change from practices of only a few years ago.

There are many subsequent investigative responses, ranging from securing a description of the child to calling out canine and helicopter units to aid in a search. Information is collected from persons reporting that a child or youth is missing to help the police decide what type and intensity of investigative actions are appropriate. Police personnel who take initial reports, usually on the telephone in most agencies, get a description of the missing child and only the basic information necessary to set an initial response priority. The police easily decide how to respond to cases at the extremes. A suspected stranger abduction of a young child will result in the maximum investigative effort. A report of a 16-year-old who has repeatedly run away and who does not appear to be in danger will not result in the immediate heavy commitment of investigative resources. Between the extremes, however, decisionmaking is often difficult. Typically, a patrol officer dispatched to the scene will be the first person to assess the investigative requirements of cases. He or she may consult with a supervisor during this initial investigation. For cases not closed quickly, investigative specialists will later make these assessments and decide on investigative actions, often in consultation with a police supervisor.

Little is known about the factors affecting police response to missing child/youth reports. Maxon et al. (1988) suggest a framework for understanding police responses to these cases which uses legal context, departmental policies and organization and perceived youth types as its

principle components. Other factors which might be considered include police perception of the seriousness of the problem and case characteristics. Legal context is relevant in several respects. Running away from home is not an offense in some jurisdictions for older children. Parental kidnapping laws vary from state to state. Certain police actions are mandated by law. Many states in recent years, for example, have passed laws requiring police departments to report missing children cases to the National Crime Information Center's (NCIC) Missing Persons File (NCMEC, 1985; Hoff, 1986).

1. Departmental Policy

Policy in police departments is determined by a variety of factors--some external to the department. Wilson (1968) showed how local political culture influenced the style of law enforcement in a community. Police department policy regarding missing children and youths will also be reactive to the contemporary notions that guide the juvenile justice system and the changing juvenile justice philosophy. Klein and Little (1981) pointed out how the social philosophy paradigm underlying juvenile justice changed from a helping orientation in the first half of the 20th century to a greater law-and-order orientation in the 1980's. The trend since the 1960's to decriminalize status offenses has also changed police department policy. Little (1981) pointed out that after a change in the law regarding runaways in California, some police no longer viewed runaways as a police responsibility.

Brown (1981), in a study of police discretion and reform, conceived a typology of police operational styles, which he argues derives from a combination of factors including departmental orientation and the values of the police culture. The typology dimensions are selectivity of enforcement (selective vs. nonselective) and aggressiveness on the street (high vs. low). The operational law enforcement style will vary by a department's placement in a two-by-two table where the cells are defined by the typology dimensions. Brown does not discuss specifically the relevance of the typology for missing children cases but, clearly, the different orientations imply differences in the handling of such cases.

Those police departments with a strong self-image as crime fighters (Brown, 1981; Kentucky Task Force, 1983) may view some categories of cases as inappropriate police matters. Runaway children from troubled homes and

parental abductions that result from domestic disputes are examples of cases that police departments oriented to crime fighting are likely to view as problems that other community organizations should handle.

Skolnick and Bayley (1986) studied police innovation in six cities. They argue that there is a "...new thrust in American policing... loosely designated as community-oriented policing..." (Skolnick and Bayley, 1986: 211). If their analysis is accurate, missing children cases should receive more attention as community-oriented policing becomes more pervasive. Such cases are likely to be given a high priority by communities.

2. Departmental Organization and Resources

Law enforcement agencies are diverse. They range from one-person departments to the New York City Police Department with more than 26,000 sworn officers. Large police departments are complex organizations with the expected bureaucratic features such as specialized investigative functions. Smaller departments are more likely to operate with police generalists and to deliver fewer police services. Smaller departments often obtain support services (such as for homicide investigations) from larger departments (Ostrom, Parks, and Whitaker, 1978). Because size is a key factor in the organization and operations of police departments, it will be an important variable in the analyses reported here.

To our knowledge, the present study is the first to examine the effects of police organizational features on the handling of missing children cases. A number of previous studies have looked at the relationship of police organization to various aspects of policing such as service delivery (Ostrom, et al., 1978), innovation (Skolnick and Bayley, 1986), and police styles (Slovak, 1986). Slovak's book is unusual in that it attempts to understand "...the differential effects of organizations and environments on styles of local police work" (Slovak, 1986:11). Based on analysis of organizational and environmental characteristics and their relationship to (1) arrest rates in 42 cities, and (2) dispatch logs for 50 neighborhoods in three cities, Slovak argues that organization is more important to police action than is environment.

Nardulli and Stonecash (1981) examined police response to service requests by response speed, effort expended, and case outcomes. They found that situational variables such as the seriousness of the occurrence were most important to police response, but they also found that agency

resources and competing demands were significant factors shaping response. The availability of police resources, for example, was associated with a quicker response to property crime reports.

Organizational characteristics and resources will be a principal aspect of the analyses reported later in this report. The effects of department size, complexity, innovativeness, and other features on investigative actions and case outcomes will be examined.

3. Case Characteristics

Police exercise substantial discretion in their actions, taking a variety of factors into account. Among these are the nature of the offense or reason for the police-citizen encounter, the characteristics and attitudes of offenders and victims the attitude of officers, and departmental policies and resources (Goldstein, 1977; LaFave, 1965; Nardulli and Stonecash, 1981; Piliavin and Briar, 1964; Wertham and Piliavin, 1967; Wilson, 1968). Most past work has focused on the use of police discretion to arrest. Such things as offense seriousness and offender demeanor have been found associated with the arrest decision.

Past work has examined the distribution of police manpower across units within police departments (e.g., Slovak, 1986). Little past work, however, has focused on the issue of most direct relevance to the current study, that is, how the decision is made to commit investigative resources to the case or incident. LaFave (1965) speculates that the policy of not arresting (when doing so would be appropriate or permissible) is usually adopted to conserve police resources. Arresting everyone thought to have broken a criminal law is not possible, given resource limitations, even if it were desirable.

Nardulli and Stonecash (1981) examined police responses to assault, property crime, and traffic accidents. They found that the response was directly related to "professional-rational" criteria--especially the seriousness of the incident. Injury and heavy property loss were associated with quicker response and greater investigative effort. Socio-political factors, such as higher victim status, were also found to exert some influence, but this effect was usually seen later in the investigative process rather than in the initial resource commitment decisions made at the outset of a case.

Police have a limited capacity to investigate cases and must decide which ones will receive the most attention. Missing child or youth cases involving a serious violation of law (such as an abduction), very young children or a dangerous situation are likely to receive intensive investigative attention. Departments with greater available resources are more likely to be quickly and vigorously responsive. The current study attempts to fill the void in understanding of factors associated with commitment of investigative resources to the investigation of cases. It does so, in part, by analyzing police assessments of the factors affecting investigative priorities such as age of child or youth, length of time gone, and previous history of running away. The goal is better understanding of police decisionmaking in the investigation of missing/homeless cases, in particular, and of investigative decisionmaking more generally.

3. METHODOLOGY

In the following sections, the mail survey methodology is discussed--beginning with a description of the data collection instrument.

A. Questionnaire Development

The objective of the mail survey was to document law enforcement policies and practices toward missing children and homeless youth. To meet this objective, the mail survey instrument was designed to collect a wide range of information. To minimize respondent burden and help insure a high response rate, both ease of administration and content were considered during the development of the protocol. The questionnaire was divided into several sections to help respondents make important conceptual distinctions between types of items and to facilitate administration in agencies where different persons would answer different questions. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix A.

The questionnaire begins with a series of questions about procedures for investigating missing child and youth cases, including runaways, reported to the department. These items obtain information on department policies and programs, factors affecting investigative priorities, frequency of specific investigative actions, and obstacles to successful recovery of missing children and youth. The second section of the questionnaire addresses the issue of homeless youth, defined as unemancipated runaways or homeless youth living on their own without a parent or guardian. The ways that law enforcement officials encounter such youth, typical actions for dealing with them, and obstacles to returning them to their homes are the major items covered in this section. Next, there is a series of items about departmental characteristics, including size, organization, and investigative specialities. The final section of the questionnaire focuses on the numbers of various types of missing children and youth cases that were investigated in 1986 and the rate of closure for these cases. Additional questions ask for information about departmental record keeping practices.

The initial draft of the questionnaire was prepared in response to requests for specific information in the solicitation and staff knowledge

of police agency operations. The instrument that was prepared for the RTI proposal was extensively reviewed and revised. Several persons outside the grantee research organizations who are experts in law enforcement, survey research and the substantive issues related to missing children and homeless youth were consulted during questionnaire development. A draft of the questionnaire was also given to four law enforcement agencies that agreed to participate in a pretest. Project staff visited these agencies to discuss their comments about the instrument and to gather details about relevant police operations. After incorporating the revisions suggested by the consultants and during the pretests, the questionnaire was reviewed by the project Advisory Board. Board members' suggestions were considered in the final version.

The process of developing the questionnaire highlighted a number of research issues. For example, early versions of the instrument did not separate case types on the items that police investigative actions addressed. During the pretest, therefore, officers attempting to describe their activities had no reference to a case classification. Many of the pretest questions, therefore, were separated by case type: runaways, parental abduction, stranger abduction, and unknown missing. Reviewers also advised that runaway cases in which the child or youth was reported missing be clearly distinguished from incidents in which police officers encountered a runaway or homeless youth on the street or as a crime victim. In addition, several approaches to resolving the difficulty of devising specific items that would be applicable to departments of various sizes and with differing policies were tried.

B. National Sample of Law Enforcement Agencies

A sample of public law enforcement agencies (LEAs) was selected so as to be representative of all such agencies in the United States (including Alaska and Hawaii) and thus to represent the investigative policies and practices of police agencies throughout the nation. An agency was eligible for the mail survey if it:

- investigated cases of missing children and youth reported by the public, and
- had actually investigated any such case in the past five years (since the spring of 1982).

Selection of this sample involved several steps:

- Locating and examining the sampling frame;
- Designing the sample;
- Screening for eligibility for mail survey; and
- Weighting responding agencies to make the sample nationally representative.

Each of these steps is described below.

1. Sampling Frame

The population of interest for the mail survey was the population of general law enforcement agencies that investigated cases of missing children and youth reported to them by the public. The sampling frame chosen to represent the population for the mail survey was the Law Enforcement Agency Directory maintained by the U.S. Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Justice Statistics. This is a computerized directory of "[g]eneral and special law enforcement agencies having sworn personnel with general powers of arrest..." (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1980: 24).

The Law Enforcement Agency Directory is a sector (subset) of the National Justice Agency List originally developed in 1970 by the Statistics Center of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (now the Bureau of Justice Statistics) with the help of the Census Bureau. The Census Bureau surveyed all local governments in the United States to identify the names and addresses of all their criminal justice agencies and institutions. Inhouse research (consisting of examination of published government documents such as budgets, organization manuals, and directories) was used to compile a list of state justice agencies and to supplement information gathered in the survey from large counties and cities. The Census Bureau has continued to maintain this list for BJS, periodically updating it through censuses of individual sectors and inhouse research.

The Census Bureau had conducted a census of the Law Enforcement Agency sector to update and correct the Directory in the fall of 1986, several months before our list was generated. The Census Bureau had accounted for every agency included in this census, including nonrespondents that had gone out of operation. Agencies (and branches of agencies) classified in the updated Directory as sheriff's offices, county general purpose police, municipal general purpose police, and other general purpose police were

included in the mail survey sampling frame. A total of 15,754 such police agencies were in the frame.

Agencies classified as special police or medical examiners in the Directory were excluded from the frame. Special police included police agencies having general powers of arrest (usually) exercised in a limited geographic area, such as park rangers, transit police, harbor police, housing authority police, and campus security agencies.

2. Sample Design

One task in designing a sample, simply put, involves choosing the number of cases needed for analysis on the basis of both substantive and statistical criteria, then adjusting this number to allow for various kinds of nonresponse, thus, determining the sample size necessary to produce the number of cases desired. The mail survey sample design also had to be adjusted because some agencies in the sample would not be eligible. The design was stratified to reduce sampling variation and increase efficiency of data collection.

A stratified simple random sample was designed to produce approximately 800 responding agencies. LEAs in the sampling frame were stratified (sorted) jointly by two characteristics expected to affect investigative policies and practices: (1) agency size defined as its number of sworn officers (four categories: <50, 50-99, 100-299, and 300 or more) and, within that, (2) region of the country as defined by the Census Bureau (Northeast, Midwest, South, and West). This produced 16 sworn-officer-size by region strata (four region strata within each of four size strata). The selection rates would differ among size strata. It was assumed that larger LEAs would have more missing child/youth cases and more homeless youths in their jurisdictions. Because there are more small than large LEAs, larger LEAs were to be sampled at higher rates to produce approximately 200 responding agencies in each of the four size strata. Agencies in the same size category were selected at the same rate from all four regions.

The proportion of LEAs that had investigated a missing child or youth case since the spring of 1982 (i.e., the proportion that was eligible for the mail survey) was unknown. It was assumed that virtually all police agencies with 100 or more sworn officers would be eligible. The eligibility rate for the two size strata, 100-299 and 300 or more, then,

would be approximately 100 percent. No assumption about eligibility rates for the two smaller size strata was certain enough to be the basis for sample selection. Therefore, a subsample of agencies from the two smaller size strata was "prescreened" to estimate empirically the eligibility rates of the two smaller strata (from which the subsample would be drawn). The resulting estimate was very conservative: that 50 percent of LEAs in the 50-99 sworn size stratum, and 15 percent of those in the less than 50 stratum, would be eligible.

It was assumed that 95 percent of sampled agencies would be screened successfully, that is, a telephone interviewer would be able to contact the agency and determine its eligibility for the mail survey. Finally, it was assumed that 75 percent of eligible agencies would respond to the survey.

3. Screening for Eligibility

The procedures used for telephone screening of sampled LEAs are described later in this chapter. Table 3.1 shows the allocation among sworn size strata of the Phase 1 sample that was selected for and resulted from screening. Column (1) of the table shows the sworn size strata, and column (2) shows the number of law enforcement agencies in each stratum in the sampling frame. The numbers selected and retained in the sample at each stage of the sampling/screening process (shown in columns 3 through 7) were based on the assumptions described above.

Column (3) shows the number of agencies initially selected at random for telephone screening. A "prescreening" subsample of 200 agencies in each of the two smaller size strata was randomly selected from the Law Enforcement Agency Directory (column 4). Of the 200 agencies with fewer than 50 sworn officers, 79 percent were successfully screened and found to be eligible; of those with 50-99 sworn officers, 91 percent were contacted and eligible. Using these percentages as our new eligibility rate assumptions, additional agencies were selected in each of these two strata: 178 additional agencies for the less-than-50 stratum (making a total of 378 agencies selected for screening) and 118 additional agencies for the 50-99

Table 3.1. Allocation of Phase I Sample Among Sworn Size Groups

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Sworn Officers	Agencies in Frame	Agencies Initially Selected	Agencies Prescreened	Agencies Finally Selected	Agencies Screened	Agencies Eligible	% of Agencies Eligible ^a
<50	14,185	2,018	200	378	389	307	81.2%
50-99	833	610	200	318	317	298	93.1%
100-299	525	303	0	303	303	278	91.7%
300+	211	211	0	211	208	180	85.3%
Total	15,754	3,140	400	1,210	1,197	1,061	87.7%

^aComputed as Agencies Eligible (7) divided by Agencies Selected (5).

stratum (making a total of 318 selected for screening, (column 5). As shown, 303 had been selected from the 100-299 stratum; all 211 agencies with 300 or more sworn officers in the frame were selected.

Columns 6 through 8 show the numbers of sample agencies screened and eligible for the survey, and the percentage of those selected found to be eligible. Of the total 1,210 agencies selected, 1,197 were successfully screened. A total of 1,061 sample agencies were found to be eligible, 88 percent of those selected. Final eligibility rates (column 8) for the two smaller strata were similar to the eligibility rates estimated from prescreening. Eighty-one percent of the selected agencies with fewer than 50 sworn officers were screened and eligible, as were 93 percent of selected agencies with 50-99 sworn officers.

Our original assumption that all agencies in the two larger sworn-size categories would be eligible did not hold, especially for the very large agencies. Only 85 percent of selected agencies with 300 or more sworn officers were screened and eligible, as were 92 percent of selected agencies with 100-299 sworn officers. In both size strata, the ineligible agencies did not conduct investigations of missing child cases. Many were large (or medium-sized) sheriff's offices managing jails and/or working for

the courts. Most (54 percent of ineligible agencies in each stratum) were in the South.

4. Weighting the Data

To make the sample data nationally representative, weights were assigned to the data for each responding agency to adjust for the disproportionate selection by sworn-size stratum and for response rate differences among the 16 size-region strata. Table 3.2 summarizes the differences in selection and response rates according to the four sworn-size strata.

Table 3.2 Allocation of Eligible and Responding Sample Among Sworn-Size Groups

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Sworn Officers	Agencies in Frame	Agencies Finally Eligible	Selection Rate ^a	Agencies Responding ^b	Response Rate ^c	Weighted Ns
<50	14,185	301	2.12%	178	59.14%	14,194.1
50-99	833	295	35.41%	220	74.58%	832.6
100-299	525	276	52.57%	233	84.42%	526.0
300+	211	177	83.89%	160	90.40%	211.0
Total	15,754	1,049	6.66%	791	75.41%	15,736.6

^aComputed as the Agencies Finally Eligible (3) divided by Agencies in Frame (2).

^bThe number responding is sometimes referred to as the "sample size."

^cComputed as the Agencies Responding (5) divided by Agencies Finally Eligible (3).

Again, column 1 shows the sworn-size category, and column 2 shows the total number of LEAs in each of these strata. Column 3 shows the number of sample agencies in each stratum remaining eligible when the mail survey field work was complete. Column 4 shows final selection rates for each size stratum, that is, the proportion of the frame that was selected and eligible. Of the 15,754 law enforcement agencies in the frame, approximately 7 percent (or 1 in 15) were selected (and eligible) for the mail survey. Selection rates differed greatly by sworn size stratum. Approximately 84 percent of agencies having 300 or more sworn officers were selected, compared to about 53 percent of those with 100-299 sworn officers, about 35 percent of those with 50-99 officers, and about 2 percent of those with fewer than 50 sworn officers.

Column 5 shows the number of eligible agencies in each sworn-size stratum that answered the mail questionnaire, and column 6 shows the response rate (the number responding as a proportion of the number finally eligible in each stratum). Overall, 791 of the 1,049 eligible agencies sampled answered the questionnaire, a response rate of 75 percent. Larger agencies were considerably more likely than smaller ones to respond. About 90 percent of agencies with 300 or more sworn officers responded, as did about 84 percent of those with 100-299 officers, 75 percent of those with 50-99 officers, and 59 percent of those with fewer than 50 sworn officers.

Two weights were computed for each of the 16 strata defined by sworn-size and region. One set of weights was the inverse of the stratum-specific selection rate; the second set of weights was the inverse of the stratum-specific response rate. These computations determined, in effect, the number of agencies each responding sample agency in the stratum of the sampling frame represented. For example, as noted earlier, approximately 7 percent (or about 1 in 15) of the police agencies in the nation were selected (and eligible). The inverse of 1 in 15 is 15, so that the average weight assigned to adjust for selection is approximately 15. Multiplying these two stratum-specific weights yields the aggregate weight used to weight the mail survey data. Column 7 of Table 3.2 shows the weighted Ns (number of cases) produced by the aggregate weights. Weighted Ns sum to the estimated size of the population represented by a sample (in the present case, the estimated number of agencies in each size stratum). It can

be seen that the weighted Ns are very similar (or identical to) the numbers in the sampling frame.

All estimates of percentages, means, and regression coefficients reported in Chapters 4 and 5 are based on weighted data. Statistical tests are based on actual (unweighted) sample sizes. Because the goal of much of this report is primarily descriptive, and because multivariate analyses are relied on to understand the effects of organizational, legal, and other factors on investigative actions and case outcomes, results of statistical significance testing are not shown in crosstabulations. Differences of proportions discussed in the text, however, are statistically significant unless otherwise noted. Differences of proportions were determined by the following formula:

$$S_{P_1 - P_2} = \sqrt{\text{DEFF} * \left(\frac{P_1 (1-P_1)}{n_1} + \frac{P_2 (1-P_2)}{n_2} \right) * 2}$$

where P_1 is the weighted percentage estimate for the first category

n_1 is the sample size for the first category

P_2 is the weighted percentage estimate for the second category,

n_2 is the sample size for the second category, and

$S_{P_1 - P_2}$ is the standard error of the difference between percentages.

If a difference is greater than the above estimate it is judged to be statistically significant.

C. Data Collection Procedures

The first step in the mail survey data collection was the telephone screening to determine which law enforcement agencies were eligible to receive the mail questionnaire. Sampling aspects of this screening were discussed in the previous section; here we describe the procedures used and provide detailed results.

*DEFF is a design effect estimated at $\sqrt{2}$ for a stratified, nonproportionate random sample.

The telephone screening was conducted by trained interviewers using a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) during the last two weeks of April, 1987. Screening interviews averaging approximately five minutes were conducted with the agency head or someone he or she designated. Interviewers began by verifying the name, address, and telephone number of the police agency. They then determined agency eligibility according to the criteria given at the beginning of Section B, above. Interviewers then asked eligible agencies to whom the mail questionnaire should be sent, the agency head or someone else, and determined the correct name, title and mailing address of that individual.

Table 3.3 shows the detailed results of the telephone screening according to sworn-size category. Interviewers contacted all but one of the 1,210 agencies selected for screening, an agency listed on the sampling frame as having fewer than 50 sworn officers. As noted earlier, 1,061 agencies (87.6 percent) were found to be eligible. One of these refused to fill out the mail questionnaire at this stage. A total of 136 agencies were not eligible: 86 (7.1 percent) because they did not investigate missing child/youth cases and 50 (4.1 percent) because they had had no such cases within the past five years. Agencies of the latter type were concentrated in the smaller sworn-size categories; 49 of the 50 saying they had had no missing child/youth cases within five years had fewer than 100 sworn officers. As mentioned earlier, many of the larger agencies that did not investigate such cases were sheriff's offices whose duties were confined to managing jails and/or doing work for the courts. Ten of the agencies sampled for screening had closed or merged with other law enforcement agencies since the Census Bureau had completed its field work updating the sampling frame; seven of these were small agencies (<50 sworn officers), and three were relatively large (300 or more sworn officers). Only two agencies refused the screening interview.

Table 3.3. Screening Results by Size of Agency

Result	Number of Sworn Officers									
	<50		50-99		100-299		300+		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not able to contact	1	0.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.1
Eligible										
Mail questionnaire sent to agency	307	81.2	295	92.8	278	91.7	180	85.3	1060	87.6
Mail questionnaire refused in screening	0	0.0	1	0.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.1
Not Eligible										
Don't investigate cases of missing children	18	4.8	16	5.0	24	7.9	28	13.3	86	7.1
No cases of missing children investigated in the past 5 years	44	11.6	5	1.6	1	0.0	0	0.0	50	4.1
Closed/Merged	7	1.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	1.4	10	0.8
Refused screener	1	0.3	1	0.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.2
Total	378	100	318	100	303	100	211	100	1210	100

On May 11, 1987, 1,060 questionnaires were mailed to eligible law enforcement agencies. Of the eligible agencies, 734 (69.2 percent) had requested that the questionnaire be mailed to the agency head and 326 (30.8 percent) had requested that it be sent to an agency employee other than the agency head. Where someone other than the agency head was designated as the questionnaire recipient, the agency head received a copy of the cover letter. Materials included in the initial mailout were a questionnaire (which had a letter from Dr. James Collins, RTI's Principal Investigator, printed on page 1), a postage-paid return envelope addressed to RTI, and a cover letter from Verne L. Speirs, Administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The Speirs' letter, included to add credibility to the study, was personalized to each potential respondent (see Figure 3.1).



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Juvenile Justice and
Delinquency Prevention

Washington, D.C. 20531

May 6, 1987

MISSING CHILDREN STUDY
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Public Safety Director
Oxnard, CADARREL STEPHENS
Executive Director
Police Executives
Research Forum

SAMPLE

Dear Chief:

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has been directed by federal law to collect information on missing children's cases. Critical to our understanding of the problem of missing children is information about local law enforcement agencies' policies and practices for handling missing children cases. These cases result when children run away from home or are victims of abduction or accident. The police are usually the first agency asked to respond to such cases.

Your department was chosen as one that represents a number of police departments. The enclosed questionnaire asks that you provide information about your policies and practices for dealing with missing children cases. Your answers to these questions are important if it is going to be possible to describe accurately how law enforcement deals with these problems. Careful attention to the questionnaire will be appreciated. All respondents will receive a summary copy of the final report in the Fall of this year.

The Advisory Board members listed on this letterhead have been consulted about the study and support it. More information about the study is provided in the enclosed letter from the Research Triangle Institute, the organization conducting the study with the support of OJJDP. That letter also gives you a toll-free number to call if you have questions or want more information.

We know that you are asked to complete numerous surveys during the course of the year; however, this survey is of particular national importance. We are most appreciative of the valuable time you and your staff contribute to this research.

Sincerely,

Verne L. Speirs
Acting Administrator

Enclosures

On May 22, 1987, reminder postcards were mailed to everyone who received a questionnaire. The postcards thanked the respondents who had already returned questionnaires and urged everyone else to complete the questionnaire as soon as possible. Approximately 45 percent of the questionnaires were returned after the initial mailing and postcard reminder.

On June 12, 1987, a second questionnaire was mailed to all potential respondents who had not yet returned the first questionnaire. A total of 580 followup questionnaires were mailed (441 were mailed to agency heads, and 139 were mailed to other designated respondents). As in the initial mailing, a copy of the letter to the designated respondent was mailed to the head of those agencies. Materials included in the followup mailout were a copy of the questionnaire, a postage-paid return envelope addressed to RTI, a copy of the Verne Speirs' letter from the initial mailout, and a letter from Dr. James Collins urging agencies to participate (refer to Figure 3.2 for an example of the followup letter). Approximately one month after the second mailout, a total of approximately 695 questionnaires (65.6 percent) had been returned.

Beginning on July 15, 1987, prompting telephone calls were made to 361 law enforcement agencies that still had not returned questionnaires. Of those, 112 agencies promised to mail the questionnaires, 51 agencies said they had already mailed the questionnaires, 157 asked to have another questionnaire sent to them, 14 refused to participate, and the remainder were unusual situations (most were cases where the law enforcement agency had an answering machine operating each time the phone call was made. In those cases, a message was left urging that the potential respondent complete the questionnaire and return it as soon as possible). The final number of questionnaires received was 801 (of which 10 were discovered to be ineligible). Table 3.4 summarizes the number of questionnaires returned, and the proportion of the total mailed.

Questionnaire receipt was monitored using a computerized control system. As each step of the data receipt procedure occurred (e.g., initial questionnaire mailed, postcard reminder, questionnaire received), an event was entered into the control system for each agency. This made it possible to determine the current status of a particular agency and track the progress through the various stages of data collection and processing.

Figure 3.2. Letter to Police Chief

Date

Dear Police Chief:

The Research Triangle Institute and URSA Institute are conducting a survey for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), to collect data about law enforcement agencies' policies and practices for investigating cases of missing children and homeless youth. The information gathered in this survey will allow the development of model programs for dealing with these cases. Several weeks ago, we mailed you a questionnaire for this survey. A copy of the letter from the Acting Administrator of OJJDP that accompanied the questionnaire is enclosed.

I am writing at this time to ask again for your support of this important project. Your participation is needed to make the survey results accurate and complete. All of the information that you give us will be kept confidential and will be used only to prepare statistical summaries.

Please take a short period of time out of your busy schedule to complete the enclosed questionnaire. A preaddressed, postage-paid envelope is enclosed for returning the questionnaire. Your time spent will contribute greatly to knowledge of police practices in the area of missing children and homeless youth.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding the study. You may call me toll free at (800) 334-8571 (in North Carolina, call collect at 919-541-6462).

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have previously returned your questionnaire, there is no need to complete the enclosed questionnaire.

Enclosures

Table 3.4 Response Rates

Date	Event	No. Mailed/ Contacted	Returned	
			N	%
5/11/87	Initial Mailout	1060		
5/22/87	Thank You Postcard Reminder	1060	480	45.3
6/12/87	Second Questionnaire Mailed	580	221	20.8
7/15/87	Telephone Followup	361	<u>100</u> 801	<u>9.4</u> 75.6

Once a week, summary reports were generated, detailing how many agencies were at each step of the data receipt process.

D. Editing and Data Processing

After questionnaires were received at RTI and logged into the computerized control system, data editors coded open-ended questions and reviewed the codability and completeness of responses to key questions. Questionnaires that failed this edit went through a special process which will be discussed later. Questionnaires that passed edit were quality controlled (i.e., checked for adequacy of editing). Initially, the first 20 questionnaires that were completed by each editor were 100 percent quality controlled. Once it was determined that the editor was editing the questionnaires accurately, 10 percent of his/her work was reviewed. After being quality controlled, questionnaires were sent to data entry for keying.

Data editors were trained only to review specific questions within the completed questionnaires. (Refer to Appendix B for edit specifications.) Fail-edit questions were checked to see that the proper number of responses had been entered, that the responses fell within a specified range, and that there was information entered for each applicable question. Fail-edit questions that asked a respondent to rank items were checked to see that each ranking was used only once per question.

The questions that required respondents to rank items (10 and 12) and the questions that asked for departmental statistics (14a and 39) were the questions that failed edit most frequently. The ranking questions often failed edit because the respondents used rankings more than once (e.g., they ranked 10 factors as "1" - most important). Two questions that were especially difficult for respondents to answer referred to the number and type of missing child reports that the department had received (39) and the number and type of contacts with homeless youth the department had (14a). These questions often failed edit because the responses were left blank or there were marginal notes indicating that the agency did not keep these statistics or, if they did, they were not in the form that the questionnaire requested (e.g., in question 39, stranger abductions, the agency might keep statistics on kidnappings but not break these down by child vs. adult kidnapping). Table 3.5 provides the fail-edit rate for each of the questions.

Table 3.5 Fail Edit Rates by Fail Edit Question

Question #	Edit Steps/ Per Question	No. of Fail Edit Questionnaires	% of Total Questionnaires Received
1	1	0	0
2a	1	0	0
2b	1	0	0
6	3	2	0.41
10	4	436	55.0
11	2	63	7.9
12	4	378	47.7
14a	3	165	20.8
17	3	65	8.2
38	1	78	9.8
39	4	582	73.4

The Telephone Survey Unit called each agency whose questionnaire failed edit for resolution of the problem responses. In most cases, the respondent could clarify the responses. However, if the respondent was unable to provide information such as the number of reports from the records, the telephone interviewer asked if the respondent could provide an estimate.

Figure 3.3

FOLLOWUP TO QUESTION 39

Agency ID No.: _____

Agency Name: _____

Circle the correct response.

01 Interviewee provided information (fill in blanks in questionnaire)

"Many police departments were unable to respond completely to this question, and we would like to better understand the reason. What is the main reason that you found this question difficult to answer?"

02 Our department does not keep records in the categories given.

03 It is too time consuming to search the records to find that information.

04 This information is not recorded in our files.

05 Department is not willing to provide this information.

06 It is not possible to make an estimate of these numbers.

07 Other (SPECIFY) _____

If she/he could, the response was entered. If not, for question 14a regarding homeless youth, the interviewer then asked if the agency had had each type of contact in 1986. A special code was assigned to designate whether the agency had that type of contact. For question 39, regarding the number of reports by case type, if the respondent could not provide an estimate, she/he was asked why the information was not available. The interviewer completed a special form indicating the reason (refer to Figure 3.4, Supplement to Question 39 Form).

The questionnaires were returned to the data editors after telephone followup. Editors then sent questionnaires that passed edit to be quality controlled. Questionnaires that met the quality control standards were sent to data entry for keying. The questionnaire data were keyed twice for verification. If the computer program found differences in the way a response was entered in the first and second keying, the keyer was prompted to re-enter the correct response.

The keyed data were converted into a SAS file format for machine editing and development of the final analysis file. The machine edit consists of various diagnostic and editing runs. Frequencies were used to detect out-of-range variables and unusual distributions. Questions that were correctly left blank due to "skip pattern" routing were assigned a special code to distinguish them from other types of missing data. Consistency checks were also made for logic errors among inter-related questions. In a few cases, data conversions were made based on the responses to other questions. The final step in creating the analysis file was to add the sample weight to each record.

E. Goals of Analysis and Key Variables

The major goals of the analyses reported here are to understand:

- 1) what police organizational, case characteristic, and legal factors are associated with the type and intensity of police investigation of missing child and youth cases, and
- 2) the relationship of police organization, case characteristics, legal factors, and investigative actions to recovery of missing children and youth, and
- 3) the police organizational, case characteristic, and legal factors associated with police reactions to homeless youth.

Four types of missing cases are distinguished in most analyses: runaways, parental abductions, stranger abductions, and missing for unknown reasons. Three types of homeless youth cases are distinguished: homeless youth who have requested assistance (walk-ins), victimized homeless youth, and youth who have come in contact with a police officer. One purpose of this report is to provide detailed descriptive information about missing and homeless cases from the police point of view. Another is to provide descriptive information about how police departments are organized generally and how they are structured to react to missing and homeless children and youth.

1. Definition of Case Types

It was expected that procedures for handling different case types would differ, so many questions in the mail survey instrument were asked for four different kinds of cases. To assist respondents in completion of the mail survey, the following definitions were given early in the questionnaire:

- Suspected Runaway Case--You have reason to believe that the child or youth has run away from home.
- Suspected Parental Abduction--You have reason to believe that the parent has wrongfully taken, kept, or concealed a child/youth reported missing from another parent or legal custodian.
- Suspected Stranger Abduction--You have reason to believe that the child was taken, kept, or concealed by a person not known to the child or his/her parent or legal guardian.
- Unknown Missing--A child/youth is missing and the facts of the case are insufficient to determine if the child was abducted, the victim of an accident, or left home voluntarily.

These case type definitions provide the context for much of the information provided by police departments regarding their handling of missing child/youth cases.

For purposes of answering questions about runaways and homeless youths, police departments were asked to consider a runaway/homeless youth to be an "unemancipated" youth (14-17 years old) who has left home and is living on his or her own in your jurisdiction without a parent or legal guardian.

2. Police Organizational Variables

The questionnaire gathered extensive information to describe the organization of police departments. This organizational information can be classified in several ways:

- policies and priorities--existence of written policy and its components,
- resources--number of officers overall and in specialized units,
- workload--number of calls for service, numbers of dispatches and arrests, magnitude of missing and homeless problem,
- investigative features--responsibility for dealing with missing child/youth cases, numbers of officers assigned to this responsibility,
- complexity--number of separate units, level of specialization,
- innovativeness--child safety programs, type of communications systems, crime analysis capability, officer training programs,
- miscellaneous--attitude of juvenile unit officers; department head elected, appointed, or civil service; type of agency (municipal, county, state).

Much of the data in the descriptive parts of the report will be displayed by agency size and type. In a number of instances, the descriptive data will also be displayed by the organizational responsibility for investigating missing cases.

3. Investigative Priorities and Obstacles

Departments were asked to rank the five case features that were most important in assigning each case type a high investigative priority. Features such as the age of the missing child, the length of time the child has been gone, a history of previously running away, and the existence of an eyewitness or physical evidence were listed. These responses provide insight into law enforcement perceptions about the different missing categories and help in understanding the police responses.

Departments ranked the five most important obstacles to successful investigation of the four missing case types and the three types of homeless youth cases. The recovery and return of the child or youth defined a "successful investigation." Examples of obstacles are: running away is not a criminal offense, lack of police resources, and lack of judicial cooperation. These data also provide insight into the police handling of missing and homeless cases.

4. Legal Factors

The age limit for juvenile status offenses, missing child reporting requirements, whether the state has a clearinghouse or

information system, and the legal status of parental kidnapping (felony, misdemeanor) vary from state to state. These differences in state laws may affect how police respond to missing and homeless children and youth.

Information pertaining to these state laws was collected from the following sources and added to the mail survey data in the analysis file.

- A state-by-state review of all the statutory citations listed under the following headings: Missing Persons, Children-Missing, Children-Abductions, Police/Peace Officer-Missing Persons.
- Hoff, Patricia. "Legal remedies in parental kidnapping cases: A collection of materials," National Legal Resource Center for Child Advocacy, American Bar Association, 1986.
- Information prepared by the National Center for Juvenile Justice.
- Copies of legislation establishing state clearinghouses gathered by NCMEC.
- "1986 Legislative Summary: Children and Youth Issues," National Conference of State Legislatures, Denver, CO.

The data were coded by state, keyed directly into a SAS file, and checked for errors. This file was then merged with the mail survey file, based on the two-character state identifier in the address of each law enforcement agency. There were no agencies in the sample from Wyoming, and there were no state data for Washington, D.C.

The results of descriptive analyses of legal context variables were somewhat disappointing. There was no detectable systematic variation, so findings are not given in the body of this report. The data collection instrument for the legal context variables, selected frequencies of the variables before being merged with the data set, and some of the preliminary descriptive tables are included in Appendix C.

There are several possible reasons these analyses show no apparent effect of state laws on police activities related to missing children. One obvious interpretation is that there is no such effect. However, that conclusion is not justified based on the existing data and analysis. The state data variables do not include the date that the statute became effective, and there may be a time dimension to police response. Police may be more responsive to newly passed laws, and/or there may be a significant time lag before police respond to new laws, etc. There is also the possibility that there are state-mandated requirements in the state's

administrative code that are not explicitly stated in the law. Departments in some states that do not have a statute that creates an information clearinghouse or state information system, for example, responded that they send missing child reports to a state file. Because a centralized information file may have been created under the authority of an administrative code and not by statute, it is difficult to assess the validity of these responses. A more extensive data collection effort would be required to refine these legal context variables before confident inferences about their effect or lack of effect on police actions could be made.

There are also some analytical difficulties associated with these variables. The effects of state laws on police behavior may be too complex to be captured by simple cross-tabulations and may be more appropriately examined in multivariate analyses. In addition, there were very few departments in the cells of some of the tabulations. For example, very few departments reported having a waiting period before taking written reports. This lack of variation makes it difficult to detect differences in department policies about waiting periods based on their state law.

5. Investigative Actions

Departments were asked to report the types and frequencies of investigative actions taken for missing child/youth and homeless case types. For missing case types, departments were asked to rank action frequency during the first week or two of a case, the followup periods for cases not solved within a week or two, and the case-closeout periods. Action frequency was scored: 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = usually and 5 = always. Action frequency was rated for 29 different initial actions such as sending a car to the scene, interviewing witnesses, and reporting cases to NCIC. Six followup and five case closeout actions were rated.

Investigative action frequencies were rated for three homeless case types:

- walk-ins: youth asks police for assistance
- youth victimized: including referrals from doctors and runaway shelters,

- officer-initiated assistance: including contacts where a youth is taken into custody for a minor offense and ultimately assisted.

The same 1 to 5 rating scheme was used for 12 different action types such as arrange transportation home, refer cases to social service agencies, and check NCIC.

In the next chapter we begin the analysis of the mail survey data for the four missing child/youth case types.

4. POLICE HANDLING OF MISSING CHILDREN AND YOUTH CASES

This chapter describes how police handle cases of missing children and youth. The chapter characterizes the cases they handle, the features of cases that result in the assignment of a high investigative priority, the frequency of various investigative actions, and the obstacles to successful investigation. Findings are displayed by case type (runaways, parental abductions, stranger abductions, and unknown missing). Variation in case handling is examined by selected organizational features such as department size (number of sworn officers), department type (municipal, county, state), and organizational assignment of investigative responsibility for missing cases (missing unit, juvenile unit, etc.). In the last part of the chapter, regression analyses examine which organizational, policy, and legal factors are associated with (1) the intensity and type of investigative actions, and (2) recovery of missing children/youth.

A. Characteristics of Missing Child/youth Cases

Data were gathered on the numbers of cases of missing children/youth reported to departments in 1986 and the rate of closure for such cases. Case type was divided into the following five categories:

- Runaways--Children and youths who have (voluntarily) run away from home.
- Parental Kidnappings--A parent has wrongfully taken, kept, or concealed a missing child/youth from another parent or legal guardian.
- Abductions by Known Individuals--A person known to the child/youth or parent/guardian has wrongfully taken, kept or concealed a missing child/youth.
- Stranger Abductions--A child/youth was taken, kept or concealed by a person not known to him/her and not known to his/her parent of legal guardian.
- Unknown Missing--A child/youth is missing and the facts of the case are insufficient to determine if the child was abducted, the victim of an accident, or has left home voluntarily.

Respondents were asked to record the total number of each case type reported in 1986, the percentage of those cases closed after 72 hours, and the percentage still open after 30 days. The source of the data, either from an estimate or from records, was also noted. Approximately 44-55 percent of the responses for the various case types were from estimates.

There was considerable non-response to this series of items, as well. As discovered in the followup telephone calls, the primary reason for this was that the department did not classify missing child/youth cases in a way that allowed respondents to give answers in the categories given, and they were unwilling to give estimates. The proportions of sample departments that did not answer the questions regarding number of cases reported to them in 1986 ranged from just over one-tenth (for runaways) and about one-fifth (for total missing child/youth cases and for parental abductions) to about one-third (for the remaining types of cases). The extent of the non-response to this series of questions, and the fact that high proportions of responses are from estimates, indicates that it is not appropriate to attempt formal estimation of incidence or prevalence of missing child/youth cases reported to police from these data. It is useful, however, to examine the overall pattern of responses, grouped in rather broad categories, as this information is interesting in itself and provides a basis for our subsequent description and analyses of case priority factors, investigative actions, and obstacles to investigation.

Table 4.1a presents data on the total number of cases reported to police by case type for all departments. Police departments were clearly more likely to have runaway cases reported to them than the other types of cases. Only 7 percent of departments said they had had no runaway cases, while 58 percent of the departments had had no parental abductions. Abductions by known individuals, stranger abductions, and unknown missings were even more rare, (85 percent, 95 percent and 78 percent, respectively, had no cases).

Table 4.1a Reported Missing Child/Youth Cases by Case Type
(Percentage of Departments)

Number of Cases deported	Case Type					Total Missing
	Runaway	Parental Abduction	Abduction by Known Individual	Stranger Abduction	Unknown Missing	
0	7.4	57.5	84.7	94.8	78.3	18.1
1-10	51.7	40.3	14.9	5.0	18.3	42.1
11-100	31.9	2.1	0.3	0.1 ^a	3.3	31.4
101-1,000	8.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2 ^a	7.6
1,001-or more	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8

^aPercentage based on 10 or fewer cases.

Departments were not only more likely to report having had runaway cases in 1986 than any other type, they were also more likely to report a larger number of runaway cases. About 52 percent of departments had 1-10 runaway reports, 32 percent had 11-100 runaway reports, and 9 percent had more than 100. Less than 5 percent of departments had more than 10 reports of any type of abduction or of unknown missing cases.

Table 4.1b Median Number of Reported Cases by Case Type
and Department Size

Case Type	Department Size			
	0-49	50-99	100-299	300+
Runaway	7.0	73.5	185.0	1086.0
Parental abduction	0.0	1.0	3.0	15.0
Abduction by known individual	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0
Stranger abduction	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Unknown missing	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Table 4.1b shows the median number of reported cases by case type and department size. The median number of runaway cases increases substantially by department size; the smallest departments reported a median of seven runaway reports in 1986 while the largest reported a median of 1086 cases. For all department size categories, the median number of runaway cases was higher than all other case types. Parental abductions also increased by department size, but the range was much narrower with the smallest departments reporting a median of 0.0 and the largest a median of 15.0. The median number of reported cases of stranger abductions and unknown missing cases for all departments was 0.0. Only a small number of very large departments (more than 1,000 sworn officers) reported investigating one or more stranger abduction cases in 1986.

Classification of cases is an important aspect of the investigative process. Table 4.2 shows the percentage of missing child/youth cases remaining unclassified after 24 and 48 hours. Almost 40 percent of departments reported that all cases were classified within 24 hours, with another 32 percent saying that only 1-10 percent of cases remained unclassified at that time in the investigation. One-half of all departments classified all cases within 48 hours, with another 37 percent saying that only 1-10 percent remained unclassified at that point.

Assuming that departments close cases only when the child has been located, case closure can be used as an indicator of the recovery rate of missing children. Table 4.3 presents data on the percentage of cases (reported to police in 1986) that were closed within 72 hours. Table 4.4 presents the percentage of cases that remained open after 30 days. These data indicate that runaway cases were more likely to be closed quickly than other types of cases (Table 4.3). Very few departments (under 5 percent) said that no (0) runaway cases had been closed after 72 hours compared to about 10 percent for cases involving abductions by a known individual, 14 percent for parental abductions and unknown missing cases, and 24 percent for stranger abductions. At the other end of the scale, fully two-thirds of departments had closed over 80 percent of their runaway cases after 72 hours while almost as many departments had closed over 80 percent of their abductions by a known individual other than a parent. Fewer departments had closed over 80 percent of their parental abductions (57 percent), stranger abductions (52 percent) or unknown missing cases (52 percent).

Table 4.2 Missing Child/Youth Cases Remaining Unclassified After 24 or 48 Hours (Percentage of Departments)

Unclassified Cases	Time Period	
	24 Hours	48 Hours
0	37.8%	50.4%
1-10	32.0%	36.9%
11-30	13.6%	5.4%
31-50	6.6%	6.5%
51-100	10.1%	0.9%

Table 4.3. Cases Closed Within 72 Hours by Case Type (Percentage of Departments)

Percent of Cases Closed	Case Type					Total Missing
	Runaways	Parental Abduction	Abduction		Unknown Missing	
			by Known Individual	Stranger Abduction		
0	2.2 ^a	13.8	10.5	24.2	14.0	0.8 ^a
1-20	11.2	14.3	20.9	17.6 ^a	19.1	13.9
21-80	19.0	14.8	4.0	6.2	15.0	19.3
81-100	67.5	57.2	64.7	51.9	52.0	66.1

Note: Columns total approximately 100 percent.

^aPercentage based on 10 or fewer cases.

Stranger abduction cases were most likely to remain open after 30 days (Table 4.4). Nearly one-third of departments said that more than 80 percent of their cases of this type remained open at that stage in the investigation, compared to 13 percent saying that parental abductions.

B. Initial Procedures for Handling Reports of Missing Children/Youth

The initial procedures for handling calls from parents or others reporting a missing child or youth can affect police understanding and initial classification of a case, and the effectiveness of later investigative procedures in recovering the child or youth. Three particular aspects of initial procedures were asked about in the mail questionnaire:

- Written reports--did the department make a written report of all calls about missing children and youth, some of these calls, or none of them?
- Waiting period--was the written report (if there was one) made immediately or was there a waiting period?
- Written policy--did the department have a written policy to formalize procedures for dealing with missing child/youth cases?

Table 4.5 presents the data on departmental practices in making reports of calls reporting a missing child or youth. Among all departments, nationally, 85 percent reported that they made a written report of all such calls. Nearly all of the remainder (15 percent) make a written report of at least some calls. Departments with 50 or more sworn officers were most likely to make written reports of all calls; 92 to 95 percent of departments in size categories of 50 or more sworn officers said they always made written reports compared to 84 percent of departments with fewer than 50 sworn officers. About 97 percent of county departments reported always making written reports compared to 82 percent of municipal departments.

Table 4.6 shows that 91 percent of all departments, regardless of size or type, had no waiting period; that is, written reports were made on the basis of the first call. About 9 percent had a waiting period, at least in some circumstances. Departments with 100 or more sworn officers were more likely than others to make written reports immediately; 98 percent of the larger departments did. Virtually all county departments (99 percent) had no waiting period compared to about 89 percent of municipal departments.

Table 4.5 Written Report of Calls
(Percentage of Departments)

Department Characteristics	All Calls	Some Calls	None
All Departments	84.8	14.5	0.7
Department Size			
0-49	83.7	15.5	0.8 ^a
50-99	94.5	5.5	0.0
100-299	92.2	7.8	0.0
300+	92.3	7.7	0.0
Department Type			
Municipal	81.7	17.4	0.9 ^a
County	96.5	3.5 ^a	0.0
State	77.8	22.2 ^a	0.0

Note: Rows total approximately 100 percent.

a = Percentage based on 10 or fewer cases.

Table 4.6 Waiting Period
(Percentage of Departments)

Department Characteristics	No Waiting Period	Waiting Period
All Departments	90.8	9.2
Department Size		
0-49	90.2	9.8
50-99	93.6	6.4
100-299	97.9	2.1 ^a
300+	98.2	1.8 ^a
Department Type		
Municipal	88.5	11.5
County	99.0	1.0 ^a
State	100.0	0.0 ^a

Note: Rows total approximately 100 percent.

^aPercentage based on 10 or fewer cases.

Most departments had not developed written procedures for dealing with missing child/youth cases. Only 27 percent of all departments reported having a written policy for dealing with these cases (Table 4.7). Having a written policy increased with sworn-force size from 23 percent of departments with fewer than 50 sworn officers to 45 percent of those with 50-99 sworn officers, 59 percent of those with 100-299 sworn officers, and 82 percent of those with 300 or more sworn officers. Departments also differed significantly by type in having a written policy: 17 percent of county departments had one, 30 percent of municipal departments, and 60 percent of state departments.

Departments that reported having a written policy for dealing with cases of missing children or youth were asked which aspects of such cases were covered by the policy. The specific aspects asked about are listed below in the order of departments reporting each to be an element of their written policies:

- Initial investigative procedures--98 percent
- Followup investigative procedures--77 percent
- Closeout procedures--62 percent
- Timing of investigative procedures--55 percent
- Criteria for classifying cases--41 percent
- Waiting period--30 percent.

Most departments with a written policy concentrated on procedural elements, especially initial procedures and case followup. More than half of all departments included some rules for timing of investigative procedures. Some departments also included criteria for classifying cases and specific information regarding the waiting period to be observed, or stated that there was to be none. Departments did not differ by size or type in elements included in written policies.

Table 4.7 Written Policy for Missing Child Cases
(Percentage of Departments)

Department Characteristics	Yes	No
All Departments	26.5	73.5
Department Size		
0-49	22.9	77.1
50-99	44.7	55.3
100-299	59.4	40.6
300+	81.9	18.1
Department Type		
Municipal	28.9	71.1
County	17.3	82.7
State	59.8	40.2 ^a

Note: Rows total approximately 100 percent.

^aPercentage based on 10 or fewer cases.

C. Organization of Departments for Handling Missing Child/Youth Cases

Juvenile units or bureaus frequently have responsibility for handling reports of missing children and youth. The next two sections discuss the organizational placement of juvenile units for those departments who have them, and the assignment of responsibility within departments for handling missing cases. These organizational factors are examined because they may be related to investigative actions taken and to case outcomes.

1. Existence and Placement of Juvenile Unit

Table 4.8 shows whether departments have separate juvenile units and where these units are placed organizationally. Among all departments, 58 percent have separate juvenile units. These units are located in investigation in 46 percent of departments. Only 12 percent of the departments have a separate juvenile unit and locate it elsewhere in their organizational structure, such as in crime prevention or community relations.

Small departments are unlikely to have separate juvenile units; only 18 percent of departments with fewer than 50 sworn officers have a separate

Table 4.8. Department Sworn Size and Type by Presence and Organizational Placement of Juvenile Unit (Percentage of Departments)

Department Characteristics	No Juvenile Unit	Juvenile Unit- Investigations	Juvenile Unit-Other
All Departments	42.0	46.3	11.6
Department Size			
0-49	82.1	11.9	6.0
50-99	39.5	48.8	11.6
100-299	23.3	65.4	11.4
300+	29.7	52.3	18.1
Department Type			
Municipal	38.3	50.0	11.7
County	46.2	42.1	11.8
State	84.0	8.0	8.0

Note: Rows total approximately 100 percent.

juvenile unit. Larger departments are much more likely to have separate juvenile units. The juvenile units in departments with 50-99 and 300 or more sworn officers are located in investigation about half the time. Departments in the 100-299 size category are most likely to locate juvenile units in investigation; 65 percent of such departments fit this pattern. The difference between the 100-299 and 300+ categories in this regard, however, is not statistically significant.

Municipal and county departments do not differ in the presence and placement of juvenile units. Only 16 percent of state agencies have separate juvenile units.

2. Responsibility for Investigating Missing Child/Youth Cases

Departments were classified according to the handling of missing child or youth cases. A minority of departments do not assign such cases to a separate unit (n=344). Departments that do assign responsibility for these cases to a separate unit were categorized as handling these cases in (1) a missing juvenile or missing person unit (n=95), (2) a juvenile unit (n=304), or in some other unit (n=48).

Table 4.9 shows how the organization of the juvenile investigation function varies with investigative responsibility for missing children/youth cases. Departments that do not have a separate juvenile unit tend not to assign the responsibility for investigating reports of missing children or youth to a separate unit; 78 percent of departments are in this category. Departments that have a separate juvenile unit located in the investigations division tend to give that unit responsibility for handling missing cases, although 15 percent of such departments do not handle these cases in a special unit and 13 percent of such departments investigate missing child/youth cases with units specializing in missing persons. The juvenile unit investigates missing children cases in a majority (57 percent) of the departments where the juvenile unit is not a part of investigations, but there is considerable variation in the assignments of this investigative responsibility in such departments. Eighteen percent of departments with a juvenile unit located outside investigations do not assign investigative responsibilities for missing children/youth cases to a separate unit, and 24 percent of such departments use missing units for investigating these cases.

Table 4.9. Organization of Juvenile Investigation and Missing Children Investigation Responsibility (Percentage of Departments)

Organization of Juvenile Investigation	Investigative Responsibility for Missing Children Cases			
	Not Handled by Separate Unit	Juvenile Unit	Missing Unit	Other
No juvenile unit	78.0	1.3	8.3	12.3
Juvenile unit-- investigations	15.0	70.3	13.3	1.4
Juvenile unit-- other	17.7	56.5	23.5	2.4

Note: Rows total approximately 100 percent.

3. Investigative Actions and Responsibility

Table 4.10 shows the variation in selected investigative actions for the four case responsibility categories. The issue of whether the assignment of responsibility within police departments for handling cases of missing children and youth makes a difference will be more fully explored in later multivariate analyses where it will be possible to control variation attributable to a number of factors at the same time. It is clear that multiple factors affect the assignment of responsibility for missing cases. Small departments, for example, are not likely to have separate missing and juvenile units. Departments without these units do not have the option of giving such units responsibility for handling cases.

Two of the case responsibility categories in Table 4.10, missing unit (n=95) and other (n=48), include relatively few departments. Therefore, some substantial percentage differences are not statistically significant because their standard errors are large. The differences between departments who assign investigative responsibility for missing cases to missing person or missing juvenile units, and departments who assign this responsibility to juvenile units are the focus of this section. Cell percentages in Table 4.10 represent the percentage of departments that said

Table 4.10 Selected Investigative Actions Always or Usually Taken by Organization of Responsibility for Investigating Missing Child/Youth Cases (Percentages of Departments Having a Case in the Last Five Years)

Investigative Actions	Case Responsibility			
	No Juvenile Unit	Missing Unit	Juvenile Unit	Other
Send a car				
Runaways	85.0	58.7	85.6	77.3
Parental abduction	85.6	93.0	91.1	85.3
Stranger abduction	94.0	99.4	98.7	100.0
Unknown missing	95.8	90.5	95.2	81.6
Issue all-points bulletin				
Runaways	80.2	86.6	77.4	91.6
Parental abduction	84.8	92.2	74.5	98.7
Stranger abduction	96.6	100.0	98.6	100.0
Unknown missing	91.1	94.4	71.3	98.0
Call investigative specialists				
Runaways	11.7	64.2	16.4	8.1
Parental abduction	20.9	75.9	27.5	29.8
Stranger abduction	49.2	94.8	79.9	77.8
Unknown missing	31.6	79.6	28.3	49.8
Interview friends/siblings				
Runaways	82.7	60.3	79.1	61.5
Parental abduction	77.7	58.5	78.2	55.5
Stranger abduction	92.5	98.9	95.1	98.4
Unknown missing	94.9	93.9	87.4	73.8
Check hospitals				
Runaways	43.5	47.2	26.0	16.6
Parental abduction	38.6	16.1	36.5	10.4
Stranger abduction	48.8	82.1	77.9	58.0
Unknown missing	64.3	76.7	45.9	41.8
Enter into NCIC				
Runaways	84.9	96.1	90.9	92.1
Parental abduction	87.5	97.5	92.0	99.8
Stranger abduction	99.6	100.0	98.4	100.0
Unknown missing	93.2	99.0	91.8	100.0
Circulate photos				
Runaways	24.5	31.8	16.6	17.6
Parental abduction	39.4	42.2	22.9	38.0
Stranger abduction	46.6	86.4	87.2	74.7
Unknown missing	46.4	27.3	30.0	60.1

Note: Neither rows nor columns sum to 100 percent because data are from a limited range of responses.

they always or usually take the specified action in the first week or two of a typical case.

Departments that assign responsibility for missing child and youth cases to a unit specializing in missing cases appear to investigate cases more aggressively than juvenile units. Missing units are more likely than juvenile units to issue an all-points bulletin in parental abduction and unknown cases. Across all four case types, missing units are more likely than juvenile units to call in investigative specialists. Missing units are more likely to check hospitals in runaway and unknown cases and to circulate photos in parental abduction cases. Missing units are less likely than juvenile units to always or usually send a car to the scene in runaway cases, and interview friends or siblings in parental abduction cases. But overall, missing units appear to investigate missing cases more aggressively than do juvenile units. The issue is examined again later in multivariate analyses.

D. Reported Factors That Affect Investigative Priorities

The mail questionnaire presented respondents with a list of 17 factors that might affect the priority a police agency assigned a particular missing child/youth investigation. These factors included characteristics of the child/youth (age, gender, presence of mental handicap and/or condition requiring medication, prior history of running away, and family history of abusing child/youth) and characteristics of the case (existence of eyewitness account and/or physical evidence, danger to child/youth of sexual exploitation, reporting parent very upset, and custody status of reporting parent). The questionnaire also presented the respondent with four specific types of missing child/youth cases: Runaways, Parental Abduction, Stranger Abduction and Unknown Missing.

For each of these case types (that the agency had investigated in the past five years), the respondent was asked to:

- Choose up to 5 factors from the list of 17 that "are most important in making your department assign a high investigative priority" to cases of that type; and
- Rank the chosen factors in order of importance, "assign[ing] a '1' to the most important, a '2' to the second most important, etc."

Table 4.11 presents the results. The first column under each type of case shows the percentage of agencies that chose each factor as an important one, that is, the percentage that chose to rank each factor. The second column shows the mean score, that is, the average ranking given by the agencies that ranked each item. Mean scores close to 2.0 indicate items usually ranked "1," "2," or "3." Mean scores close to 4.0 indicate items usually ranked "3," "4" or "5."

Investigators apparently believe several factors put a missing child/youth particularly "at risk." These are the factors that investigators ranked as important in their decision to assign cases high priorities for two or more types of cases. Seventy percent or more ranked "child 8 or younger" as a high priority factor in runaway cases, stranger abductions, and unknown missing cases; and nearly half ranked this factor as important in parental abductions. Half or more ranked "child/youth has condition requiring prescription medication" as a high priority factor in all four types of cases, as did approximately the same proportions for "child/youth mentally handicapped or disabled." Agencies apparently saw these two factors as more salient in runaway and unknown missing cases (where more than 60 percent ranked them as important) than in either type of abduction (where between 40 and 60 percent ranked them as important). Finally, 60 percent or more ranked "child/youth in danger of sexual exploitation" as a high priority factor in parental or stranger abductions, while 44 percent ranked it as important in runaway cases and 33 percent in unknown missing cases.

Clear differences emerged among case types in the sets of factors agencies saw as important in making them assign a high investigative priority to a case. There were some differences among agencies with different characteristics, and for some factors there was a high level of agreement regardless of organizational differences. The remainder of this section presents the data on priority factors for each case type and discusses similarities and differences among agencies and the choices they made.

1. Investigative Priority Factors in Runaway Cases

The most frequently chosen factors for runaway cases were (with mean scores shown in parentheses):

Table 4.11. Importance of Factors in Making Departments Assign High Investigative Priority to Missing Child/Youth Cases by Case Type
(Percentage of Departments Having Such a Case Type in Past Five Years)

Importance of Factors Affecting Investigative Priority	Runaways		Parental Abduction		Stranger Abduction		Unknown Missing	
	Percent Ranking	Mean Score	Percent Ranking	Mean Score	Percent Ranking	Mean Score	Percent Ranking	Mean Score
a. Child 8 or younger	70.0	2.0	47.5	2.8	71.7	2.5	79.1	2.2
b. 9-13 year-old child	23.7	3.3	7.8	4.1	27.4	3.7	19.6	3.6
c. Gender	6.7	3.3	5.5	3.1	9.6	3.7	3.5	3.9
d. Child/youth has condition requiring prescription medication	63.9	2.5	57.1	3.0	54.2	2.9	69.8	2.4
e. Child/youth mentally handicapped or disabled	68.9	2.8	43.2	3.5	49.4	3.6	73.2	2.9
f. Child/youth gone 5 hours or less	8.8	4.0	5.6	4.0	25.9	3.4	11.2	3.4
g. Child/youth gone 24-48 hours	26.7	3.3	11.9	3.7	2.2	3.7	17.8	3.4
h. Child/youth gone over 48 hours	21.9	3.3	13.2	3.8	7.5	2.3	24.0	3.6
i. Child/youth has not run away before	35.9	3.5	5.3	3.9	15.6	3.8	32.7	3.7
j. Child/youth has run away once before	5.4	3.7	1.0	4.9	0.3	3.3	2.4	4.6
k. Reporting parent is very upset	15.9	3.5	10.2	3.8	1.3	3.5	11.7	3.2
l. You have eyewitness account	21.1	3.1	38.1	3.2	67.1	2.4	30.9	2.9
m. You have physical evidence	24.5	3.8	29.6	3.3	55.1	2.9	35.2	3.0
n. Family history of abusing child/youth	33.2	3.5	69.9	2.7	5.6	2.8	22.7	3.2
o. Child/youth in danger of sexual exploitation	45.7	2.7	60.8	2.4	65.8	2.5	32.4	3.0
p. Reporting parent has legal custody	7.7	3.8	64.5	2.4	4.5	3.8	7.4	3.7
q. Reporting parent has no formal custody order	2.4	4.2	12.8	3.4	3.9	4.8	3.6	4.8

- Child 8 or younger--ranked by 70 percent (2.0)
- Mentally handicapped or disabled--69 percent (2.8)
- Requiring prescription medication-- 64 percent (2.5)
- In danger of sexual exploitation--46 percent (2.7)
- Has not run away before--36 percent (3.5)
- Family history of abusing child/youth--33 percent (3.5).

The first five factors indicate vulnerability, that the child/youth may be in danger. The two most frequently chosen factors in this type of case, extreme youth and mental handicap or disability, are characteristics of children or youth who probably could not take care of themselves. The next three refer to the more specific vulnerabilities of potential illness or exploitation and lack of experience with the situation. The sixth factor listed, family history of abusing child/youth, was chosen almost as often as the fifth, although it is not clear what meaning it had to investigators. The mean scores generally get larger as the proportion of agencies choosing a factor decreases, indicating that those factors that were most salient and chosen most often by investigators of runaway cases tended to be ranked higher in importance as well.

Department size was related to choice of several factors. (Data on priority factors by various organizational characteristics are presented in Tables D1-D4 Appendix D.) The percentage choosing each of the first four factors listed above increased steadily with sworn-force size; more than 85 percent of the departments with 300 or more sworn officers chose extreme youth and mental handicap as high priority factors, 77 percent chose requiring prescription medication, and 60 percent chose danger of sexual exploitation. One-third of departments in this largest size category showed concern about somewhat older presumed runaways, choosing "9-13 year old child" as a high priority factor. Smaller departments (those with under 100 sworn officers) were more likely than larger ones to show some interest in the time the child/youth had been gone (specifically the "24-48 hours" category) and in the presence of physical evidence.

The type of unit having investigative responsibility for missing child/youth cases also had some effect in that the choices of high priority factors were different in departments where missing units were responsible than in departments where juvenile units were responsible. (Data not shown.) Juvenile units were much more likely than missing units to choose

requiring prescription medication" (72 percent compared to 40 percent). Missing units, on the other hand, were much more likely than juvenile units to choose "danger of sexual exploitation" (79 percent compared to 35 percent) and "family history of child abuse" (45 percent compared to 24 percent).

2. Investigative Priority Factors in Parental Abduction Cases

The factors that most frequently make a parental abduction a high priority to investigators were:

- Family history of abusing child/youth--70 percent (2.7)
- Reporting parent has legal custody--65 percent (2.4)
- In danger of sexual exploitation--61 percent (2.4)
- Requiring prescription medication--57 percent (3.0)
- Child 8 or younger--48 percent (2.8)
- Mentally handicapped or disabled--43 percent (3.5)
- You have eyewitness account--36 percent (3.2)

With this case type, it is notable that two characteristics of the case were important to investigators: that the reporting parent has legal custody (chosen by nearly two-thirds) and that there is an eyewitness account (chosen by just over one-third). Three-fifths or more of the agencies responded that the belief that the abducted child/youth was in danger of abuse or sexual exploitation were very important. The three remaining factors in this list are the same indicators of vulnerability that were important to missing child/youth investigators across case types: requiring medication, child 8 or younger, and mentally handicapped or disabled. For this case type, the mean scores do not show a clear pattern that would indicate that more frequently chosen factors also received relatively high importance rankings.

Organizational characteristics made little difference, for the most part, in departments' choices of factors that would make them assign a high priority to a parental abduction case. The proportion choosing "in danger of sexual exploitation" increased steadily with sworn force size (from 59 percent of departments with less than 50 sworn officers to 72 percent of those with 300 or more). Departments where missing units had investigative responsibility for missing child/youth cases differed from other departments in several (rather puzzling) ways. Missing units were much less likely than respondents in other departments to choose "reporting

parent has legal custody" (only 26 percent did) or "in danger of sexual exploitation" (only 36 percent). They were much more likely to choose "requiring prescription medication" (86 percent) and "child 8 or younger" (71 percent). Departments where no separate unit had responsibility for these investigations, or where a juvenile or other type of unit did, chose these factors in proportions similar to the overall figures listed above.

3. Investigative Priority Factors in Stranger Abduction Cases

For stranger abductions, the factors most frequently chosen as important in making the agency assign a high investigative priority were:

- Child 8 or younger--72 percent (2.5)
 - You have an eyewitness account--67 percent (2.4)
 - In danger of sexual exploitation--66 percent (2.5)
 - You have physical evidence--55 percent (2.9)
 - Requiring prescription medication--54 percent (2.9)
 - Mentally handicapped or disabled--49 percent (3.6).

Again, the factors indicating the involvement of a young child or danger of sexual exploitation were among the most important, chosen by about two-thirds or more of agencies. Two characteristics of the case were important--having an eyewitness account and/or physical evidence--chosen by two-thirds and just over half, respectively. The need for prescription medication and/or a child/youth who was mentally handicapped would be important to the assignment of a high investigative priority at approximately half the agencies. The mean score for "mentally handicapped or disabled" (3.6) indicates that this factor was generally assigned a lower importance ranking than the other factors listed above. The mean scores for these other factors differ little, however, indicating that none was consistently given a higher or lower ranking than the others.

Agency sworn-force size made no clear difference in the choice of high priority factors. Agency type did, however. County departments were more likely than municipal departments to choose "you have an eyewitness account" (82 percent), "in danger of sexual exploitation" (81 percent), and "you have physical evidence" (70 percent); and county departments were less likely to choose "mentally handicapped or disabled" (31 percent). Municipal departments chose these as high priority factors in proportions similar to the overall figures listed above.

Investigative responsibility also made some difference in choice of high priority factors. Departments where missing child/youth investigation was the responsibility of a missing persons/juveniles unit were much more likely than other departments to choose having an eyewitness account (89 percent) and/or physical evidence (75 percent). Those where a juvenile unit had investigative responsibility were more likely than others to choose "requiring prescription medication" (64 percent). Those where either of these types of units was responsible for missing child/youth investigations also showed unusual interest in older children. Where a missing unit was responsible, 60 percent of departments chose "9-13 year old child" as a high priority factor; where a juvenile unit was responsible, almost 40 percent chose this factor. Only 18 percent of departments where no separate unit was responsible chose this factor.

4. Investigative Priority Factors in Unknown Missing Child/Youth Cases

The factors most frequently chosen as making an unknown missing case a high priority to investigators were:

- Child 8 or younger--79 percent (2.2)
- Mentally handicapped or disabled--73 percent (2.3)
- Requiring prescription medication-- 70 percent (2.4)
- You have physical evidence--35 percent (3.0)
- Has not run away before--33 percent (3.7)
- In danger of sexual exploitation--32 percent (3.0)
- You have an eyewitness account--31 percent (2.9).

Again, involvement of a young child, mental handicap and/or need for prescription medication were very important high priority factors; 70 percent or more of agencies chose to rank these. The four remaining factors that were chosen by a relatively substantial proportion of agencies were each chosen by only about one-third. The mean scores indicate that the three factors chosen most often were also ranked higher than the other four with some consistency.

Again agency sworn force size made little difference in departments' choices of high priority factors. The proportion choosing "you have physical evidence" declined as size increased (from 38 percent with fewer than 50 sworn officers to 18 percent of those with 300 or more). Otherwise, there were no clear differences in factors chosen by size. The

unit having investigative responsibility did make some difference, however. Departments where missing units had this responsibility were much less likely than others to choose "mentally handicapped or disabled" (40 percent did) and/or "requiring prescription medication" (45 percent). At the same time, these departments were more likely than others to see whether the child/youth had run away before (63 percent) and/or the presence of physical evidence (61 percent) and an eyewitness (58 percent) as important high priority factors for unknown missing cases.

E. Investigative Actions

1. Actions by Case Types

Table 4.12 shows how often various investigative actions are taken for the four case types: runaways, parental abductions, stranger abductions, and cases where the reason for disappearance is unknown. The mail questionnaire asked respondents to estimate the likelihood that a given action would be taken for a "typical" case during the first week or two. Departments were asked to score a list of 29 possible investigative actions as follows:

- 1 = never
- 2 = rarely
- 3 = sometimes
- 4 = usually
- 5 = always.

The first two and last two categories are combined in Table 4.12 which includes percentage distributions for action frequencies and a mean score for each action type. Mean scores close to 5.0 indicate actions are always or usually taken. Scores close to 1.0 indicate actions are never or rarely taken.

Most departments never or rarely take reports only on the telephone. Runaway cases are most likely to be handled in this manner, but only 15 percent of departments said this was always or usually their typical response to these cases. Departments always or usually dispatch a car to the scene, especially for stranger abductions and unknown cases where 94-96 percent of agencies responded they always or usually do so. Mean scores for this action range from 4.4 to 4.8.

Table 4.12 Frequency of Investigative Actions by Case Type (Percentage of Departments)

	Runaways				Parental Abductions			
	% Never Rarely	% Sometimes	% Always Usually	Mean Score	% Never Rarely	% Sometimes	% Always Usually	Mean Score
a. Take report only on the phone	69.0	16.6	14.5	2.1	75.4	12.0	12.6	1.9
b. Send a car to the scene	3.6	12.7	83.7	4.4	4.8	8.8	86.4	4.5
c. Interview parents or guardian in person	0.3	5.8	93.4	4.7	0.1	2.1	97.8	4.8
d. Search home of child/youth	27.5	31.6	41.0	3.3	34.4	23.7	41.9	3.3
e. Get description of child/youth	*	*	100.0	5.0	0.1		100.0	5.0
f. Get photograph of child/youth, if available	0.1	4.8	95.3	4.7	0.2	3.8	96.1	4.8
g. Call for search of area	27.9	31.1	41.1	3.3	28.8	25.3	45.9	3.3
h. Issue all points bulletin	5.9	13.6	80.6	4.3	4.8	10.8	84.6	4.5
i. Set up command post	84.1	10.8	5.2	1.8	81.4	10.1	8.5	1.9
j. Call investigative specialists	72.2	13.9	13.9	2.2	53.5	21.5	25.0	2.5
k. Gather physical evidence	33.4	17.5	49.1	3.4	18.0	18.8	63.2	3.8
l. Question available suspect(s)	12.2	8.8	79.1	4.1	2.5	5.0	92.5	4.6
m. Notify surrounding jurisdictions (e.g., by teletype)	2.4	6.8	90.8	4.6	2.0	4.5	93.4	4.7
n. Interview available neighbors	9.5	30.4	60.2	3.8	4.7	20.5	74.8	4.1
o. Interview child's friends/siblings (if any)	1.3	18.2	80.5	4.2	6.9	17.0	76.1	4.1
p. Interview other available relatives	13.3	38.8	47.9	3.5	4.5	30.7	64.8	3.9
q. Interview school personnel	14.7	44.0	41.2	3.4	12.4	36.8	51.0	3.6
r. Check hospitals	24.7	36.3	39.0	3.3	32.6	31.2	36.2	3.2
s. Check runaway shelter(s)/social service agencies	33.9	33.4	32.7	3.1	50.7	26.2	23.1	2.7
t. Check known juvenile haunts	1.3	17.5	81.2	4.2	43.1	18.7	38.2	3.0
u. Report to state missing persons file	8.8	10.3	80.9	4.4	6.5	7.3	86.1	4.5
v. Enter report into NCIC missing persons file	5.6	8.3	86.1	4.5	2.7	6.2	89.1	4.7
w. Report case to National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)	65.7	12.3	21.9	2.4	48.7	18.6	32.7	2.8
x. Report to FBI	79.8	10.4	10.0	1.9	58.6	21.0	22.4	2.5
y. Circulate child/youth's photo to law enforcement agencies	37.5	38.7	23.7	2.9	29.8	32.9	37.4	3.1
z. Get child/youth's dental records	75.6	14.2	10.2	2.0	68.8	18.9	14.3	2.2
aa. Give copy of incident report to parent/guardian	66.2	17.9	15.9	2.2	58.8	19.5	21.7	2.4
bb. Obtain search warrant/subpoena to examine suspect's record	80.7	11.9	7.4	1.8	65.3	20.3	14.4	2.2
cc. Maintain cases as open until child/youth returned	0.1	1.4	98.5	4.9	0.2	1.9	98.0	4.9

*Less than .05 percent.

Table 4.12 (continued)

	Stranger Abductions				Unknown			
	% Never Rarely	% Sometimes	% Always Usually	Mean Score	% Never Rarely	% Sometimes	% Always Usually	Mean Score
a. Take report only on the phone	85.2	5.1	9.6	1.5	72.4	14.3	13.3	1.9
b. Send a car to the scene	2.0	2.2	95.8	4.8	0.4	5.7	93.9	4.7
c. Interview parents or guardian in person	0.1		99.9	4.9	0.2	3.0	96.7	4.8
d. Search home of child/youth	22.0	24.7	53.2	3.6	24.4	26.1	49.5	3.5
e. Get description of child/youth	0.1		99.9	5.0	0.1	0.1	99.9	5.0
f. Get photograph of child/youth, if available	0.1		99.9	4.9	0.1	1.6	98.3	4.8
g. Call for search of area	2.6	7.4	90.0	4.6	8.4	23.0	68.5	4.0
h. Issue all points bulletin	0.2	2.3	97.6	4.9	1.7	10.9	87.5	4.6
i. Set up command post	47.5	21.0	31.6	2.8	6.7	19.6	12.7	2.3
j. Call investigative specialists	28.2	11.1	60.8	3.5	49.1	16.7	34.2	2.9
k. Gather physical evidence	4.5	2.9	92.5	4.8	12.2	16.0	71.8	4.1
l. Question available suspect(s)	0.1	0.2	99.7	4.9	0.3	2.5	97.2	4.7
m. Notify surrounding jurisdictions (e.g., by teletype)	0.1	0.6	99.4	5.0	1.4	5.6	93.0	4.7
n. Interview available neighbors	0.1	3.1	96.8	4.8	2.4	12.6	85.1	4.4
o. Interview child's friends/siblings (if any)	0.1	5.9	94.0	4.8	0.5	8.5	91.1	4.5
p. Interview other available relatives	0.6	31.6	67.8	4.2	6.0	23.2	70.9	4.1
q. Interview school personnel	3.5	28.8	67.7	4.1	3.3	31.6	65.1	4.0
r. Check hospitals	9.7	33.2	57.1	3.8	10.3	31.0	58.7	3.8
s. Check runaway shelter(s)/social service agencies	32.0	33.8	34.4	3.1	26.0	28.0	46.1	3.4
t. Check known juvenile haunts	23.4	19.3	57.3	3.6	3.6	17.7	78.7	4.2
u. Report to state missing persons file	0.6	0.8	98.6	4.9	6.4	8.5	85.1	4.5
v. Enter report into NCIC missing persons file	0.1	0.4	99.4	5.0	3.1	3.2	93.7	4.8
w. Report case to National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)	41.1	14.6	44.4	3.1	50.3	17.0	32.7	2.8
x. Report to FBI	27.6	18.6	53.8	3.6	57.7	12.0	30.4	2.6
y. Circulate child/youth's photo to law enforcement agencies	16.9	23.4	59.7	3.8	28.6	29.1	43.3	3.3
z. Get child/youth's dental records	32.2	15.6	52.3	3.4	55.7	15.3	29.0	2.6
aa. Give copy of incident report to parent/guardian	59.8	22.1	18.1	2.4	66.1	17.3	16.6	2.3
bb. Obtain search warrant/subpoena to examine suspect's record	43.9	23.5	32.6	2.9	58.0	19.2	22.9	2.4
cc. Maintain cases as open until child/youth returned	*	0.1	99.9	5.0	0.1	0.2	99.7	4.9

*Less than .05 percent.

Rows total approximately 100 percent within case types.

In-person interviews are conducted with parents or guardians in most cases, and a description of the child or youth is obtained virtually all the time. Very high percentages of departments said they always or usually report cases to state and national missing persons files. Mean scores for these actions are high.

Other kinds of investigative actions are less likely to be taken most of the time. Substantial percentages of departments said they always or usually interviewed relatives and school officials and checked hospitals, shelters, and juvenile haunts. There were clear differences between case types, however, in the frequency of these actions. With the exception of checking known juvenile haunts, an action most likely to be taken in the case of runaways, most other investigative actions are most likely in abduction and unknown cases. Similarly, reporting to the FBI, circulating photographs, getting dental records, and obtaining warrants are actions least likely for runaway cases and most likely for abduction and unknown case types. In general, investigative action intensity is highest for stranger abduction and unknown case types.

The Table 4.12 data also indicate some investigative actions are most characteristic of certain case types. For example, police are comparatively unlikely to check runaway shelters or juvenile haunts in parental abduction cases.

2. Followup Case Actions and Closeout Procedures

Police departments were asked to report about how often various followup actions would be taken where cases were not closed within a day or two, and how often a number of case closeout procedures would be followed for missing child/youth cases. Departments scaled followup action and closeout procedure frequencies where a score of five indicated always and one indicated never. The first section of Table 4.13 lists followup actions and gives percentage distributions for action frequencies.

More than nine of ten agencies said they always or usually have periodic contact with the child or youth's family and investigate new leads. Mean scores for these followup actions are 4.8. Less than half of departments always or usually reinterview witnesses and check with shelters or other social agencies, although if the sometimes category is included, about three quarters of all departments said they carried out these actions with some regularity. Posters are circulated and locator services are

checked always or usually by 25-27 percent of departments. Roughly half of the departments said they never or rarely circulate posters or check locator services.

The second section of Table 4.13 indicates that virtually all departments always or usually: (1) verify that the child or youth has returned, and (2) remove cases from information systems such as NCIC as a part of case-closeout procedures. Mean scores for these actions are 4.8. About half of departments always or usually interview the child or youth and refer the child, youth, or family to counseling as part of case-closeout. Obtaining a medical exam for a recovered child or youth is always or usually done by only six percent of departments, although 23 percent reported this is sometimes done as part of case-closeout procedures. The mean score for this closeout action suggests "rarely" is the best description of its frequency.

3. Variation in Investigative Actions by Department Size and Type

The frequencies of investigative actions shown in Table 4.12 were examined by department size to see if small, medium, and large departments differed from each other, and to examine whether different kinds of departments varied in this way. These lengthy tables (D7-D10) are in Appendix D. Findings for investigative action variation by department size and type are summarized in this section.

For most investigative action types, there is an inverse relationship between department size and the frequency of investigative activity; larger departments tend to take actions less frequently than smaller ones. There are notable exceptions to this general finding, however. For example, the percentage of departments always or usually sending a car to the scene in runaway cases varied as follows across the smallest to largest size categories: 85 percent, 83 percent, 69 percent, 69 percent. Similarly the percentages of departments always or usually issuing all-points bulletins in runaway cases were 82, 72, 77, 68 percent. The largest department category was most likely to report always or usually calling in investigative specialists, and checking with runaway shelters or social service agencies. This is not surprising because larger departments are more likely to have specialists, and to have shelters and social service agencies to serve runaway youth. There were a number of investigative action types where there was little difference between the

Table 4.13. Followup and Closeout Procedures
(Percentage of Departments)

	All Case Types			Mean Score
	Never/ Rarely	Sometimes	Always/ Usually	
<u>Followup Actions</u>				
Periodic family contact	2.7	6.0	91.3	4.8
Investigate new leads	2.6	3.2	94.2	4.8
Reinterview witnesses	7.6	46.1	46.3	3.6
Circulate posters	49.9	25.1	25.0	2.6
Check shelters/agencies	25.8	29.3	44.9	3.3
Check locator services	50.7	22.5	26.8	2.7
<u>Closeout Procedures</u>				
a. Verify that child/youth has returned	2.6	1.7	95.7	4.8
b. Interview the child/youth	12.4	36.0	51.6	3.6
c. Obtain medical examination for the child/youth	71.3	22.8	6.0	2.1
d. Refer child/youth/family to social service agency for counseling	9.1	40.8	50.2	3.6
e. Remove case from information files (e.g., state police, NCIC, NCMEC)	3.6	1.2	95.2	4.8

Note: Rows total approximately 100 percent.

four department size categories in the frequency of actions for runaway cases. These action types included: reporting cases to state missing persons file (81-85 percent), NCIC (86-91 percent) and the FBI (10-14 percent), circulating photographs to law enforcement (15-25 percent), and obtaining dental records (10-17 percent).

4. Followup Actions Department Size and Type

Followup action frequency was also examined by department size and type. The data are not shown because there was little variation among departments in the frequency of engaging in the various followup activities. (See Tables D11 and D11A in Appendix D.)

5. Investigative Action Intensity

A single summary measure of investigative action intensity was developed for each case type (runaways, etc.) from departments' ratings of the typical frequency of their investigative actions. For each investigative action¹ rated as always or usually taken, a score of one was assigned, and these scores were summed within case types. For example, if a department reported ten different action types were always or usually taken in the case of runaways, they received a rating of ten for investigative action intensity for runaway cases. If a department said they always or usually took 15 different action types in stranger abduction cases, they received a rating of 15 for investigative action intensity for this case type. These indicators allow the easy comparison of investigative action frequency across case types and for various categories of interest such as department size and type. Investigative action intensity scores will also be used as dependent variables in multivariate analyses reported later in this chapter.

Table 4.14 shows investigative action scores broken down into categories overall and by department size and type. The previously discussed variation in investigative actions by case type is seen across the first row of the table. Only 10 percent of all departments always or usually took 21-28 different actions during typical runaway investigations. Almost half (49 percent) of departments typically took this many actions

^{1/} Take report only on the phone was excluded because this "action" is a more passive response than taking a report in person.

Table 4.14 Investigative Action Intensity for Case Types by Department Size and Type: Percentage of Departments Having Such A Case in the Last Five Years

	NUMBER OF ACTIONS TAKEN ALWAYS OR USUALLY															
	Runaways				Parental Abductions				Stranger Abductions				Unknown Missing			
	1-10	11-15	16-20	21-28	1-10	11-15	16-20	21-28	1-10	11-15	16-20	21-28	1-10	11-15	16-20	21-28
All Departments	15.4	43.7	31.3	9.6	8.1	43.3	33.6	15.0	0.4	7.6	43.0	49.0	4.7	28.0	34.0	33.3
Department Size																
0-49	13.3	44.8	31.8	10.1	7.1	44.9	33.2	14.9	0.0	7.5	46.0	46.5	3.9	29.2	35.1	31.8
50-99	28.0	35.0	29.7	7.4	10.8	34.1	36.4	18.7	2.0	12.7	28.9	56.4	7.2	23.0	29.5	40.3
100-299	35.8	34.5	26.0	3.7	18.7	34.4	35.4	13.5	1.5	4.2	38.7	55.6	9.7	21.1	27.6	41.6
300+	37.6	37.7	20.1	4.6	23.3	31.9	36.7	8.1	1.4	5.3	32.3	61.0	13.0	15.2	24.9	47.0
Department Type																
Municipal	14.2	41.3	33.4	11.1	4.9	42.1	36.9	16.1	0.3	7.1	44.4	48.2	5.6	26.1	36.0	32.4
County	19.9	53.0	23.2	4.0	17.1	46.9	24.1	11.9	0.5	9.7	39.7	50.1	1.4	35.1	27.6	36.0
State	30.1	40.2	17.1	12.6	10.6	19.1	57.4	12.8	3.2	0.0	17.8	79.0	11.0	0.0	31.1	57.9

Note: Rows total approximately 100 percent within case types.

for stranger abduction cases. Ninety-two percent (43 plus 49 percent) of departments had action intensity scores of 16 or more for stranger abduction cases. One-third of departments fell into the highest action intensity category for unknown missing case type, and 15 percent were classified there for parental abduction cases.

Table 4.14 indicates clearly that department size is associated with the number of investigative actions taken for runaway and parental abduction case types. The first column in each section of the table shows that the smallest departments are least likely to be found in the lowest action frequency categories. The percentages in each number-of-actions categories increase with size of department, indicating that larger departments take fewer actions. The most marked difference of department, by department size for runaway case types is between the smallest departments and all other size categories.

Departments of different sizes are more similar in investigative action frequency for stranger abduction cases. For example, departments of different sizes do not differ statistically from each other in the lowest (1-10) and highest (21-28) action frequency categories. There are significant differences between the smallest and largest size categories for unknown missing cases, but other size comparisons do not differ from each other.

There are few differences between municipal, county, and state police departments in the frequency of their investigative actions. Some of the large percentage differences between state police and others are not statistically significant because of the small number of state police agencies. State police agencies are more likely than municipal agencies to always or usually take the highest number of actions (21-18) in stranger abduction cases.

F. Obstacles to Successful Investigation of Missing Child/Youth Cases

The mail questionnaire asked departments about the greatest obstacles to successful investigation of three types of missing child/youth cases: runaways, parental abduction, and stranger abduction. Successful investigation was defined as investigation that results in recovery and return of the child or youth. For each type of case, departments (that had

investigated that case type in the past five years) were asked to choose up to five "most important" obstacles from a list and to rank their choices, assigning a "1" to the greatest obstacle, a "2" to the second greatest obstacle, and so on. Table 4.15 presents the results from this series of questions, showing the percentage of departments that chose to rank each obstacle listed for each case type and the mean score (or rank) given.

For runaway cases, there was high agreement among the departments that one obstacle listed was one of the most important; 72 percent of departments nationally chose to rank "age/independence/mobility of youth." Departments were more likely to choose this obstacle than any other, regardless of sworn-force size, type of department, or the type of unit having responsibility for missing child/youth investigations. (See Tables D12-15 in Appendix D.)

Three of the listed obstacles were chosen by somewhat more than one-half of departments:

- Difficulty of knowing whether child or youth is voluntarily absent--difficulty in classifying case (58 percent),
- Inadequate information available to locate children or youth outside jurisdiction (55 percent), and
- Running away not a criminal offense (53 percent).

Departments with 100 or more sworn officers and those where juvenile units had responsibility for missing child/youth investigations were less likely than others to choose "difficulty of knowing whether child or youth is voluntarily absent" as an important obstacle to successful investigation of such cases. Forty-seven percent of departments where juvenile units conducted missing juvenile investigations chose this obstacle as an important one, compared to 69 percent of departments where missing persons units had such responsibility and 62 percent of those where the responsibility was not located in a separate unit. Less than 40 percent of departments with 100 or more sworn officers chose this obstacle, compared to 58 percent of departments with fewer than 50 sworn officers.

Table 4.15. Obstacles to Successful Investigation of Missing Child or Youth Cases (Percentage of All Departments)

Obstacles to Successful Investigation	Percent Ranking	Mean Score
A. RUNAWAYS		
a. Running away not a criminal offense	53.1	2.5
b. Lack of family cooperation	28.8	3.0
c. Age/independence/mobility of child/youth	72.0	2.3
d. Lack of cooperation from other jurisdictions	21.1	3.3
e. Difficulty of knowing whether child or youth is voluntarily absent--difficulty in classifying case	55.7	2.9
f. Inadequate information available to locate children or youth outside jurisdiction	54.5	2.8
g. Lack of police resources	41.8	3.1
h. Lack of cooperation from social service agencies	19.1	3.5
i. Parental discretion--lack of parental cooperation	37.4	3.0
j. Low departmental priority--not important police matter	14.9	3.8
k. Lack of judicial cooperation	18.0	3.5
l. Inability to detain youth	40.1	2.9
m. Lack of cooperation from friends and peers	0.7	4.0
n. Number or volume of runaways	0.1	3.8 ^a
B. PARENTAL ABDUCTION		
a. Lack of family cooperation	69.8	2.4
b. Lack of cooperation from other law enforcement agencies	42.8	3.5
c. Statutes (custody laws)	76.9	2.1
d. Lack of cooperation from prosecutor's office in your state	32.3	3.1
e. Lack of cooperation from prosecutor's office in other state	39.0	3.2
f. Lack of judicial cooperation	34.8	3.6
g. Difficulty verifying custody	79.9	2.1
h. Low departmental priority--not important police matter	16.5	3.6
i. Lack of cooperation from international authorities		
j. Other	8.0	3.4
C. STRANGER ABDUCTION		
a. Difficulty in classifying case--insufficient information	88.5	2.1
b. Difficulty in securing witnesses	96.2	1.9
c. Difficulty in obtaining physical evidence	93.8	2.3
d. Lack of cooperation from family	37.4	3.7
e. Lack of cooperation from other law enforcement agencies	48.1	4.2
f. NCIC information not adequate--or access difficult	22.8	3.7
g. Other departmental priorities compete for personnel or resources	31.4	4.2
h. Lack of cooperation from friends/peers	0.2	5.0 ^a

^aEstimate based on 10 or fewer cases.

The proportion choosing "running away not a criminal offense" increased with department size. Two-thirds or more of departments with 100 or more sworn officers saw this obstacle as important, compared to about half of departments with under 50 sworn officers. Considering "inadequate information to locate child outside jurisdiction" to be an important obstacle to runaway investigation did not vary by department characteristics.

Approximately two-fifths of departments chose another three of the listed obstacles:

- Lack of police resources (42 percent),
- Inability to detain youth (40 percent), and
- Parental discretion--lack of parental cooperation (37 percent).

The proportions choosing "lack of police resources" and "parental discretion" as important obstacles to investigation of runaway cases did not vary substantially with department size, type, or location of investigative responsibility. Choosing "inability to detain youth," however, increased with sworn-force size from 39 percent of departments with under 50 sworn officers to 61 percent of those with 300 or more. Departments where juvenile units were responsible for missing child/youth investigations were less likely than those where missing persons units were responsible to consider this an obstacle; 30 percent of juvenile units did compared to 50 percent of missing person units.

The results for obstacles to successful investigation of parental abduction cases look very different, not just in the obstacles chosen (which would be expected) but also in the pattern of percentages of departments choosing to rank particular obstacles. There was high agreement on the importance of three of the obstacles, chosen for ranking by 70 to 80 percent of departments:

- Difficulty in verifying custody (80 percent),
- Statutes (custody laws) (77 percent), and
- Lack of family cooperation (70 percent).

Agency type and missing child investigative responsibility made some difference in proportions of departments choosing these obstacles. County departments (at 72 percent) were less likely than municipal departments (83 percent) to choose "difficulty in verifying custody." Departments where juvenile units were responsible for the investigation (at 65 percent) were less likely than other departments (over 80 percent) to choose this obstacle. Departments where missing persons units were responsible for investigating these cases were less likely than others to cite "statutes" as an obstacle (only 39 percent did compared to approximately 80 percent of other departments). At the same time, missing persons units were more likely than other departments to cite "lack of family cooperation" as an obstacle (85 percent, compared to approximately 70 percent of other departments).

There was less apparent agreement on the importance of four listed obstacles regarding lack of cooperation from other police departments, prosecutors, and justices. These were chosen by about one-third to two-fifths of departments nationally:

- Lack of cooperation from other law enforcement agencies (43 percent),
- Lack of cooperation from prosecutor's office in other state (39 percent),
- Lack of judicial cooperation (35 percent), and
- Lack of cooperation from prosecutor's office in your state (32 percent).

There was little difference by size or type of department in the proportions choosing these obstacles as important. Departments where missing persons units were responsible for these cases were less likely than others to regard cooperation from prosecutors or other law enforcement agencies as an investigative obstacle (22 percent did compared to 42 to 50 percent of other departments) and more likely to choose "lack

of judicial cooperation" as an obstacle (54 percent did compared to about 32 percent of other departments).

The pattern for stranger abductions was similar. Departments were in very high agreement about the importance of three obstacles, chosen by nearly 90 percent or more:

- Difficulty in securing witnesses (96 percent),
- Difficulty in obtaining physical evidence (94 percent), and
- Difficulty in classifying case--insufficient information (89 percent).

Three obstacles were chosen by considerably fewer departments:

- Lack of cooperation from other law enforcements agencies (48 percent),
- Lack of cooperation from family (37 percent), and
- Other departmental priorities compete for personnel or resources (31 percent).

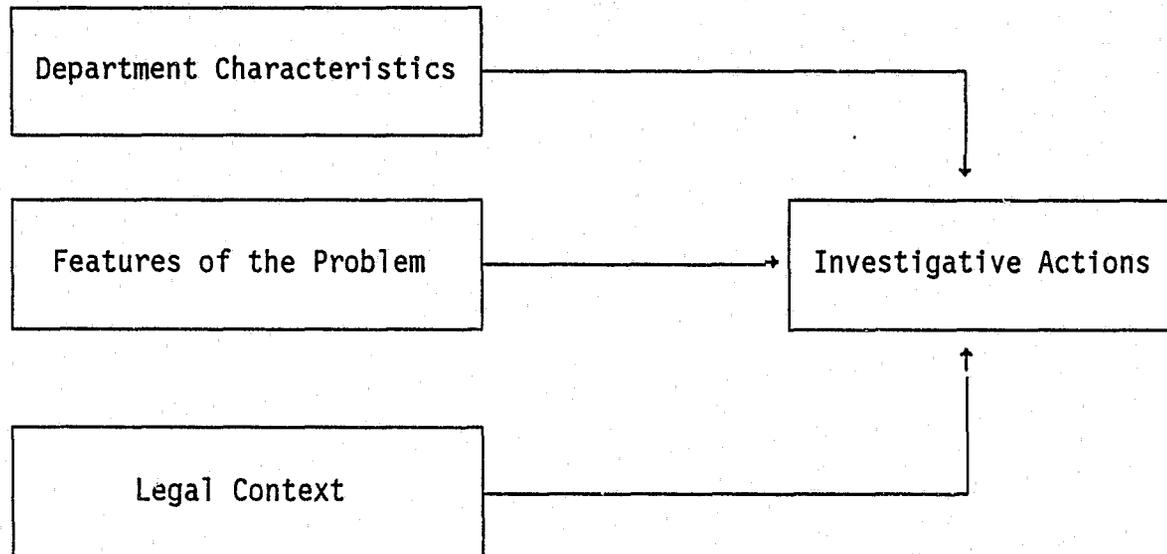
There were no significant differences among departments of various sizes, types, or unit having investigative responsibility in the proportions choosing any obstacle to investigation of stranger abductions.

G. Investigative Action Modeling

1. Introduction

An exploratory multivariate analysis was conducted to provide better understanding of the factors related to the handling of missing child and youth cases. Figure 4.1 presents the conceptual model underlying this analysis. This model shows three very general categories of variables that were hypothesized to affect (or be associated with) investigative actions police may take in any type of case: departmental characteristics, features of the problem (or case), and legal context. The analyses of investigative actions presented in section E above showed that there were clear differences by case type in both the number and types of actions taken.

Figure 4.1. Conceptual Model of Investigative Actions in Missing Child/Youth Cases



Sworn force size was also associated with the frequency with which police took some types of actions and was inversely associated with the number of actions taken. Sworn force size has been found to be associated with a number of other indicators of departmental organization and resources (for example see Ostrom et al., 1978; Skolnick and Bayley, 1986; Slovak, 1986). In the present study it has been found to be associated with caseload, having a written policy for missing child cases, and having juvenile and/or missing persons specialists in the department. It is not clear, then, what the associations between size and investigative actions mean for policy. Additional data collected in the mail survey allow specific measurement of a variety of departmental characteristics that may affect the way police handle missing child/youth cases. These include degree of detail in written policy specifications, existence of juvenile and missing persons investigative specialties in the department and number of officers assigned to them, organizational location of investigative responsibility for missing child cases, indicators of departmental

commitment to juvenile work, general level of specialization in the department and indicators of the department's political environment.

Police investigative actions are also affected by the legal mandates and definitions that they must follow. State laws establishing information systems on missing child cases often include reporting requirements. Some systems provide technical investigative help as well as information on missing and found children. Some states define running away as a status offense or delinquent act; police in these states may investigate cases more intensively than those where running away is not an offense. Finally, the upper age limit defining persons subject to status offense charges varies among the states from 16 to 18 which might affect investigation of cases involving older adolescents.

Investigative action intensity (the number of actions taken always or usually) was modelled separately for each of the four missing case types using multiple regression analysis. Regression analysis, because it controls for all variables in a model simultaneously, allowed identification of the most important factors associated with investigation of each case type. The dependent variable was measured by five investigative action intensity scores:

- Total Investigative Action Intensity Score,
- Routine Investigative Action Intensity Score,
- Proactive Investigative Action Intensity Score,
- Interviewing Investigative Action Intensity Score, and
- Reporting Investigative Action Intensity Score.

The first of these scores provides a measure of overall investigative intensity. It was computed separately for each case type as described in section E of this chapter; distributions of these scores were presented in Table 4.14. The four remaining scores allowed examination of whether different types of actions were associated with different sets of factors. These too were computed separately for each case type; their construction is described in part 3 of this section.

An identical set of measures of departmental characteristics and legal context was included in each model estimated. (Control for features of the problem was introduced, in effect, by using dependent variables computed separately for different case types.). A number of measures of department characteristics were included in the regression models as independent variables. The types of characteristics measured were departmental policy regarding missing child/youth cases, organizational characteristics specific to missing child/youth cases, and general organizational characteristics.

Missing Child/Youth Policy Variables

- Waiting period (a dummy variable)
- Number of written policy specifications regarding missing child/youth cases (scored 0-6)

Organizational Characteristics Specific to Missing Child/Youth Cases

- Number of department child safety programs (scored 0-10)
- Department has separate juvenile unit (a dummy variable)
- Department gives juvenile work a high priority (a dummy variable)
- Location of missing child/youth investigative responsibility (set of dummy variables)
 - missing persons unit vs. not handled by separate unit
 - juvenile unit vs. not handled by separate unit
 - other unit vs. not handled by separate unit
- Number of officers assigned to a juvenile unit (categories scored 1-7)
- Number of officers assigned to a missing persons unit (categories scored 1-7)

General Organizational Characteristics

- Number of sworn officers (set of dummy variables)
 - 50-99 vs. <50
 - 100- 299 vs. <50
 - 300-999 vs. <50
 - 1000 or more vs. <50

- Number of investigative specialities in the department (scored 0-12)
- Type of agency (set of dummy variables)
 - County vs. municipal
 - State vs. municipal
- Department head tenure (set of dummy variables)
 - Elected vs. appointed
 - Civil service vs. appointed

Three independent variables serve as measures of the legal context:

- Existence of a state information system for missing child cases
- Status offense age <18 (a dummy variable)
- Running away a status offense or delinquent act (a dummy variable).

Linear multiple regression models were fit using RTI's survey regression procedure for weighted data. The procedure operates on primary sampling level matrices of weighted sums of squares and cross-product terms corresponding to linear model parameter effects. Regression coefficients were computed using the appropriate sampling weight. The robust delta method (Taylor series linearization) was used to estimate the corresponding design based variance covariance matrix. Tests of significance for regression coefficients were carried out by comparing suitably transformed Wald statistics to Snedecor's F distribution (LaVange and Folsom, 1985; Shah, Holt and Folsom, 1977; and Shah and LaVange, n.d.).

2. Overall Investigative Action Intensity

Table 4.16 shows the regression coefficients and levels of statistical significance for the total investigative actions intensity scores. Coefficients can be interpreted as differences in number of investigative actions taken always or usually for independent variable categories when variation accounted for by the other variables in the model is controlled. Departments with 1,000 or more sworn officers, for example, on the average always or usually take 5.8 fewer investigative action (regression coefficient = -5.8) for runaway cases than do departments with fewer than 50 sworn officers.

Table 4.16. Weighted Regression Coefficients and Significance Levels
for Case Types: Total Investigative Actions

	Runaways	Parental Abductions	Stranger Abductions	Unknown Missing
Waiting period	-.389	-2.891	.277	-.974
Number written policy specifications	.468**	.140	.209	.728***
Number child safety programs	.122	-.138	.222	.259
Separate juvenile unit	-.958	.513	-3.798	-2.001
Juvenile work high priority	1.049	1.720	-.929	-.133
Missing children investigative responsibility				
Missing unit vs. not separate unit	.069	.737	-.095	-1.747
Juvenile unit vs. not separate unit	-2.301	-1.974	-2.633	-5.988**
Other unit vs. not separate unit	-1.851	-.225	1.714	-.283
Number of sworn officers				
50-99 vs. <50	-1.445*	.351	-1.411	.110
100-299 vs. <50	-1.872**	-.115	-.122	.566
300-999 vs. <50	-3.932**	-2.537*	-1.178	-.095
1000 or more vs. <50	-5.782**	-5.009*	-3.000	-4.205
Number juvenile officers	.078	.153	-.258	-.333
Number juvenile operations	-.204*	-.097	-.002	.131
Number assigned missing persons	1.488***	.850	.638	1.151*
Number investigative specialties	.152	.268	.184	.104
Type of agency				
County vs. municipal	-2.871*	-2.002	-.324	2.975**
State vs. municipal	-.581	.233	2.529	.629
Department head				
Elected vs. appointed	1.727	-.093	-.429	-4.087**
Civil service vs. appointed	-1.720*	-1.276	.206	.029
State information system	-.019	.005	.261	-1.938
Status offense age <18	1.082	.794	.501	-.075
Running away an offense	1.350*	-.539	.303	-.610
Dependent variable mean	13.90	14.92	19.57	18.96
Intercept	29.504	25.855	28.283	35.471
R ²	.167	.138	.163	.178
(Sample Size)	(853)	(585)	(380)	(418)

Note: F ratio levels of statistical significance.

*probability <.05
**probability <.01
***probability <.001

The Table 4.16 results indicate that several variables are directly associated with more intense investigations of runaway cases. Departments who have written policies for missing children and youth cases and specify certain actions, such as initial investigative and case closeout procedures, investigate runaway cases more intensely than departments that have no such written policies or have written policies with none or few specific requirements. Departments whose juvenile units or specialists are involved in a higher number of operations (see questions 25b and 27 in Appendix A) investigate runaway cases less intensely. In departments where juvenile units have responsibility for investigating missing cases, these units do so less intensely than in departments where such cases are handled in another way. Departments headed by a civil service chief or commissioner investigate runaway cases less intensely than departments headed by an appointed chief.

Department size is inversely related to overall investigative action intensity in runaway cases. Bigger departments take from 1.4 to 5.8 fewer actions always or usually than do the smallest departments, and the magnitude of this effect increases with size. Conversely, departments with larger numbers of officers assigned to missing person units investigate runaway cases more intensely.

Runaway cases are investigated more intensely in states where the status offense age limit is less than 18 and states where running away is a status offense or a delinquent act.

The R^2 for the runaway model shows a modest 16.7 percent of the variation in number of investigative actions taken always or usually is accounted for by the model.

The parental abduction model shows fewer effects for particular variables and a lower R^2 (.138). Sworn-officer size is again inversely related to investigative action intensity for the two largest size categories. The largest departments take five fewer investigative actions always or usually than do the smallest departments.

The third column of Table 4.16 shows the stranger abduction modeling results. No variables are associated with investigative action intensity below the .05 probability level.

The significant findings for unknown missing cases are in several ways consistent with the runaway case category. The number of specifications in

department's written policies regarding missing children, and the number of officers assigned to investigate missing persons are associated with higher investigative action intensity. The latter association was also seen for parental abduction cases. As with runaway cases, assignment of missing children investigative responsibility to a juvenile unit is associated with lower investigative action scores in comparison to departments where investigative responsibility is not given to a separate unit. County departments have higher investigative action scores than municipal departments in unknown missing cases. This finding is the opposite of that for runaway cases. Departments with elected heads had lower scores for unknown missing cases than those with appointed heads. Departments with civil service heads had lower scores than departments with appointed heads for runaway cases.

In summary, Table 4.16 suggests the number of missing children written policy specifications, and the number of officers assigned to investigate missing persons are associated with higher investigative action scores. When the juvenile unit has responsibility for investigating missing child/youth cases, the intensity of investigative action is lower. Departments headed by civil service chiefs or commissioners were found to have lower scores than departments with appointed heads for runaway cases, while those with elected heads had lower scores for unknown cases.

Department size appears to be inversely associated with investigative actions for runaway cases and parental abductions. Larger departments take fewer actions always or usually. While this association is robust in the sense that variation attributable to a number of other factors has been held constant, not all relevant factors are included in the models. One factor that may help account for these lower action scores in larger departments is departmental workload. The larger departments may have higher demands per resource unit than do the small departments. It has not been possible to include appropriate workload controls in the models for two reasons:

- 1) the workload variables that are available for most departments (calls, dispatches, arrests) are very highly correlated with the number of sworn officers variable and thus could not be included in the models because of multicollinearity; and
- 2) the data for numbers of case types (runaways, etc.) which might have been used to control for workload variation were not complete or accurate enough to be used in models (see earlier discussion in section B).

Because the models may be incomplete in a manner that is particularly relevant for larger departments, the department size findings should be viewed with caution.

3. Intensity of Investigative Action Types

It was of interest to determine whether there is a relationship between particular types of investigative action and the department characteristics, legal context, and features of the problem presented by the four case types. The 27 investigative actions were grouped into four conceptually similar sets. Action-intensity scores were computed for each set as before, by summing the number of actions in the set carried out usually or always for each type of case:

- Routine Investigative Action Score--sum from five items
 - Send a car to the scene
 - Interview parents or guardian in person
 - Search home of child/youth
 - Get description of child/youth
 - Get photograph of child/youth, if available
- Proactive Investigative Action Score--sum from 12 items
 - Call for search of area
 - Issue all-points bulletin
 - Set up command post
 - Call in investigative specialists
 - Gather physical evidence
 - Question available suspect(s)
 - Check hospitals
 - Check runaway shelter(s)/social service agencies
 - Check known juvenile haunts
 - Circulate child/youth's photo to law enforcement agencies
 - Get child/youth's dental records
 - Obtain search warrant/subpoena to examine suspect's record

- Interviewing Investigative Action Score--sum from four items
 - Interview available neighbors
 - Interview child's friends/siblings (if any)
 - Interview other available relatives
 - Interview school personnel
- Reporting Investigative Action Score--sum from five items
 - Issue all-points bulletin
 - Report to state missing persons file
 - Enter report into NCIC missing persons file
 - Report case to National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)
 - Report to FBI

Weighted regression models were estimated for these four investigative action types separately for each of the four case types. In the presentation and discussion of the results of these analyses, we proceed somewhat differently. All four investigative action types will be discussed together by case type. Summary tables in this section show only those variables that account for statistically significant variation in the various investigative action types.

Table 4.17 shows the results of modeling the four types of investigative actions for runaway cases. It is clear from the summary table that department size, measured as the number of sworn officers, is the most consistent correlate of investigative action intensity for runaway cases. Larger departments tend to engage in fewer actions always or usually for all four types of action. This result is most pronounced for proactive actions, where all size categories in the model show significant and relatively large coefficients. These estimates indicate that departments with between 50 and 300 sworn officers engaged in approximately one less proactive action than departments with less than 50 officers, while departments with 300-999 officers engaged in approximately 1.6 fewer actions, and those with 1000 or more officers engaged in approximately 2.8 fewer actions. The corresponding results for the other action types were less dramatic, but sworn size does appear among the significant factors for each.

Table 4.17. Statistically Significant Results for Investigative Action Categories: Runaways

<u>Routine Actions Model</u>	
Dependent Variable Mean 4.13	R ² = .141
Significant Variables	Coefficients and significance levels
100-299 officers	.363*
300-999 officers	.740**
<u>Proactive Action Model</u>	
Dependent Variable Mean 4.50	R ² = .155
Significant Variables	Coefficients and significance levels
50-99 officers	-.789*
100-299 officers	-.914*
300-999 officers	-1.624*
1000+ officers	-2.777*
Running away an offense	.833*
County agency	-1.36**
Number assigned to missing	.717***
<u>Interviewing Actions Model</u>	
Dependent Variable Mean 2.26	R ² = .120
Significant Variables	Coefficients and significance levels
No. written policy specifications	.110*
No. juvenile operations	-.097**
Other unit invest. responsibility	-.675*
100-299 officers	-.493*
Number assigned to missing	.363**
<u>Reporting Actions Model</u>	
Dependent Variable Mean 2.77	R ² = .114
Significant Variables	Coefficients and significance levels
No. written policy specifications	.108**
300-999 officers	-.466*
1000+ officers	-.941*
County agency	-.574*
Number assigned to missing	.249*

Note: F ratio levels of statistical significance.

*probability <.05
 **probability <.01
 ***probability <.001

The number of officers assigned to investigation of missing persons is directly associated with higher action scores for proactive, interviewing, and reporting action types. County departments had lower proactive and reporting action model scores than municipal departments. Departments in states where running away was a status offense or a delinquent act had higher proactive investigative action scores. For the most part, then, the organizational factors associated with investigative actions of one type are associated with those of another. Furthermore, the results are fairly consistent with the results for total investigative actions. For runaway cases, the different types of investigative actions were not clearly associated with different configurations of organizational characteristics, problem features, or legal context.

Table 4.18 shows the statistically significant results of modeling the four investigative action variables for parental abduction cases. There were fewer significant effects for this case type. None of the organizational characteristics, problem features, or legal context variables in the model was significantly associated with number of proactive investigative that actions departments reported taking usually or always with this case type (though, on the average, departments reported taking about 4.7 actions of this type).

The inverse effect of department size on investigative action intensity appears again, though much less prominently than for runaway cases. Here only the two largest sworn-size categories, the 300-999 officer departments for routine actions and the 1,000 or more officer departments for reporting actions, are associated with lower investigative action scores for only routine and reporting action types.

Several variables were associated with interviewing and reporting investigative actions that did not appear to be important in the overall investigative action score model. Departments that required a waiting period before making a written report of some or all calls regarding a missing child or youth took approximately one less interviewing action and one less reporting action than did departments with no waiting period. On the other hand, departments giving high priority to juvenile work also had higher interviewing and reporting action scores (by approximately one-half a point) for parental abduction cases.

Table 4.18. Statistically Significant Results for Investigative Action Categories: Parental Abductions

<u>Routine Actions Model</u>	
Dependent Variable Mean 4.19	R ² = .109
Significant Variables	Coefficients and significance levels
300-999 officers	-.488*
Elected department head	-.570**
 <u>Proactive Action Model</u>	
Dependent Variable Mean 4.69	R ² = .107
Significant Variables	Coefficients and significance levels
None	
 <u>Interviewing Actions Model</u>	
Dependent Variable Mean 2.63	R ² = .140
Significant Variables	Coefficients and significance levels
No waiting period	-.860*
Elected department head	1.289***
Running away an offense	-.434*
Juvenile work high priority	.619*
County department	-1.804***
 <u>Reporting Actions Model</u>	
Dependent Variable Mean 3.10	R ² = .186
Significant Variables	Coefficients and significance levels
No waiting period	-1.167*
Juvenile work high priority	.532**
1000+ officers	-1.094*

Note: F ratio levels of statistical significance.

*probability <.05
 **probability <.01
 ***probability <.001

County departments had parental abduction interviewing action scores almost two points lower than municipal departments. For reasons that are not clear from these analyses, departments in states where running away was a status offense or a delinquent act had somewhat lower interviewing action scores for parental abduction cases than departments in states where running away was not an offense.

Table 4.19 shows the statistically significant results of modeling the four investigative action variables for stranger abduction cases. The organizational characteristics, problem features, and legal context variables included in the model appear to have made little difference in the number of actions taken usually or always for most action types. There were some significant effects, however, whereas there were none for the model of total investigative action score discussed earlier. Departments where there was a separate juvenile unit performing a relatively large number of operations, where juvenile work was given high priority and whose chief, commissioner, or sheriff was elected rather than appointed had lower routine action scores than other departments. Summing across the coefficients for these four organizational characteristics indicates that departments with all of these characteristics performed approximately 1.4 fewer routine investigative actions.

Otherwise, the significant effects are too few and scattered to lend themselves to any very meaningful interpretation. Sworn-force size (but only the 50-99 officers category) and being a state police agency were associated with lower proactive investigative action scores. Having larger numbers of officers assigned to a missing persons unit increased slightly the number of interviewing actions engaged in usually or always. Having a separate juvenile unit reduced the reporting action scores.

Table 4.20 shows the statistically significant results of modeling the four investigative action variables for unknown missing cases. These results are similar to those observed above for runaway cases in two ways. Most of the model variables that show significant effects do so for more than one action type, and most of these effects are similar to those observed in modeling the total investigative action score for unknown missing cases.

Table 4.19. Statistically Significant Results for Investigative
Action Categories: Stranger Abductions

Routine Actions Model

Dependent Variable Mean 4.49

R² = .237

Significant Variables

Coefficients and significance levels

Separate juvenile unit	-.491*
Juvenile work high priority	-.269*
Number juvenile operations	-.033*
Elected department head	-.610**
Running away an offense	.306*

Proactive Action Model

Dependent Variable Mean 7.70

R² = .190

Significant Variables

Coefficients and significance levels

50-99 officers	-1.264*
State agency	1.999*

Interviewing Actions Model

Dependent Variable Mean 3.28

R² = .161

Significant variables

Coefficients and significance levels

Number assigned to missing	.197*
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Reporting Actions Model

Dependent Variable Mean 3.92

R² = .203

Significant variables

Coefficients and significance levels

Separate juvenile unit	-.838*
------------------------	--------

Note: F ratio levels of statistical significance.

- *probability <.05
- **probability <.01
- ***probability <.001

Table 4.20. Statistically Significant Results for Investigative Action Categories: Unknown Missing

<u>Routine Actions Model</u>	
Dependent Variable Mean 4.43	R ² = .117
Significant Variables	Coefficients and significance levels
Number policy specifications	.089*
Juvenile unit inv. resp.	-.454*
County department	-.529*
Elected department head	-.887***
<u>Proactive Action Model</u>	
Dependent Variable Mean 6.23	R ² = .198
Significant Variables	Coefficients and significance levels
Number policy specifications	.389*
Juvenile unit invest. resp.	-.377**
Number assigned to missing	.651*
County department	1.748*
Elected department head	-2.471**
<u>Interviewing Actions Model</u>	
Dependent Variable Mean 3.12	R ² = .187
Significant Variables	Coefficients and significance levels
Number policy specifications	.108*
300-999 officers	-.743*
1000+ officers	-1.600**
Number of investigative specialties	.069*
<u>Reporting Actions Model</u>	
Dependent Variable Mean 3.92	R ² = .203
Significant Variables	Coefficients and significance levels
100-299 officers	.856**
300-999 officers	.788*
Number assigned to missing persons	.316*
Number of investigative specialties	-.105*

Note: F ratio levels of statistical significance.

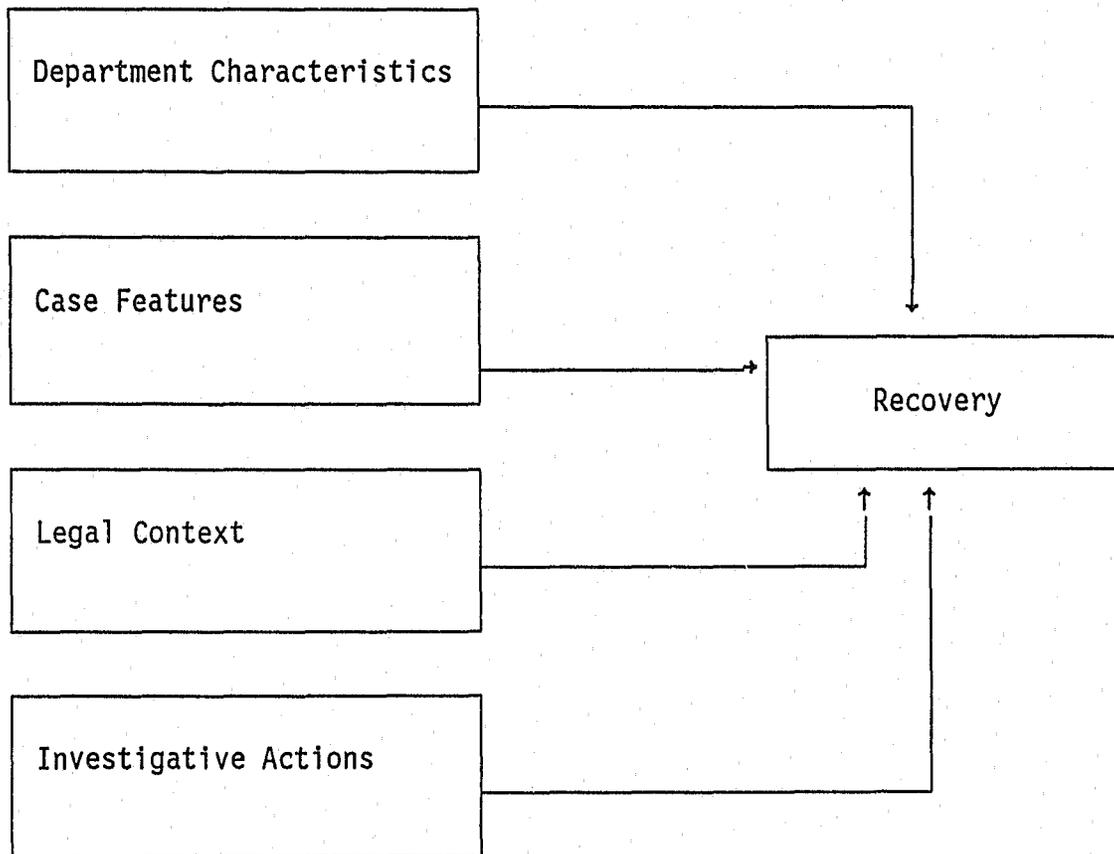
*probability <.05
 **probability <.01
 ***probability <.001

Measures of department size and complexity showed no significant effect in modeling the total investigative action score for unknown missing cases. The two measures do, however, have significant effects in modeling interviewing and reporting action scores for this case type. Departments with larger numbers of investigative specialties had slightly higher interviewing actions scores and slightly lower reporting actions scores than other departments. Departments in the sworn size categories 300-999 and 1000 or more had lower interviewing action scores (than departments with fewer than 50 sworn officers). Those with 100-299 officers or 300-999 officers had higher reporting action scores than small departments.

H. Recovery Modeling

It is expected that department characteristics, case features, legal factors, and investigative actions affect the recovery of missing children. The simple model shown in Figure 4.2 below depicts the hypothesized relationship.

Figure 4.2. Case Outcomes Analytic Model (by case types)



Here, the number of particular actions specified in written policy was directly associated with slightly higher routine, proactive, and interviewing action scores. Departments where the investigative responsibility for missing child/youth cases was assigned to a juvenile unit, which were county (rather than municipal) departments, or whose department head was elected (rather than appointed) had lower routine and proactive actions scores. Departments with larger numbers of officers assigned to missing persons units had somewhat higher proactive and reporting action scores than other departments.

Regression models were analyzed to determine what factors were associated with the speed of recovery of missing children and youth. Two dependent variables were used: the percentage of cases closed within 72 hours, and the percent of cases still open after 30 days. (See question 39 in the mail questionnaire in Appendix A). Most departments report a high percentage of cases are closed within 72 hours, and most departments report a very low percent of cases are still open after 30 days. Because the distributions of these variables were highly skewed, the two variables were dichotomized for regression analyses as follows:

- percent closed within 72 hours--81-100 percent = 1, otherwise 0,
- percent still open after 30 days--1-100 percent = 1, otherwise 0.

These indicators classify departments as simply "high" or "low" on the recovery variables. Because the dependent variables are dichotomous, weighted logistic regression procedures were used. Recovery was modeled separately for runaways, parental abductions, and stranger abductions.

Independent variables were selected for inclusion in the models as follows:

- only departmental characteristics that were associated with significant variation in the investigative actions modeling were included in the recovery modeling,

- legal context variables were included in all recovery models,
- case type investigative obstacles identified by approximately one-third or more of departments as being important were included as dummy variables in the models,
- total investigative actions scores for each case type were included in models.

Table 4.21 gives the results of the runaway recovery modeling. No variables account for statistically significant variation in recovery within 72 hours. It should be noted that the investigative actions variable is not significantly associated with a high likelihood of recovery within 72 hours. This suggests that when variation accounted for by other factors is controlled, the number of investigative actions taken always or usually is not important to the recovery of runaways within 72 hours.

It should also be noted that the R^2 of .008 indicates the model does not account for substantial variation.² Leaving methodological issues aside, this suggests the factors associated with the quick recovery of runaways have not been identified by the analyses.

The second column of Table 4.21 shows the findings for the second recovery variable. Departments reporting that some of their runaway cases in 1986 were still open after 30 days were compared in the regression analysis to departments that said all such cases were closed within 30 days. This model is more robust than the 72 hour model. A number of variables are significantly associated with having runaway cases open after 30 days, and the R^2 of .154 suggests more variation accounted for the recovery within 72 hours model.

^{2/} In the case of logistic regression, the R^2 statistic is the proportion of log likelihood explained by the model.

Table 4.21. Weighted Logistic Regression Coefficients and Significance Levels: Runaways

	Recovery Within 72 Hours	Unrecovered After 30 Days
Number written policy specifications	-.015	.303*
Missing children investigative responsibility		
Missing unit vs. not separate unit	-1.544	1.848
Juvenile unit vs. not separate unit	-.541	-.231
Other unit vs. not separate unit	.806	.179
Number of sworn officers		
50-99 vs. <50	-.168	1.461**
100-299 vs. <50	-.447	1.859**
300-999 vs. <50	-.605	2.172**
1000 or more vs. <50	-.961	6.165**
Number juvenile operations	.092	.116
Number assigned missing persons	.286	.094
Department Head		
Elected vs. appointed	-.612	.388
Civil service vs. appointed	-.621	-.621
State information system	.304	-.392
Status offense age <18	-.043	-1.515*
Running away an offense	-.336	.115
Investigative Obstacles		
Not an offense	-.120	-.535
Difficulty in classifying as runaway	.654	.141
Inadequate information	-.054	.668
Lack of police resources	-.221	-.305
Lack of parental cooperation	.121	.077
Inability to detain youth	.053	-.008
Investigative action intensity	.039	-.149**
High percent closed 72 hours	a	-.004
Intercept	-.421	1.362
R ²	.008	.154
(Sample Size)	(548)	(512)

Note: F ratio levels of statistical significance:

- *probability <.05
- **probability <.01
- ***probability <.001
- aVariable not included in model.

Departments whose written policies include more components are more likely to have runaway cases open after 30 days. Department size is directly associated with having some runaway cases open after 30 days. Larger departments are more likely than small ones to report some percent of cases stay open after 30 days. This is probably not surprising given that larger departments have more cases and thus an elevated chance that all such cases will not be closed within a month.

Departments in states where the juvenile status offense age is less than 18 are less likely than other departments to have runaway cases open after 30 days.

In the unrecovered after 30 days model, investigative action intensity is inversely associated with having cases open for this period. Departments that take fewer actions always or usually are more likely to have open cases. This is what one would expect to find if investigative action intensity assists in quick recovery. The finding suggests that active investigation can make a difference to the recovery of runaways not within 72 hours, but within 30 days.

Table 4.22 shows the recovery results for parental abduction cases. The results for recovery within 72 hours are similar to the findings for the quick recovery of runaways in the sense that the R^2 is low (.051) and only two variables account for significant variation. In jurisdictions where parental abduction is exclusively a misdemeanor (versus a felony in some circumstances) parental abduction cases are less likely to be closed within 72 hours. This suggests that stricter laws against parental abduction may aid in the quick recovery of victims. The second significant variable in the 72 hour recovery model suggests criminal justice system inaction may adversely affect the quick recovery of parental abduction victims. Departments that identified the lack of prosecutor cooperation from other states as an important obstacle to the investigation of such cases are less likely to close more than 80 percent of parental abduction cases within 72 hours.

Table 4.22. Weighted Logistic Regression Coefficients and Significance Levels: Parental Abductions

	Recovery Within 72 Hours	Unrecovered After 30 Days
Juvenile work high priority	.664	.140
Number of sworn officers		
50-99 vs. <50	.547	1.928***
100-299 vs. <50	-.045	2.168***
300-999 vs. <50	-.185	3.026***
1000 or more vs. <50	-.260	5.427***
Number assigned missing persons	.268	-.954*
State information system	-.810	1.075
Parental abduction exclusively a felony vs. a felony in some circumstances	-.405	.945
Parental abduction exclusively a misdemeanor vs. a felony in some circumstances	-1.619*	1.829*
Investigative Obstacles		
Lack of family cooperation	.725	1.362*
Lack of law enforcement cooperation	.550	-.213
Custody laws	.285	2.236***
Lack prosecutor cooperation (own state)	.777	-.127
Lack prosecutor cooperation (other state)	-1.241	.759
Lack judicial cooperation	-.021	-.071
Difficulty verifying custody	.593	.453
Investigative action intensity	-.050	.079
High percent closed in 72 hours	a	-.012*
R ²	.051	2.10
(Sample Size)	(405)	(365)

Note: F ratio levels of statistical significance:

- *probability <.05
- **probability <.01
- ***probability <.001

aVariable not included in model.

Column two of Table 4.22 gives the modeling results for parental abduction cases still open after 30 days. A number of variables account for significant variation and the R^2 is a moderate .243. Size is again found to be associated with cases being open for more than 30 days. Larger departments were more likely than small ones to say they had some parental abduction cases open for more than 30 days in 1986, and the relationship is quite strong based on the size of the regression coefficients and their levels of significance. Departments with larger numbers of officers assigned to missing persons units are less likely to have parental abduction cases open for more than 30 days.

Jurisdictions where parental abduction is a misdemeanor only are more likely to report cases remaining open after 30 days. Finally, as expected, departments that reported more than 80 percent of their parental abduction cases closed within 72 hours are also less likely to report some such cases stayed open for more than 30 days.

Table 4.23 shows the results of modeling recovery for stranger abduction cases. The recovery within 72 hours model indicates department size is relevant but the relationship is inconsistent; departments with 50-99 or 1000 or more sworn officers do not differ from departments with fewer than 50 officers. Departments with 100-299 sworn officers close a higher percent of cases within 72 hours in comparison to departments with fewer than 50 sworn officers. County departments close a lower percent of cases within 72 hours than do municipal departments.

Table 4.23. Weighted Logistic Regression Coefficients and Significance Levels: Stranger Abductions

	Recovery Within 72 Hours	Unrecovered After 30 Days
Juvenile work high priority	-.783	-.794
Missing children investigative responsibility		
Missing unit vs. not separate unit	-.650	1.102
Juvenile unit vs. not separate unit	-.101	-.356
Other unit vs. not separate unit	1.095	-1.143
Number sworn officers		
50-99 vs. <50	-.983*	1.428
100-299 vs. <50	2.295**	2.157
300-999 vs. <50	2.259*	1.950
100 or more vs. <50	1.350	2.225
Type of agency		
county vs. municipal	-1.532*	.958
state vs. municipal	-.351	.462
State information system	.779	.600
Status offense age <18	.275	-.009
Running away an offense	-.370	.359
Investigative Obstacles		
Difficulty classifying case	-4.04***	1.197
Difficulty securing witnesses	-2.880	-.513
Difficulty obtaining physical evidence	3.204	-3.184
Lack of family cooperation	.652	-1.358
Lack of cooperation from law enforcement	-.595	.180
Competing departmental priorities	.374	-.568
Investigative action intensity	.191*	.077
High percent closed within 72 hours	a	.008
Intercept	-3.963	-2.613
R ²	.341	.243
(Sample size)	(155)	(137)

Note: F ratio levels of statistical significance:

- *probability <.05
- **probability <.01
- ***probability <.001

aVariable not included in model.

One investigative obstacle identified by departments, difficulty classifying cases, is associated with a lower percent of cases closed within 72 hours. Departments identifying this obstacle as important are less likely than departments that do not mention these obstacles to close cases within three days. The investigative action intensity variable is directly associated with a high percentage of cases closed within 72 hours. Departments with higher numbers of actions taken always or usually are more likely to close cases within 72 hours.

Column two shows the modeling results for recovery of stranger abduction cases within 30 days. Only one variable is significantly associated with having some cases open after 30 days. Departments saying that the obstacle "difficulty obtaining physical evidence" is a problem in the investigation of stranger abduction cases are less likely to have had any such cases open for more than 30 days in 1986. It is not clear why this relationship is found.

I. Summary of Modeling

The modeling of investigative actions reported earlier showed some notable relationships. Department size, as measured by the number of sworn officers was strongly and inversely associated with the number of investigative actions taken always or usually for some case types. Larger departments took fewer such actions in runaway and parental abduction cases. As discussed earlier, because it was not possible to control for workload effects in the analysis, this finding should be interpreted cautiously.

The number of written policy specifications was strongly and positively associated with investigative action intensity for runaway and unknown case types. The number of officers assigned to missing person's units was associated with higher investigative action scores for runaway and unknown case types.

For reasons that are not clear from the data available in the mail survey, county agencies take fewer investigative action in runaway cases and more such actions in unknown case types in comparison to municipal departments.

It is notable from the regression modeling of abduction cases that few variables account for significant variation in investigative action intensity. Departments with very different characteristics are similar in the way that they respond investigatively to such cases.

The modeling of recovery also produced notable findings. For the recovery within 72 hours models for runaway and parental case types R^2 's were low and few variables accounted for significant variation. For stranger abduction cases the model accounted for more variation overall and in terms of the number of statistically significant variables. One investigative obstacle (difficulty classifying cases) was inversely associated with closing more than 80 percent of stranger abduction cases within 72 hours. The investigative action intensity variable was directly associated with closing a high percent of runaway cases within 30 days and stranger abduction cases within three days.

It appears that the legal status of parental abduction cases may affect the speed with which such cases are closed. In both 72 hour and 30 day models, jurisdictions where parental abduction was only a misdemeanor had less favorable recovery outcomes. This suggests a felony status for parental abductions can have a positive effect on recovery.

In the next chapter attention is turned to homeless youth cases. The final chapter will return again to the investigation and recovery of missing children and youth. In that chapter, the implications of the above findings will be discussed.

5. POLICE HANDLING OF HOMELESS YOUTH CASES

A. Introduction

In the course of their work, police encounter homeless or transient youth. These cases are distinguished from those that come to police attention because someone, usually a parent or guardian, reports a child or youth missing. Homeless youth were defined as an "unemancipated youth (14-17 years old) who has left home and is living on his or her own in your jurisdiction without a parent or legal guardian." The homeless youth may have run away from home in the department's jurisdiction or from another jurisdiction. The essential feature of these cases for purposes of this report is that the immediate police/youth contact did not result from a missing report, but from an encounter where the officer initially believed or subsequently determined that the youth was living unsupervised. Some large cities have very high numbers of such youth.

Departments were asked to report about three categories of runaway and homeless youth: walk-ins, youth victimized, and officer initiated assistance. The first category was defined as runaway or homeless youth who come to the police for help; "youth victimized" refers to runaways who have been victims of crime, including referrals to police from hospitals and doctors. "Officer initiated assistance" includes proactive contacts by the police and situations where police may have taken a homeless youth into custody for a minor offense but ultimately assisted in some way.

This chapter describes police contacts with runaway and homeless youth. Departments were asked to characterize this problem in their jurisdictions, describe how cases are handled, and indicate obstacles to closing those cases by the return of the youths to their homes or some protective care.

B. Characteristics of the Problem

The mail questionnaire asked police about characteristics of the homeless youth problem in their jurisdictions, including their perceptions

of the seriousness of the problem and the numbers and types of police contacts with such youth.

Respondents were asked to rate the homeless youth problem in their jurisdiction on a five point scale; very serious, serious, moderately serious, not very serious and not serious at all. Table 5.1 shows these ratings by size and type of department. The ratings of serious and very serious have been combined into one category, as have the ratings of not very serious and not serious at all. Overall, slightly more than half of the departments rated their problem as not very serious or not serious at all while 14 percent rated their problem as serious or very serious. However, there were significant differences in ratings based on department size. For the smallest departments, only 11 percent ranked the problem in the serious category, and 57 percent ranked it in the not serious category. The situation was reversed for the largest departments; nearly half rated it as serious/very serious, and only 7 percent rated it as not very serious/not serious at all. The two middle categories of department size (50-99 and 100-299) were similar for all the ratings. There were no significant differences by department type.

Table 5.2a presents the numbers of police contacts with homeless youth in 1986 by type of contact. The most rare types of contacts are through victimizations of youth, hospital or doctor reports, and prostitution arrests; between 49 and 86 of the departments overall reported no such contacts in 1986. For the other contact types (youth asks officer for help, officer initiates contact to assist youth, shelter or social service agency reports, drug or theft arrests of youth), between 42 and 61 of the departments reported only 1-5 such contacts. Only 2 to 7 percent of departments nationwide reported more than 50 contacts per year with homeless youth in any contact category. Since these data do not provide incidence estimates of the number of homeless youth in the jurisdiction, it is not possible to determine whether the number of contacts is based on the size of the population or the degree of proactivity on the part of the police in handling such cases.

Table 5.1. Seriousness of Runaway/Homeless Youth Problem by Department Size and Type (Percentage of Departments That Ever Handle Cases)

	Rating of Seriousness		
	Serious/Very Serious	Moderately Serious	Not Very Serious/Not At All Serious
All Departments	14.1	34.4	51.5
Department Size			
0-49	11.0 ^a	32.6	56.4
50-99	27.2	45.9	26.9
100-299	31.6	45.6	22.8
300+	49.4	43.3	7.3 ^a
Department Type			
Municipal	14.2	31.7	54.1
County	13.3	45.4	41.3
State	38.0 ^a	56.8 ^a	5.3 ^a

Note: Rows total approximately 100 percent.

^aPercentage based on 10 or fewer cases.

Table 5.2a. Number of Police Contacts in 1986 with Runaway/Homeless Youth (Percentage of Departments That Ever Handle Cases)

Type of Contact	Numbers of Contacts in 1986			
	0	1-5	6-50	51+
Youth asks officer for help	16.5	59.3	22.2	2.0
Officer initiates contact to assist youth	8.5	61.3	24.8	5.4
Shelter or social service agency reports	32.2	44.6	20.3	2.9
Hospital or doctor reports	60.5	28.1	9.7	1.8
Victimizations of youth	48.8	33.2	14.7	3.4
Prostitution arrests of youth	85.7	8.0	4.3	2.0
Drug arrests of youth	33.3	41.7	22.2	2.9
Theft arrests of youth	18.5	45.3	29.4	6.8

Note: Rows total approximately 100 percent.

Table 5.2b shows the median number of contacts for each type of encounter with runaway/homeless youth for departments that had a total of 100 or more such contacts in 1986. Approximately one-quarter of all the departments are in this high contact category; and of the high contact departments, two-thirds have a sworn force size of 100 or more. The most common type of encounter for the high contact departments is through theft arrests of youth, while the least common is prostitution arrests of youth.

Table 5.2b. Median Number of Police Contacts in 1986 with Runaway/Homeless Youth by Type of Contact for Departments Reporting 100 or More Contacts

Type of Contact	Median Number of Contacts
Youth asks officer for help	25.0
Office initiates contact to assist youth	50.0
Shelter or social service agency reports	30.0
Hospital or doctor reports	10.0
Victimizations of youth	25.0
Prostitution arrests of youth	2.5
Drug arrests of youth	30.0
Theft arrests of youth	100.0

The number of police contacts by type and by seriousness rating was also examined (Table 5.3). Here it can be seen that for most types of contact, departments that rated their homeless youth problem as serious or very serious were substantially more likely than departments rating it as not very/not at all serious to report having some contacts of that type and to report more than five contacts. These differences were statistically significant for all contact types except shelter/social service agency reports, hospital reports, and prostitution arrests.

C. Written Policy

Approximately one-fifth of all departments reported having a written policy for dealing with runaway/homeless youth. (See Table 5.4.) There is a clear pattern of variation by size of department; larger departments are more likely to have written policies than smaller ones. Among the smallest group of departments (0-49 sworn-force size), only 18 percent have written policies, while 73 percent of the largest departments (300+) have written policies. State departments are more likely to have written policies than municipal or county departments; approximately one-third of state departments do compared to about one-fifth of the others.

D. Investigative Actions

Departments were asked to scale various actions taken in homeless youth cases as occurring always, usually, sometimes, rarely, or never. Tables 5.5 - 5.7 show the frequency of 12 actions for the three kinds of contacts: walk-ins, youth victimized, and officer-initiated contacts.

Certain actions are always or usually taken by large percentages of departments. These actions include arranging transportation home (64-66 percent), attempting to locate and notify parents (92-95 percent), referring cases to juvenile specialists (56-78 percent), notifying the youth's home jurisdiction (84-89 percent), and checking with state and national crime information systems (68-79 percent). Referral to social service agencies, use of secure and nonsecure detention, and checking with a state clearinghouse and NCMEC were also actions reported taken always or usually by notable percentages of departments.

Table 5.3. Number of Police Contacts in 1986 by Type of Contact and Seriousness of Homeless Youth Problem Rating (Percentage of Departments)

Type of Contact/ Homeless Youth Rating	Numbers of Contacts in 1986			
	0	1-5	6-50	51+
Youth asks officer for help				
Serious/Very serious	2.9 ^a	48.7	43.5	4.8
Not very/Not at all serious	26.9	56.2	16.8	0.2 ^a
Officer initiates contact to assist youth				
Serious/Very serious	2.3 ^a	64.0	26.3	7.4
Not very/Not at all serious	13.3	69.4	16.7	0.6 ^a
Shelter or social service agency reports				
Serious/Very serious	29.6	26.1	37.3	7.1
Not very/Not at all serious	41.3	44.6	13.8	0.3 ^a
Hospital or doctor reports				
Serious/Very serious	50.2	37.6	10.1	2.1 ^a
Not very/Not at all serious	68.9	26.6	4.4	0.1 ^a
Victimizations of youth				
Serious/Very serious	39.5	36.3	16.6	7.7
Not very/Not at all serious	66.6	27.1	5.5	0.8 ^a
Prostitution arrests of youth				
Serious/Very serious	79.2	11.4	7.3	2.2
Not very/Not at all serious	89.0	5.3	5.5 ^a	0.2 ^a
Drug arrests of youth				
Serious/Very serious	17.6	60.5	14.6	7.3
Not very/Not at all serious	46.5	35.3	18.0	0.2 ^a
Theft arrests of youth				
Serious/Very serious	1.8 ^a	42.9	43.8	11.5
Not very/Not at all serious	31.8	42.2	25.2	0.8 ^a

Note: Rows total approximately 100 percent.

^aPercentage based on 10 or fewer cases.

Table 5.4. Written Policies Regarding Homeless Youth by Department Size and Type (Percentage of Departments)

	Written Policy	
	Yes	No
All Departments	21.5	78.5
Department Size		
0-49	17.5	82.5
50-99	36.8	63.2
100-299	49.0	51.0
300+	72.5	27.5
Department Type		
Municipal	22.5	77.5
County	17.5	82.6
State	31.8	68.2

Note: Rows total approximately 100 percent.

Table 5.5. Actions Regarding Runaways or Homeless Youth by Contact Type--
Walk-ins: All Departments

Actions	Frequency			Mean Score
	Never/ Rarely	Sometimes	Usually/ Always	
a. Arrange transportation home	5.2%	29.3%	65.5%	3.9
b. Attempt to locate and notify parents	1.3%	6.7%	92.0%	4.6
c. Refer case to juvenile division or specialists employed by department	15.5%	28.9%	55.6%	3.6
d. Refer case to local social service agencies, runaway shelters, etc.	15.0%	45.1%	40.0%	3.4
e. Notify home jurisdiction	3.4%	8.8%	87.9%	4.5
f. Detain juvenile in secure facility	50.8%	32.2%	17.0%	2.5
g. Detain juvenile in nonsecure facility	33.8%	39.1%	27.1%	2.8
h. Check with State Crime Information Center (SCIC) or state police	14.1%	15.0%	71.0%	4.0
i. Check with state clearinghouse for missing children	39.9%	25.1%	35.1%	3.0
j. Check National Crime Information Center's (NCIC) Missing Person File	9.2%	11.6%	79.2%	4.3
k. Check with National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)	48.2%	28.3%	25.5%	2.7
l. None of the activities listed above	77.9%	10.8%	11.3%	1.8

Note: Row percentages total approximately 100 percent.

Table 5.6. Actions Regarding Runaways or Homeless Youth by Contact Type--
Youth Victimized: All Departments

Actions	Frequency			Mean Score
	Never/ Rarely	Sometimes	Usually/ Always	
a. Arrange transportation home	13.1%	23.2%	63.7%	3.8
b. Attempt to locate and notify parents	2.5%	4.5%	93.0%	4.7
c. Refer case to juvenile division or specialists employed by department	8.6%	13.6%	77.8%	4.2
d. Refer case to local social service agencies, runaway shelters, etc.	8.4%	23.2%	68.4%	4.0
e. Notify home jurisdiction	4.0%	11.8%	84.4%	4.4
f. Detain juvenile in secure facility	47.3%	30.8%	21.9%	2.6
g. Detain juvenile in nonsecure facility	35.8%	44.4%	19.8%	2.7
h. Check with State Crime Information Center (SCIC) or state police	16.7%	15.6%	67.8%	3.9
i. Check with state clearinghouse for missing children	33.5%	32.0%	34.5%	3.1
j. Check National Crime Information Center's (NCIC) Missing Person File	12.7%	17.2%	70.1%	4.1
k. Check with National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)	48.2%	25.6%	23.2%	2.6
l. None of the activities listed above	87.4%	12.1%	0.5%	1.3

Note: Row percentages total approximately 100 percent. Table 5.7. Actions Regarding

Runaways or Homeless Youth by Contact Type--
Officer-Initiated Assistance: All Departments

Actions	Frequency			Mean Score
	Never/ Rarely	Sometimes	Usually/ Always	
a. Arrange transportation home	3.6%	32.5%	64.0%	3.9
b. Attempt to locate and notify parents	0.2%	4.9%	94.9%	4.7
c. Refer case to juvenile division or specialists employed by department	15.7%	22.9%	61.5%	3.7
d. Refer case to local social service agencies, runaway shelters, etc.	16.4%	34.8%	48.8%	3.4
e. Notify home jurisdiction	2.7%	8.4%	89.0%	4.5
f. Detain juvenile in secure facility	41.2%	38.1%	20.7%	2.8
g. Detain juvenile in nonsecure facility	32.9%	45.3%	21.8%	2.8
h. Check with State Crime Information Center (SCIC) or state police	15.7%	15.1%	69.2%	3.9
i. Check with state clearinghouse for missing children	42.6%	27.6%	29.8%	2.8
j. Check National Crime Information Center's (NCIC) Missing Person File	9.8%	11.4%	78.8%	4.3
k. Check with National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)	55.5%	21.8%	22.7%	2.5
l. None of the activities listed above	87.0%	12.3%	0.8%	1.3

Note: Row percentages total approximately 100 percent.

The percentages of departments reporting the various actions always or usually did not differ across types of contact for 10 of the 12 types. Departments were more likely, however, to refer victimized youth to juvenile specialists and to refer such cases to local social service agencies. These findings are logical in that victimized youth are probably more likely to need special services.

Investigative action frequency was examined by department size and type. These tables (D16-D18) are included in Appendix D. There was not much variation in investigative action frequency by these departmental features. For example, departments attempt to locate and notify parents about homeless youth they encounter always or usually in the following percentage ranges across the four department size groups: 92-95 percent for walk-ins, 92-95 percent for youth that are victimized, and 93-96 percent for officer initiated assistance.

E. Obstacles to Successful Handling of Cases Involving Homeless Youth

The mail questionnaire asked departments what they considered to be "the greatest obstacles to having youth returned home or placed in some other form of protective care (such as a shelter or group home)." Respondents were asked to choose up to five obstacles from a list of 12, and to rank those in order of importance, assigning a "1" to the most important, a "2" to the second most important, and so forth. Table 5.8 presents the results for all departments nationally, showing the percentage of departments that chose each listed obstacle and the mean rank given.

Approximately 60-63 percent of departments agreed in choosing three of the items listed as obstacles to returning homeless youth: age/independence/mobility of youth, running away not a criminal offense, and lack of cooperation from family. The mean score for running away not a criminal offense (2.0) indicates that departments fairly consistently ranked this among the three most important obstacles. Approximately 44-47 percent of departments chose four items as obstacles to returning youth: not enough shelters, statutes that prohibit taking youth into custody, youth has run away from an abusive environmental family situation, and youth involved in criminal

Table 5.8. Obstacles to Returning Homeless Youth: All Departments

Obstacle	Percent Ranking	Mean Score
a. Running away not a criminal offense	62.0	2.0
b. Age/independence/mobility of youth	62.7	3.0
c. Too much paperwork involved	5.9	3.6
d. Youth involved in criminal activities	44.1	3.3
e. Statutes that prohibit taking youth into custody	46.8	2.4
f. Lack of cooperation from family	59.9	2.8
g. Lack of cooperation from other law enforcement agencies	7.0	3.6
h. Not enough shelters	46.9	2.9
i. Lack of cooperation from social service agencies	30.5	3.1
j. Special problems handling youth from outside jurisdiction	36.1	3.1
k. Low priority in department (not an important police matter)	6.1	4.4
l. YOUTH has run away from an abusive environmental family situation	45.0	3.4

activities. Approximately 31-36 percent cited special problems handling youth from outside the jurisdiction and the lack of cooperation from social service agencies as obstacles to returning youth to protective care.

There was little difference among departments of different sizes or types in their perceptions of the greatest obstacles to returning homeless youth (see Table D19 in Appendix D). Departments with 50-99 sworn officers were most likely to cite not enough shelters; 71 percent did. County departments were more likely than municipal departments to choose statutes that prohibit taking youth into custody (71 percent compared to 40 percent) and less likely to choose either lack of cooperation from family (45 compared to 64 percent) or lack of cooperation from social service agencies (15 compared to 35 percent).

F. Modeling Actions Taken for Homeless Youth Cases

The general conceptual framework underlying the analysis of actions taken to deal with homeless youth who come to police attention is the same as that shown in Figure 4.1, above, for modeling missing child/youth investigative actions. Action Intensity is, again, the dependent variable, measured by a set of action scores computed by summing the number of actions departments reported engaging in usually or always for each of the three types of contact with homeless youth. The individual items (or actions) from which these scores were computed have been described in some detail in section D above, together with the basic relationships between the frequency with which departments engaged in them and department size and type.

Again, there were three categories of independent variables, conceptually speaking: departmental characteristics, features of the problem and legal context. The departmental characteristics measured and included in the regression models were departmental policy regarding homeless youth contacts, organizational characteristics specific to homeless youth and general organizational characteristics.

Missing Child/Youth Policy Variables

- Written policy specific to homeless youth cases (scored 1=Yes/2=No)

Organizational Characteristics Specific to Homeless Youth Cases

- Seriousness of homeless youth problem (5-point scale scored from 1=Not at all serious to 5=Very serious)
- Number of department child safety programs (scored 0-10)
- Department has separate juvenile unit (a dummy variable, Yes=1)
- Department gives juvenile work a high priority (a dummy variable, high=1)
- Number of officers assigned to a juvenile unit (categories scored 1-7)
- Number of operations carried out by juvenile unit/specialists (scored 0-8)

General Organizational Characteristics

- Number of sworn officers (set of dummy variables)
 - 50-99 vs. <50
 - 100-299 vs. <50
 - 300-999 vs. <50
 - 1000 or more vs. <50
- Number of investigative specialities in the department (scored 0-12)
- Type of agency (set of dummy variables)
 - County vs. municipal
 - State vs. municipal
- Department head tenure (set of dummy variables)
 - Elected vs. appointed
 - Civil service vs. appointed

Two independent variables serve as measures of the legal context:

- Status offense age <18 (a dummy variable)
- Running away a status offense or delinquent act (a dummy variable).

Once again, using dependent variables computed separately for different types of contact serves to control for features of the problem. Linear multiple regression models were fit using RTI's regression procedure for weighted survey data as described in section H.1 of Chapter 4.

Table 5.9 shows the regression results. There was little difference among the three contact types in the factors associated with police action intensity in dealing with homeless runaway cases. Two factors were associated with increases in action intensity. Departments that gave juvenile work a high priority engaged in approximately one more action than those that gave juvenile work a lower priority. Departments whose chief, sheriff or commissioner was elected engaged in more actions than departments whose head was appointed. This effect appeared to be somewhat stronger for walk-in cases where homeless youths had contacted the police than for those where youths came to police attention as crime victims or through officer initiated contacts. On the other hand, county departments engaged in fewer actions than municipal departments. Again, this effect appeared somewhat stronger for walk-ins than for the other two case types. Departments in states where running away was a status offense or delinquent act engaged in about one more action for walk-ins than other departments.

The independent variables included in the models explain only very modest amounts of the variation in the dependent variables--12.7 to 8.3 percent. Neither of the independent variables that measure personnel availability (generally, in terms of total sworn officers or, specifically, in terms of number of juvenile officers) significantly affects action intensity in these cases involving homeless runaways. Both sets of independent variables showed strong effects on investigative intensity for reported runaway cases. This suggests that the police actions required in returning runaways that have been "found" may make less demand on police resources than those involved in searching for those reported missing.

Table 5.9. Weighted Regression Coefficients and Significance Levels
for Case Types: Actions Taken for Homeless Youth

	Walk-ins	Youth Victimized	Officer Initiated Assistance
Seriousness of homeless problem	.339	-.305	.001
Written policy for homeless cases	-.424	-.279	-.355
Number child safety programs	-.094	-.040	-.575
Separate juvenile unit	.238	-.133	-.082
Number juvenile officers	.283	.353	-.022
Number juvenile operations	-.018	-.067	-.018
Juvenile work high priority	.790*	.897*	.762*
Number of sworn officers			
50-99 vs. <50	.001	-.001	.355
100-299 vs. <50	-.449	-.381	.336
300-999 vs. <50	-.369	-.163	.837
1000 or more vs. <50	-1.234	-.935	.498
Number investigative specialties	.050	.043	-.071
Type of agency			
County vs. municipal	-3.123***	-1.315*	-1.175**
State vs. municipal	.314	.672	-.333
Department head			
Elected vs. appointed	3.374***	2.051**	1.431**
Civil service vs. appointed	-.280	-.768	-.300
State information system	-.406	-.066	-.770
Status offense age <18	.064	-.226	.266
Running away an offense	.751*	.224	.409
Dependent variable mean	5.82	6.11	5.88
Intercept	5.432	7.182	4.692
R ²	.127	.123	.083
(Sample size)	(491)	(474)	(483)

Note: F ratio levels of statistical significance.

*probability <.05
**probability <.01
***probability <.001

6. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

A. Summary of Findings

1. Characteristics of Missing Child/Youth Cases

The mail survey gathered data on numbers of missing child/youth cases reported to police in 1986, and on recovery rates for these cases, for five categories of cases:

- Runaways
- Parental Kidnappings
- Abductions by Known Individuals
- Stranger Abductions
- Unknown Missing

Many departments did not classify cases in a way that allowed them to arrive easily at estimates for the categories given. The resulting high non-response to this series of items, and the substantial proportion of answers based on estimates, make formal estimation of prevalence of the five types of cases inappropriate. Results from examination of these data, broadly grouped, are consistent with findings from more limited studies.

Departments were most likely to have had reports of missing runaways in 1986, and next most likely to have had reports of parental abductions. Reports of other categories of missing child/youth cases were relatively rare. Nationally, 93 percent of departments had one or more runaway cases in 1986; 43 percent had had reports of parental abductions; 15 percent, abductions by known individuals; 5 percent, stranger abductions; and 22 percent, unknown missing cases.

Departments also had a larger number of runaway cases than missing child/youth cases of any other type. About 41 percent had more than 10 reports of runaways (and 9 percent had more than 100); less than 5 percent of departments nationwide had more than 10 reports of any type of abduction or of an unknown missing child/youth.

Case classification is an important step in the investigative process. Very large proportions of departments classified 90 percent or more of their missing child/youth reports within 24 hours (72 percent of departments) and within 48 hours (87 percent of departments).

Assuming that departments close cases only when the child or youth has returned, case closure can be used as an indicator of the recovery rate of missing children/youth. Departments were asked what proportion of cases in each of the five categories were closed within 72 hours and what proportion remained open after 30 days. Runaway cases and abductions by known individuals were most likely to be closed quickly; 67 percent of departments closed more than 80 percent of runaway cases within 72 hours in 1986, and 65 percent of departments closed that proportion of abductions by known individuals. About 52-57 percent closed over 80 percent of their parental abduction, stranger abduction and unknown missing cases in that time.

Stranger abduction cases, on the other hand, were more likely to remain open after 30 days, possibly because extended investigation may be needed to identify and arrest some offenders. The majority of departments said that no cases remained open at this stage for each case type, but departments were least likely to report having closed all their stranger abduction cases within 30 days. Nearly one-third of departments said that more than 80 percent of their stranger abductions in 1986 remained open that long, compared to 13 percent saying that many parental abductions remained open that long, and 5 percent or fewer saying that many unknown missing cases or abductions by a known individual remained 30 days. Only 5 percent of departments reported that over 20 percent of their runaway cases remained open after 30 days.

2. Initial Procedures for Handling Reports of Missing Children/Youth

The initial procedures for handling calls reporting a missing child or youth (here, specifically, whether a written report is made of the call, and whether it is made immediately or after a waiting period) can affect police understanding and classification of a case, and the effectiveness of later investigative procedures in recovering the child or youth. The mail survey showed that 85 percent of departments, nationally,

made a written report of all missing child/youth calls that came in; of departments in sworn size categories over 50, 92-95 percent made written reports of all calls. Nearly all departments that made a written report did so on the basis of the first call--that is, had no waiting period prior to writing a report.

Most departments had not formalized their procedures for dealing with missing child/youth cases into written policy. Nationally, only 27 percent reported having a written policy. Larger departments were much more likely to have formalized procedures in this way: 59 percent of those with 100-299 officers and 82 percent of those with 300 or more officers did, compared to 23-45 percent of smaller departments. Nearly all these written policies specified initial investigative procedures, most specified followup investigative procedures and closeout procedures, and about half specified the timing of procedures. Case classification criteria and specifications regarding a waiting period (or its lack) were included in less than half of written policies.

3. Organization of Departments for Handling Missing Child/Youth Cases

The mail survey asked about organizational factors that might be related to investigative actions taken and to case outcomes. These factors included the existence and organizational placement of juvenile units (which frequently had responsibility for handling missing child/youth reports) and the assignment of responsibility within departments for handling such cases. Nationally, 58 percent of departments had a separate juvenile unit, 46 percent located in an investigative division and 12 percent, in some other division (such as crime prevention or community relations). Only 18 percent of departments with fewer than 50 sworn officers had a separate juvenile unit; 60 to 70 percent of larger departments did, most often located in investigation.

Departments were classified according to whether they assigned missing child/youth investigations to a juvenile unit, a missing persons/missing juvenile unit, some other unit or not to a separate unit. The great majority of departments with no juvenile unit (78 percent) did not assign these cases to a separate unit. Most departments with a juvenile unit located in investigations (70 percent) assign missing child/youth cases to

that unit, while 13 percent assign them to a missing persons/juveniles unit. In departments where the juvenile unit is not part of investigations, 57 percent assign these cases to the juvenile unit while 23 percent assign them to a missing unit. Examination of investigative actions taken always or usually (for runaway cases, parental abductions, stranger abductions and unknown missing cases) according to the type of unit with investigative responsibility indicates that missing units appeared to investigate cases more aggressively than juvenile units.

4. Factors That Affect Investigative Priorities

The mail questionnaire presented respondents with a list of 17 factors that might affect the priority police assign a particular missing child/youth investigation. These factors included characteristics of the child/youth (age, gender, presence of mental handicap and/or condition requiring medication, prior history of running away and family history of abusing child/youth) and characteristics of the case (existence of eyewitness account and/or physical evidence, danger to child/youth of sexual exploitation, reporting parent very upset and custody status of reporting parent). Respondents were asked to choose up to 5 of these factors that "are most important in making your department assign a high investigative priority" to cases for four types of cases: runaways, parental abduction, stranger abduction and unknown missing.

Four of the factors apparently indicated a child or youth particularly "at risk" to investigators. High proportions of departments ranked these factors as important in making them assign a high priority to a case for two or more case types:

- Child 8 or younger
- Child/youth has condition requiring prescription medication
- Child/youth mentally handicapped or disabled, and
- Child/youth in danger of sexual exploitation.

Seventy percent or more ranked "child 8 or younger" as a high priority factor in runaway cases, stranger abductions and unknown missing cases; and nearly half ranked this factor as important in parental abductions. Half

or more ranked "condition requiring prescription medication" and "mentally handicapped or disabled" as high priority factors in all four types of cases. Departments apparently saw these two factors as more salient in runaway and unknown missing cases (where more than 60 percent ranked them as important) than in either type of abduction (where 40 to 60 percent ranked them as important). Finally, 60 percent or more ranked "in danger of sexual exploitation" as a high priority factor in parental or stranger abductions (while 46 and 33 percent ranked it as important in runaway and unknown missing cases, respectively).

There were clear difference among case types in the sets of factors departments said would make them assign a high investigative priority to a case. For runaway cases, the four factors listed above were the four departments chose most often; approximately one-third also chose "has not run away before" and "family history of abusing child/youth." For parental abduction cases, the two most salient factors (chosen by approximately two-thirds of departments) were two not listed above: "family history of abusing child/youth" and "reporting parent has legal custody." The four "at risk" factors were chosen by 43 to 61 percent of departments. For stranger abductions, having an eyewitness account and physical evidence (chosen by 67 and 55 percent respectively) were among the six factors chosen most often, along with the four "at risk" factors listed above. For unknown missing cases, the four "at risk" factors were chosen most often as making departments assign a high priority to a case. In addition, approximately one-third of departments chose "has not run away before," having an eyewitness account and physical evidence. Sworn force size made some difference in proportions of departments choosing some factors only for runaway cases. The proportions choosing the four "at risk" factors increased steadily with sworn force size, so that substantially higher proportions of departments in the largest size category (300 or more) chose these factors than in smaller departments.

There were some differences in factors chosen between departments according to whether juvenile units or missing persons/juvenile units handled missing child/youth investigations that were fairly consistent across case types (though not entirely so). Where missing units were

responsible for investigation, departments were often more likely to choose "danger of sexual exploitation," "family history of child abuse," physical evidence and eyewitness account. Where juvenile units were responsible, departments were often more likely to choose "condition requiring prescription medication" and "mentally handicapped or disabled."

5. Investigative Actions

The mail questionnaire asked how often a list of 29 possible investigative actions would typically be taken during the first week or two of the investigation for each of the four case types: runaways, parental abductions, stranger abductions and unknown missing. Most departments always or usually dispatch a car to the scene, especially for stranger abductions and unknown missing cases where 94-96 percent of departments always or usually do so. Most conduct in-person interviews with parents or guardians always or usually, and a description of the child or youth is obtained virtually all the time. Very high percentages of departments said they always or usually report cases to state and national missing persons files. Other kinds of investigative actions were less likely to be taken most of the time.

There were some clear differences in investigative actions between case types. Police were most likely to check juvenile haunts and runaway shelters in runaway cases. Substantial percentages said they always or usually interviewed relatives and school officials, checked hospitals, reported to the FBI, circulated photographs, got dental records and obtained warrants for abduction and unknown missing case types. In general, investigative action intensity--the number of actions engaged in always or usually-- was highest for stranger abductions and unknown missing cases.

The mail questionnaire also asked about followup actions and closeout procedures. More than nine out of ten departments said they always or usually had periodic contact with the family and investigated new leads. Other followup actions were not done this frequently. Less than half of departments always or usually reinterviewed witnesses and checked with shelters or other social service agencies. About one-fourth circulated posters and/or checked with locator services this frequently.

In closing out missing child/youth cases, virtually all departments said they always or usually : (1) verified that the child or youth had returned, and (2) removed cases from information systems such as NCIC. About half always or usually interviewed the child or youth and referred the child/youth or family to counseling. Departments rarely obtained a physical examination for a recovered child or youth.

For most investigative action types there was an inverse relationship between department size and the frequency of investigative activity, with some notable exceptions. For two investigative actions (calling in investigative specialists, and checking with runaway shelters or social service agencies) the largest department category was most likely to report always or usually taking the action. This is not surprising because larger departments are more likely to have such resources available. For runaway cases, departments differed little by size in their frequency of reporting cases to state and national files and other law enforcement agencies, or in obtaining dental records. There were no differences between department size and type categories in the frequency of followup investigative actions.

A summary measure of investigative action intensity was developed for each of the four case types: the number of 28 possible investigative actions "typically" taken always or usually. The previously mentioned difference in investigative intensity by case type is made clear by these scores. Only 10 percent of departments always or usually took 21-28 different actions during typical investigations of runaway cases. Almost half (49 percent) of departments took this many actions for stranger abduction cases, and one-third of departments for unknown missing cases. Department size is inversely related to investigative intensity for runaway cases and parental abductions. Larger departments take fewer actions. Departments of different sizes are more similar in investigative action frequency for stranger abduction cases. There are significant differences between the smallest and largest size categories for unknown missing cases but other size comparisons do not differ. There are few differences between municipal, county, and state police departments in investigative intensity.

6. Obstacles to Successful Investigation of Missing Child/Youth Cases

The mail questionnaire asked departments to rank the greatest obstacles to successful investigation (i.e., one resulting in recovery and return of the child or youth) of three types of missing child/youth cases: runaways, parental abductions and stranger abductions. For runaway cases, there was high agreement among departments that one obstacle was the most important: age/independence/mobility of youth, chosen by 72 percent. Three obstacles were chosen by 53 to 58 percent: (1) difficulty of knowing whether child or youth was voluntarily absent, (2) inadequate information available to locate children or youth outside jurisdiction, and (3) running away not a criminal offense. Larger departments (100 or more sworn officers) and those where a juvenile unit had investigative responsibility were less likely than other departments to choose the first of these obstacles. These larger departments were more likely than others, however, to choose the third.

For parental abduction, there was high agreement on the importance of three obstacles (chosen by 70 to 80 percent of departments): (1) difficulty in verifying custody, (2) statutes (custody laws), and (3) lack of family cooperation. Departments where juvenile units had investigative responsibility for these cases were less likely than others to cite difficulty in verifying custody. Departments where missing units were responsible were less likely than others to cite statutes, but more likely to choose lack of family cooperation as investigative obstacles. There was less apparent agreement on the importance of four listed obstacles regarding lack of cooperation from other police departments, prosecutors (own and other states) and judges; these were chosen by 32 to 43 percent of departments.

The pattern for stranger abduction showed a similar consensus. Departments were in very high agreement about the importance of three obstacles (chosen by 90 percent or more): (1) difficulty in securing witnesses, (2) difficulty in obtaining physical evidence, and (3) difficulty in classifying case. Considerably fewer departments (31 to 48 percent) cited lack of cooperation from other police departments or from the family, and competition with other departmental priorities as obstacles

to successful investigation of these cases. There were no significant differences among departments with different characteristics in the proportions choosing these obstacles.

7. Modeling Missing Child/Youth Investigation and Recovery

A series of regression models were examined to explore the effects of variables measuring various organizational characteristics and legal context on the investigative action intensity scores for runaway cases, parental abduction, stranger abduction and unknown missing cases. Sworn size of departments was strongly and inversely associated with the number of investigative actions taken always or usually for some case types. Larger departments took fewer actions in runaway and parental abduction cases. (Because in this analysis it was not possible to control for workload effects which were strongly correlated with size these results should be interpreted cautiously.)

The number of written policy specifications was strongly associated with higher action intensity for runaway and unknown case types, as was the number of officers assigned to missing persons units. It is notable from the modeling of stranger abduction investigative intensity that few variables account for significant variation in numbers of actions taken. Departments with very different characteristics, then, were similar in the way that they responded investigatively to such cases.

The modeling of recovery also produced notable results. For the models of recovery of runaways and parental abductions within 72 hours, few variables accounted for significant variation and the R^2 's were low. One investigative obstacle, difficulty in classifying cases, was inversely associated with closing more than 80 percent of stranger abduction cases within 72 hours. Investigative action intensity was directly associated with closing a higher percent of stranger abduction cases within 72 hours and runaway cases within 30 days. The legal status of parental abduction cases may affect the speed with which such cases are closed; specifically, a felony status for parental abduction can have a positive effect on speed of recovery.

8. Police Handling of Homeless Youth Cases

Slightly more than half of departments nationwide rated the problem with homeless youth in their jurisdictions as not very serious or not serious at all, while 14 percent rated their problem as serious or very serious. There were significant differences in ratings by sworn size such that the situation was reversed for departments in the largest size category. About half of departments with 300 or more sworn officers rated their problem as serious or very serious while 7 percent rated it as not very or not at all serious.

The mail questionnaire asked about the ways police come in contact with homeless youth. The rarest types of contact departments reported were victimizations of youth, hospital or doctor reports, and prostitution arrests; 49 to 86 percent of departments nationally reported no such contacts in 1986. For the other contact types asked about (youth asks officer for help, officer initiates contact to assist youth, shelter or social service agency reports, drug or theft arrests of youth), 42 to 61 percent of departments nationally reported 1-5 contacts while only 2 to 7 percent reported more than 50. Departments rating their homeless youth problem as serious or very serious were substantially more likely than departments rating it as not very/not at all serious to report having some contacts of most types and to report more than five such contacts.

Approximately one-fifth of departments nationally reported having a written policy for dealing with homeless youth. The proportion having written policy increased substantially with sworn force size and was higher for state police agencies than for those of other types.

Departments were asked to scale various actions taken in homeless youth cases (from 1=never to 5=always) for three types of contact: walk-ins, youth victimized, and officer-initiated contacts. Certain actions were always or usually taken by large percentages of departments, including: arranging transportation home, attempting to locate and notify parents, referring cases to juvenile specialists, notifying the youth's home jurisdiction, and checking with state and national crime information systems. Departments were more likely to refer victimized youth than youth

contacted in other ways to juvenile specialists and to local social service agencies. Otherwise there was little difference in the frequency of taking the various actions across the three types of contact, or by size or type of department.

The mail questionnaire asked departments what they considered to be "the greatest obstacles to having youth returned home or placed in some other form of protective care (such as a shelter or group home)." Nearly two-thirds of departments agreed in choosing three of the items listed: age/independence/mobility of youth, running away not a criminal offense, and lack of cooperation from family. Between 44 and 47 percent cited: not enough shelters, statutes that prohibit taking youth into custody, youth has run away from an abusive environment, and youth involved in criminal activities. There was little difference among departments based on sworn force size or type in their perceptions of these obstacles.

Modeling action intensity scores computed for each of the three contact types (walk-ins, youth victimized and officer initiated contact) showed that there was little difference among the contact types in the factors associated with action intensity in police handling of homeless youth cases. Departments that gave juvenile work a high priority and those whose head was elected rather than appointed had higher action intensity scores than others; county departments engaged in fewer actions always or usually than municipal departments. These effects appeared to be somewhat stronger for walk-in cases than for the other two contact types. Departments in states where running away was a status offense or delinquent act engaged in more actions for walk-ins than other departments. Measures of personnel availability included in the model were not associated with action intensity for any contact type. This suggests that the police actions required in returning runaways that have been "found" may make less demand on police than those involved in searching for those reported missing.

B. Implications of Multivariate Findings

The multivariate analyses reported earlier have identified some police organizational/operational factors that are associated with vigorous

investigation of missing child/youth cases and with the rapid closure of these cases. The multivariate findings are the major basis for the implications discussed here because these analytic procedures, by their simultaneous control of multiple sources of variation, increase the likelihood that observed relationships between variables represent true relationships.

Implications discussed here are made under the assumptions that vigorous investigation of missing child and youth cases and their rapid closure are desirable goals. Not all would agree with the desirability of these goals. Few would argue with the desirability of the rapid recovery of missing children or youth, although that is not always a desirable goal. A youth who has run away from seriously abusive or neglectful parents should probably not be returned quickly to the same situation. It is also the case that some would disagree with the goal of vigorous investigation of missing cases. Police sometimes argue that runaway and parental abduction cases are not appropriate police matters, or that such cases ought to be pursued as low priorities given the need to focus on predatory crime, and limitations of police resources. Civil libertarians may argue that runaway youth ought to be allowed their freedom of movement without police interference. In spite of these complexities, however, it will generally be considered that vigorous police investigation and rapid recovery of missing child/youth cases are goals to be sought.

The discussion of implications will refer mainly to three of the four case types analyzed here - runaways, parental abductions and unknown missing cases. Stranger abduction cases will not be emphasized. There are three reasons for this: (1) stranger abduction cases are rare and most departments participating in the survey had none or only a few such cases, (2) there is a widespread consensus that stranger abduction cases should be pursued with all available police resources, and (3) based on the results of modeling investigative actions (Table 4.16) departments differ little from each other in their handling of such cases. Stated in another way, the exercise of police discretion in reacting to stranger abduction cases is limited. Unlike the other case types, there is widespread agreement

that these cases should receive priority attention to bring about the rapid, safe recovery of the victim, and apprehension of the offender.

The multivariate findings suggest there are some police organizational factors that are within the control of departments and are associated with more vigorous investigation and rapid recovery. Based on study findings police administrators might be advised to:

- have a written policy for dealing with missing child/youth cases that gives detailed specifications, and
- have missing person investigative specialists and assign a sufficient number of people to this role.

The recommendations are based firmly in the modeling findings. The number of written policy specifications and the number of officers assigned to missing persons units were found in several models to be associated with more vigorous investigation--especially for runaway and unknown missing cases.

The first recommendation probably does not have major organizational or budgetary implications. Departments can formulate and implement policy modifications easily given the clear authority of police executives. There would be costs but they are likely to be moderate. The content of new policies for investigating missing child and youth cases does not have to involve radical departures from standard police practice, or involve the need to make major new commitments of investigative resources. Policies existent in departments that participated in the current study tended to give guidance on basic matters such as defining case types and the timing of particular investigative actions.

The second recommendation can have more important implications for police organizations and resources. It may require creating a specialized missing person function or unit where none exists currently, and it may involve the commitment of additional resources. Departmental consideration of such changes has to take place in the context of other organizational and fiscal factors, but results of this study suggest such changes can

positively impact investigative intensity for runaway and unknown missing cases and recovery for parental abduction cases.

The relationship of department size to less vigorous investigation of runaway and parental abduction cases has been discussed but it is difficult to infer implications from the findings for two reasons: (1) the absence of a workload measure in models reduces confidence in the finding, i.e., that it is size, itself, that is the relevant characteristic, and (2) department size is largely outside the control of police administrators in any case. The implication of the size findings must await further evidence and analysis.

Multivariate findings showing that agency type and status of the department head are related to investigative action intensity in some models are also difficult to interpret. Relationships are not consistent. For example, county agencies have lower investigative action scores than municipal agencies in runaway cases, but higher investigative action scores in unknown missing cases. Department heads who are elected have lower investigative action scores than appointed heads in unknown missing cases, but there are no differences between elected and appointed heads for the other three case types. It will be necessary to understand what it is about department type and department head status that may be associated with the investigation of missing child and youth cases before the implications of the findings can be specified.

Some legal variables were associated with investigative actions and recovery:

- departments in jurisdictions where running away is an offense investigate runaway cases more intensely; more intense investigation was not associated with recovery within 30 days, but it was associated with having no runaway cases open after 30 days;
- the percent of parental abduction cases closed within 72 hours and 30 days is adversely affected when parental abduction is only a misdemeanor offense;

- departments in jurisdictions where the juvenile status offense age limit is less than 18 are less likely to report runaway cases open for more than 30 days.

These findings suggest that the legal status of runaway and parental abduction case types can affect the investigation and resolution of such cases. These results alone cannot justify "recriminalizing" running away from home or making parental abduction a felony offense. Complex issues are involved. Arguments that runaways ought not be treated as offenders, that the police are not the appropriate agency for dealing with this problem, and other points of view are legitimate points in the consideration of the most appropriate legal status for running away. It is also appropriate to consider carefully how parental abduction cases should be defined legally. There is no question that the rights of custodial and noncustodial parents should be protected, and that children in divided families are especially vulnerable and in need of protection. But it is questionable whether the adversarial and overburdened criminal justice system is the place to deal with most incidents of parental abduction, which are often manifestations of parental conflict and custody dispute. The issue needs serious consideration, and, given the existence of variation between states in the legal status and handling of the problem, there is an opportunity to assess the advantages, disadvantages, and effects of the legal status of parental abduction. The research findings of this study are clear: a felony status for parental abduction appears to result in quicker recovery of the child. The study does not, however, deal with the related issues such as criminal justice resource burden created by the felony status or the effects that this has on family relations.

Finally, investigative action intensity was associated with favorable recovery outcomes in two models - runaway and stranger abduction cases (see Tables 4.21 and 4.23). Aggressive police investigation can apparently shorten the time it takes to recover children and youth who run away or who are abducted by strangers. This effect is notable because it is observed after many other variables are controlled. The finding suggests police should pursue missing cases with vigor, and that if they do so, recovery outcomes will be improved.

C. Strengths and Limitations of Study

The foregoing study is based on a national probability sample of state and local law enforcement agencies in the United States, so the findings are generalizable to the entire nation. Heretofore, studies of police handling of missing child and youth cases were narrow in scope and detail. The responses of the 791 eligible departments that participated in the study (a 75 percent response rate) provide very detailed information about the departments, their organization, and their responses to cases of missing and homeless children and youth. As discussed above, some of the findings have implications for an improved law enforcement response to such cases.

The data and findings are limited in a number of ways. First, the mail questionnaire information was provided by police departments about their own behavior. No direct observation of police responses to cases was included in this first phase of the study. A mail survey approach is also, by its nature, limited. Data were gathered about complex police matters and responses, and it stretches the capacity of a mail survey instrument to capture this complexity. The questionnaires were also completed by only one or a few respondents for each department, so the response range may underestimate the variation in practices within departments. In spite of these limitations, conversations with respondents who called to ask questions about the questionnaire, hundreds of follow-up telephone calls to gather or check data, and examination of the questionnaires themselves leads to the conclusion that respondents were careful and conscientious and provided high quality data.

The mail survey represents only the first of several phases of the study. In Phase II police departments were visited in person to interview administrators, supervisors, investigators, dispatchers and patrol officers for the purpose of understanding police reactions to missing and homeless cases in detail, including the reasons for police actions and inaction. A report by Forst et al. (1988) gives the results of that study phase. A third phase of the study taking place in 1989 will focus on parents and children to learn of the missing episode from their point of view. At the

completion of the study a model police program or programs will be developed for possible adoption by departments.

The mail survey was an important part of the study, but it is only the first of several phases. At the completion of the entire study a comprehensive picture of law enforcement responses to missing children and homeless youth will exist, including the perspectives and experiences of parents and children. Analyses of these wide ranging data will document effective law enforcement responses and ways they may be improved.

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Appendix A

Mail Questionnaire

May, 1987

Dear Sir or Madam:

The Research Triangle Institute of Research Triangle Park, N.C. and the URSA Institute of San Francisco have been directed to study law enforcement policies and practices regarding missing children and homeless youth. We are conducting this research under a Cooperative Agreement from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) of the U.S. Justice Department.

The cases being studied result when children run away from home or are the victims of abduction or accident. The attached questionnaire represents the first phase of this study. The questionnaire asks for information about your department and your policies and procedures for handling missing child or youth cases. Because your department was chosen to represent a number of police departments, it is important that you provide the information requested. All responses are confidential. More information about the survey and instructions for completion of the questionnaire are provided on pages 1 and 2.

The survey results will be available in the Fall of 1987. A written summary of these results will be sent to all departments that respond to the questionnaire.

The information requested in the questionnaire is of particular national importance because little systematic information about the topic exists. We understand you receive numerous requests for information but hope you will invest some of your valuable time to answer the questions asked in the attached questionnaire. Your response by May 29, 1987, will be appreciated.

Sincerely,



James J. Collins, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator

**NATIONAL STUDY OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES POLICIES AND PRACTICES
REGARDING MISSING CHILDREN AND HOMELESS YOUTH**

DEPARTMENTAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Purpose of the study

To learn for the first time in a systematic way about law enforcement agencies' investigative and case management practices currently used in cases of missing or homeless children and youth.

Who Is Conducting the Study

Research Triangle Institute (RTI) of Research Triangle Park, NC, collaborating with the URSA Institute of San Francisco, CA, supported by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the U.S. Department of Justice.

How and Why Your Department Was Selected

Large departments were all selected; small and medium-sized departments were randomly chosen to represent law enforcement agencies across the country.

Confidentiality of Responses

All responses will be confidential. Each department's responses will be entered into a computer along with an identifying number. Questionnaires (which include names) will be kept in a locked file and destroyed when data processing is complete. Data will be reported in statistical tables. No responses will be identified by the department or individual providing them.

Is Completion of the Questionnaire Required by Law

Participation in the survey is completely voluntary. However, since your agency represents a number of agencies, your responses are needed to make the results of the survey meaningful.

What Is the Questionnaire About

The questions are organized into 4 sections:

- A. Missing Child/Youth Cases Reported to the Department—deals with procedures for looking for runaways and other children or youth reported missing.
- B. Contacts with Runaways and Homeless Youth—asks about procedures for handling runaway and homeless youth who are living in your jurisdiction, without a parent or guardian.
- C. Organization of the Department—asks about departmental characteristics such as investigative specialties, and sworn force size.
- D. Record Keeping—deals with how records are kept and the numbers of missing child or youth cases of various kinds investigated by your department in 1986.

Who Should Complete This Questionnaire

The information sought in this questionnaire is factual, or requires an informed judgment, rather than opinions. Therefore, each section of the questionnaire should be completed by the person most knowledgeable about the information being asked for. Space is provided at the end of the questionnaire to enter the name(s) of the person(s) completing this questionnaire.

If You Have Questions

Please call Ms. Ellen Stutts at RTI, (800) 334-8571, toll-free.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The law enforcement agencies being asked to complete this questionnaire differ in a number of ways. The questions are applicable to this variety of agencies in a general way, but it is not possible to make them exactly fit the situation of each department. If the wording of a particular question does not fit your department's situation and you would like to offer an explanation, please enter the number of the question and the explanation in the comments section at the end of the questionnaire. Also add in the space provided for "other" any categories we have left out completely.

Some questions provide a set of answers.

- For questions of this type, read all of the answers and then circle the number in front of the answer you choose. If none of the printed answers exactly applies to your agency, circle the answer that **best** fits your situation.
- Sometimes you will be instructed to *circle all that apply*. For those questions, circle the numbers in front of all the answers you choose.

Some questions ask you to choose the "most important" items from a list and rank them according to how important you think they are.

EXAMPLE: Which of the community relations activities listed below are most important?

Rank up to 5 activities—assign "1" to the most important, "2" to the second most important, etc.

Activities	Priority Ranking
a. Police Athletic League	3
b. Police active in community groups in their spare time	—
c. Talks on results of drug possession and use by uniformed police in schools	4
d. Police live in community where they work	—
e. Chief or Sheriff talks about crime on television	—
f. Use of foot patrols	2
g. Organize community watch groups	1
h. Conduct property identification campaign	—
i. Other (<i>List and rank</i>)	

Talk to community groups about preventing victimization 5

- First read the entire list. If any activities that you would rank among the 5 most important are missing from the list, add them under "Other."
- Choose the 5 (or fewer) activities that you think are most important.
- Rank the 5 (or fewer) activities you have chosen according to how important you think they are—assign "1" to the most important, "2" to the second most important, etc. *Use each number only once.*

For questions that require you to answer in some other way, you will be given instructions with the questions.

DEFINITIONS

Several terms used throughout the questionnaire are defined as follows for purposes of this study:

Child—A person 13 years old or younger.

Youth—A person 14 through 17 years old.

Missing child or youth—A runaway or other person under 18 years old who has been reported missing.

Runaway/homeless youth—Unemancipated youth (14-17 years old) who has left home and is living on his or her own in your jurisdiction without a parent or legal guardian.

A. MISSING CHILD/YOUTH CASES REPORTED TO THE DEPARTMENT

This section asks about cases of missing children (13 years or younger) and youth (14-17 years old) reported to your department. We want to know what would happen in your department, based on your experience with typical cases. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. Has your department investigated any cases of missing children or youth in the last 5 years . . . that is, since spring 1982?

- 01 Yes — Continue with Question 2a.
- 02 No — Go to Section B on page 11.

2a. Does this department make a written report of *all* calls about missing children and youth, some of these calls, or *none* of them?

- 01 All — Continue with Question 2b.
- 02 Some — Continue with Question 2b.
- 03 None — Go to Question 3a.

b. Does this department make a written report of missing children and youth calls *immediately* or is there a *waiting period* (when a written report is made)?

- 01 No waiting period — Go to Question 3a.
- 02 Waiting period — Continue with Question 2c.

c. For what cases is there a waiting period?

- 01 For all missing children and youth calls — Go to Question 3a.
- 02 For missing youth (14 and older) calls only — Go to Question 3a.
- 03 For selected children and selected youth — Continue with Question 2d.
- 04 For only selected youth — Continue with Question 2d.
- 05 For other cases — Continue with Question 2d.

d. What are the department's criteria for determining the waiting period? *Circle all that apply.*

- 01 Age of child or youth
 - 02 Sex of child or youth
 - 03 Other case circumstances—*Specify below.*
-
-

3a. Does this department have a *written* policy for dealing with cases of missing children and youth?

- 01 Yes — Please attach a copy and return with questionnaire. Continue with Question 3b.
- 02 No — Go to Question 4.

b. Which of the following does the written policy include? *Circle all that apply.*

- 01 Waiting period
- 02 Initial investigative procedures
- 03 Criteria for classifying cases
- 04 Followup investigative procedures
- 05 Timing of investigative procedures
- 06 Closeout procedures

4. In missing child/youth cases not solved within 1 or 2 weeks, about how often would the *followup actions* listed below be taken?

For each item enter one of the following codes:

1 = Never 2 = Rarely 3 = Sometimes 4 = Usually 5 = Always

- a. Periodic contact with family _____
- b. Investigate new leads _____
- c. Reinterview witnesses _____
- d. Circulate posters _____
- e. Check with runaway shelters/social service agencies _____
- f. Check with information resources such as locator service _____
- g. Other action(s)—*Specify below.*

5a. Does your department have a time limit on how long missing child/youth cases are kept open?

- 01 Yes — Continue with Question 5b.
- 02 No — Go to Question 6.

b. How long is that period?

_____ days.

6. In closing out cases of *returned* children/youth, how often does your department typically follow the procedures listed below?

For each item enter one of the following codes:

1 = Never 2 = Rarely 3 = Sometimes 4 = Usually 5 = Always

- a. Verify that child/youth has returned _____
- b. Interview the child/youth _____
- c. Obtain medical examination for the child/youth _____
- d. Refer child/youth/family to social service agency for counseling _____
- e. Remove case from information files (e.g., state police, NCIC, NCMEC) _____
- f. Other closeout procedure—*Specify below.*

7. Some cases cannot be classified early in the investigation.

a. Approximately what percentage of missing child/youth cases remain unclassified 24 hours after the report is filed?

_____ % unclassified after 24 hours

b. Approximately what percentage remain unclassified 48 hours after the report is filed?

_____ % unclassified after 48 hours

8a. Does your department have a *department sponsored* child safety program?

- 01 Yes — *Continue with Question 8b.*
- 02 No — *Go to Question 8c.*

b. Which of the following features does this program have? *Circle all that apply.*

- 01 Fingerprinting
- 02 Photographs
- 03 Child abuse prevention
- 04 Other—*Specify below.*

c. Does your department have a child safety program *in cooperation with local business(es) or social agencies?*

- 01 Yes — *Continue with Question 8d.*
- 02 No — *Go to Question 9.*

d. Which of the following features does this program have? *Circle all that apply.*

- 01 Fingerprinting
- 02 Photographs
- 03 Child abuse prevention
- 04 Other—*Specify below.*

9. NOTE: For purposes of this study, the following definitions apply.

Suspected Runaway Case—You have reason to believe that the child or youth reported missing has voluntarily run away from home.

Suspected Parental Abduction—You have reason to believe that the parent has wrongfully taken, kept, or concealed a child/youth reported missing from another parent or legal custodian.

Suspected Stranger Abduction—You have reason to believe that the child or youth was taken, kept, or concealed by a person not known to the child or to his/her parent or legal guardian.

Unknown Missing—A child/youth is missing and the facts of the case are insufficient to determine if the child was abducted, the victim of an accident, or has left home voluntarily.

A. Has your department investigated any cases of reported *runaway* children or youth in the last 5 years . . . that is, since spring 1982?

- 01 Yes
- 02 No

B. Has your department investigated any cases of *parental abduction* of a child or youth in the last 5 years . . . that is, since spring 1982?

- 01 Yes
- 02 No

C. Has your department investigated any cases of *stranger abduction* of a child or youth in the last 5 years . . . that is, since spring 1982?

- 01 Yes
- 02 No

D. Has your department investigated any cases of *unknown missing* children or youth in the last 5 years . . . that is, since spring 1982?

- 01 Yes
- 02 No

NOTE: Questions 10, 11, and 12 have parts labeled to correspond to parts A, B, C and D in Question 9.

Please answer Questions 10, 11, and 12 for each type of case your department has investigated in the last 5 years; that is, each type for which you answered "Yes" in parts 9A, B, C and D above. If you did not investigate a type of case, draw a line through the column for that type. In answering these questions, assume you have enough information to classify all cases (except the "Unknown").

10. What factors are most important in making your department assign a high investigative priority to cases of those types you have investigated in the last 5 years?

These types of cases are defined in Question 9. First read the entire list. If any factors that you would rank among the 5 most important are missing from the list, add them under "Other."

For each type of case your department has investigated in the last 5 years, rank up to 5 factors in order of importance. Assign a "1" to the most important, a "2" to the second most important, etc.

If your department has not investigated a type in 5 years, draw a line down the column. Rank each type of case before going to the next type.

Factors Affecting Investigative Priority	A. Runaways	B. Parental Abduction	C. Stranger Abduction	D. Unknown Missing
a. Child 8 or younger	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. 9-13 year-old child	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. Gender	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. Child/youth has condition requiring prescription medication	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. Child/youth mentally handicapped or disabled	_____	_____	_____	_____
f. Child/youth gone 5 hours or less	_____	_____	_____	_____
g. Child/youth gone 24-48 hours	_____	_____	_____	_____
h. Child/youth gone over 48 hours	_____	_____	_____	_____
i. Child/youth has not run away before	_____	_____	_____	_____
j. Child/youth has run away once before	_____	_____	_____	_____
k. Reporting parent is very upset	_____	_____	_____	_____
l. You have eyewitness account	_____	_____	_____	_____
m. You have physical evidence	_____	_____	_____	_____
n. Family history of abusing child/youth	_____	_____	_____	_____
o. Child/youth in danger of sexual exploitation	_____	_____	_____	_____
p. Reporting parent has legal custody	_____	_____	_____	_____
q. Reporting parent has no formal custody order	_____	_____	_____	_____
r. Other—List below and rank.				
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

11. How often would each of the following actions typically be taken during the first week or two of the investigation for each type of case your department has investigated in the last 5 years?

These types of cases are defined in Question 9. First read the entire list. If any actions that you would consider important are missing from the list, add them under "Other."

For each type of case your department has investigated in the last 5 years, enter one of the following codes for each action:

- 1 = Never 2 = Rarely 3 = Sometimes 4 = Usually 5 = Always

If your department has not investigated a type, draw a line down the column. Complete each type of case before going to the next type.

Investigative Actions	A. Runaways	B. Parental Abduction	C. Stranger Abduction	D. Unknown Missing
a. Take report only on the phone	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. Send a car to the scene	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. Interview parents or guardian in person	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. Search home of child/youth	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. Get description of child/youth	_____	_____	_____	_____
f. Get photograph of child/youth, if available	_____	_____	_____	_____
g. Call for search of area	_____	_____	_____	_____
h. Issue all points bulletin	_____	_____	_____	_____
i. Set up command post	_____	_____	_____	_____
j. Call in investigative specialists	_____	_____	_____	_____
k. Gather physical evidence	_____	_____	_____	_____
l. Question available suspect(s)	_____	_____	_____	_____
m. Notify surrounding jurisdictions (e.g., by teletype)	_____	_____	_____	_____
n. Interview available neighbors	_____	_____	_____	_____
o. Interview child's friends/siblings (if any)	_____	_____	_____	_____
p. Interview other available relatives	_____	_____	_____	_____
q. Interview school personnel	_____	_____	_____	_____
r. Check hospitals	_____	_____	_____	_____
s. Check runaway shelter(s)/social service agencies	_____	_____	_____	_____
t. Check known juvenile haunts	_____	_____	_____	_____
u. Report to state missing persons file	_____	_____	_____	_____
v. Enter report into NCIC missing persons file	_____	_____	_____	_____
w. Report case to National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)	_____	_____	_____	_____
x. Report to FBI	_____	_____	_____	_____
y. Circulate child/youth's photo to law enforcement agencies	_____	_____	_____	_____
z. Get child/youth's dental records	_____	_____	_____	_____
aa. Give copy of incident report to parent/guardian	_____	_____	_____	_____
bb. Obtain search warrant/subpoena to examine suspect's record	_____	_____	_____	_____
cc. Maintain cases as open until child/youth returned	_____	_____	_____	_____
dd. Other—List below	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

12. What do you consider to be the greatest obstacles to successful investigation of each type of case your department has investigated in the last 5 years—that is, investigation that results in recovery and return of the child or youth?

These types of cases are defined in Question 9. First read the entire list. If any activities that you would rank among the 5 most important are missing from the list, add them under "Other."

For each type of case your department has investigated in the last 5 years, rank up to 5 obstacles. Assign a "1" to the greatest obstacle, a "2" to the second greatest obstacle, etc.

If your department has not investigated a type in the past 5 years, draw a line down the column.

A. RUNAWAYS:

Obstacles to Successful Investigation	Ranking
a. Running away not a criminal offense	_____
b. Lack of family cooperation	_____
c. Age/independence/mobility of child/youth	_____
d. Lack of cooperation from other jurisdictions	_____
e. Difficulty of knowing whether child or youth is voluntarily absent—difficulty in classifying case	_____
f. Inadequate information available to locate children or youth outside jurisdiction	_____
g. Lack of police resources	_____
h. Lack of cooperation from social service agencies	_____
i. Parental discretion—lack of parental cooperation	_____
j. Low departmental priority—not important police matter	_____
k. Lack of judicial cooperation	_____
l. Inability to detain youth	_____
m. Other—List below and rank.	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

12. (Continued)

B. PARENTAL ABDUCTION:

Obstacles to Successful Investigation	Ranking
a. Lack of family cooperation	_____
b. Lack of cooperation from other law enforcement agencies	_____
c. Statutes (custody laws)	_____
d. Lack of cooperation from prosecutor's office in your state	_____
e. Lack of cooperation from prosecutor's office in other state	_____
f. Lack of judicial cooperation	_____
g. Difficulty verifying custody	_____
h. Low department priority—not important police matter	_____
i. Lack of cooperation from international authorities	_____
j. Other— <i>List below and rank.</i>	
_____	_____
_____	_____

C. STRANGER ABDUCTION:

Obstacles to Successful Investigation	Ranking
a. Difficulty in classifying case—insufficient information	_____
b. Difficulty in securing witnesses	_____
c. Difficulty in obtaining physical evidence	_____
d. Lack of cooperation from family	_____
e. Lack of cooperation from other law enforcement agencies	_____
f. NCIC information not adequate—or access difficult	
g. Other departmental priorities compete for personnel or resources	_____
h. Other— <i>List below and rank.</i>	
_____	_____
_____	_____

B. CONTACTS WITH RUNAWAYS AND HOMELESS YOUTH

The previous section dealt with procedures for looking for runaways and other children/youth **reported missing**. This section asks about procedures for handling unemancipated runaway and homeless youth (14-17 years old) who are **living on their own in your jurisdiction**—without a parent or guardian.

13. Does your department ever handle cases involving runaways or homeless youth living on their own?

01 Yes — Continue with Question 14a.

02 No — Go to Section C on page 15.

14a. Following is a list of ways police come in contact with runaways/homeless youth. How many of each of these types of contact did your department have in 1986?

- Add "others" to the list if appropriate.
- Enter the numbers of contacts in 1986 for the remaining types
- If you are unsure of a number, give your best estimate.

a. Youth asks officer for help _____

b. Officer initiates contacts to assist youth _____

c. Shelter or social service agency reports _____

d. Hospital or doctor reports _____

e. Victimitizations of youth _____

f. Prostitution arrests of youth _____

g. Drug arrests of youth _____

h. Theft arrests of youth _____

i. Other kinds of arrests—List below and give number.

_____ _____

_____ _____

j. Other contacts—List below and give number.

_____ _____

_____ _____

b. Are the figures in part a. above from records or are they estimates?

01 From records

02 Estimates

03 Some from records, some estimates

15a. Do you use public or private programs to assist in returning runaways/homeless youth home?

- 01 Yes — Continue with Question 15b.
- 02 No — Go to Question 16.

b. Which do you use? Circle all that apply.

- 01 Trailways - Home Free (tickets issued in officer's name)
- 02 Airline ticket price reductions
- 03 Runaway Hotlines
- 04 Interstate Compact
- 05 Other National Program(s)—Specify below.

- 06 Departmental Outreach activities
- 07 Other Local Program(s)—Specify below.

16. What do you consider to be the greatest obstacles to having youth returned home or placed in some other form of protective care (such as a shelter or group home)?

Rank up to 5 factors in order of importance. Assign a "1" to the most important, a "2" to the second most important, etc.

- a. Running away not a criminal offense _____
- b. Age/independence/mobility of youth _____
- c. Too much paperwork involved _____
- d. Youth involved in criminal activities _____

- e. Statutes that prohibit taking youth into custody _____
- f. Lack of cooperation from family _____
- g. Lack of cooperation from other law enforcement agencies _____
- h. Not enough shelters _____

- i. Lack of cooperation from social service agencies _____
- j. Special problems handling youth from outside jurisdiction _____
- k. Low priority in department (not an important police matter) _____
- l. Youth has run away from an abusive environmental family situation _____

m. Other—List below and rank.

17. Below is a list of actions police may take to deal with runaways or homeless youth. How often does your department use the following actions in dealing with each of the three following types?

- A. **Walk-ins**—may include youth who come to police for assistance (to a station house or on the street) and referrals to police; e.g., from social agencies or runaway programs.
- B. **Youth victimized**—may include referrals to police; e.g., from hospitals, doctors, or runaway programs.
- C. **Officer initiated assistance**—may include contacts where a youth is taken into custody for a minor offense and ultimately assisted; **do not include arrests for crimes.**

For each type of case your department has dealt with in the last 5 years, enter one of the following codes:

1 = Never 2 = Rarely 3 = Sometimes 4 = Usually 5 = Always

If your department has not dealt with a case type in the past 5 years, draw a line down the column.

If an action is not applicable or possible for your department, please enter "0" in the appropriate column.

Complete one type of case before going to the next type.

Actions	A. Walk-ins	B. Youth Victimized	C. Officer Initiated Assistance
a. Arrange transportation home	_____	_____	_____
b. Attempt to locate and notify parents	_____	_____	_____
c. Refer case to juvenile division or specialists employed by department	_____	_____	_____
d. Refer case to local social service agencies, runaway shelters, etc.	_____	_____	_____
e. Notify home jurisdiction	_____	_____	_____
f. Detain juvenile in secure facility	_____	_____	_____
g. Detain juvenile in nonsecure facility	_____	_____	_____
h. Check with State Crime Information Center (SCIC) or state police	_____	_____	_____
i. Check with state clearinghouse for missing children	_____	_____	_____
j. Check National Crime Information Center's (NCIC) Missing Person File	_____	_____	_____
k. Check with National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)	_____	_____	_____
l. None of the activities listed above	_____	_____	_____
m. Other—Specify below.	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

18. In your opinion, how serious is the runaway/homeless youth problem in your jurisdiction?

- 01 Very serious
- 02 Serious
- 03 Moderate
- 04 Not very serious
- 05 Not serious at all

19. Does this department have a written policy for dealing with cases of runaway/homeless youth?

- 01 Yes — Please attach a copy and return with questionnaire. Continue with Question 20.
- 02 No — Continue with Question 20.

20. Do officers who are juvenile specialists have responsibility for investigating missing child/youth cases (asked about in Section A) and/or cases involving runaway/homeless youth (asked about in this section)?

- 01 Yes — Questions 21-23 should be answered by such a juvenile specialist.
- 02 No — Go to Section C on page 15.
- 03 No juvenile specialists — Go to Section C on page 15.

21. Thinking about the type of work juvenile officers do from day to day, how challenging an assignment is juvenile work?

On a scale of 1 to 9 where 1 means "not at all challenging" and 9 means "very challenging," circle one number to rate how challenging a juvenile assignment is.

Not At All Challenging									Very Challenging
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	

22. Thinking about the chances for promotion juvenile officers have in this department, how good an assignment is juvenile work?

Very Bad									Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	

23. How high a priority does this department give juvenile work, compared to the other kinds of work officers do (patrol, felony investigation, vice, etc.)?

Very Low									Very High
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	

C. ORGANIZATION OF THE DEPARTMENT

24. Does your department have a separate juvenile unit?

01 Yes — Continue with Question 25a.

02 No — Go to Question 26.

25a. What larger division of the agency is your juvenile unit part of? Circle one.

00 Not part of a larger division

01 Crime Prevention/Community Relations

02 Investigation

03 Other—Specify below.

b. What types of operations does the juvenile unit conduct? Circle all that apply.

01 Investigation of law violations by juveniles

02 Investigation of law violations in which juveniles are victims

03 Intelligence gathering (e.g., about gang activities or drug distribution)

04 Liaison with juvenile court

05 Liaison with social service agencies

06 Referral to social service agencies

07 Liaison with schools; prevention programs in schools

08 Intake screening/diversion

09 Other—Specify below.

26. Does your agency have juvenile specialists (other than those in a separate juvenile unit)?

01 Yes — Continue with Question 27.

02 No — Go to Question 30.

27. What types of operations do your juvenile specialists conduct? Circle all that apply.

01 Investigation of law violations by juveniles

02 Investigation of law violations in which juveniles are victims

03 Intelligence gathering (e.g., about gang activities or drug distribution)

04 Liaison with juvenile court

05 Liaison with social service agencies

06 Referral to social service agencies

07 Liaison with schools; prevention programs in schools

08 Intake screening/diversion

09 Other—Specify below.

28. Do your juvenile officers receive formal training (other than in-service training) related to working with juveniles?

- 01 Yes — Continue with Question 29.
- 02 No — Go to Question 30.

29. What subjects have any current juvenile specialists had formal training in? Circle all that apply.

- 01 Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (Glenco, GA) in missing child investigation
 - 02 Other formal training in missing child investigation or runaways
 - 03 Other investigative procedures (e.g., drug detection, gang intervention)
 - 04 Juvenile statutes/law
 - 05 Adolescent psychology, family psychology
 - 06 Child abuse detection, investigation
 - 07 F.B.I. Academy child pornography course
 - 08 Social services, runaway programs available locally
 - 09 Other—Specify below.
-
-

30. What (other) formal units (such as divisions, bureaus, etc.) does this department have? Circle all that apply.

- 00 No specialized units — Go to Question 31a.
 - 01 Patrol
 - 02 Traffic
 - 03 Investigative (homicide, vice, etc.)
 - 04 Dispatching/Communications
 - 05 Community Relations/Crime Prevention
 - 06 Training
 - 07 Planning/Research
 - 08 Forensics/Evidence Processing
 - 09 Administration
 - 10 Crime Analysis
 - 22 Other—Specify below.
-
-

Note: Please return with the questionnaire copies of the organizational charts for each type of unit you circled above.

31a. Are investigations of missing child or youth cases handled by a separate unit or function of the department?

- 01 Yes — Continue with Question 31b.
- 02 No — Go to Question 32.

b. What unit or function is that? Circle all that apply.

- 01 Missing juvenile unit
- 02 Missing person unit
- 03 Juvenile unit
- 04 Other—Specify below.

32. Does this department have multiple locations such as precinct stations, substations, and/or district headquarters?

- 01 Yes — Continue with Question 33a.
- 02 No — Go to Question 34.

33a. How many stations and substations are there—including headquarters?

_____ stations and substations (including headquarters)

b. Where are the detectives who are responsible for missing child/youth investigations located?

- 01 All located at precinct stations or substations
- 02 Some at headquarters, some at substations
- 03 All located at headquarters

34. What investigative specialties are there in this department? (These specialties do not have to be housed in a specialized unit.) Circle all that apply.

- 00 None
- 01 Burglary
- 02 Homicide
- 03 Juvenile
- 04 Arson
- 05 Fraud/White Collar
- 06 Crimes Against Persons
- 07 Crimes Against Property
- 08 Vice/Narcotics
- 09 Missing Persons
- 10 Other—Specify below.

35a. Does this department have a *computer-assisted* dispatch system?

- 01 Yes
- 02 No

b. Does this department use Differential Police Response when screening citizen calls for service?

- 01 Yes — *Please return a copy of the manual or form used when screening calls. Continue with Question 35c.*
- 02 No — *Continue with Question 35c.*

c. Does your department have a tactical crime analysis unit?

- 01 Yes
- 02 No

36. Is the Department Head (Chief, Sheriff, Director, etc.) an elected, appointed, or civil service position?

- 01 Elected
- 02 Appointed
- 03 Civil Service

37. At the present time, how many full-time sworn officers (including supervisory personnel) do you have in the entire department?

_____ full-time sworn officers

38. How many full-time sworn officers do you have at the present time in each of the categories listed below? If your department does not formally assign officers in the categories, please try to provide an estimate of the full-time equivalent officer commitment to each function.

	None	1-5	6-10	11-25	26-49	50-99	100 or more
a. Assigned to Patrol Operations	01 . . .	02 . . .	03	04	05	06	07
b. Investigation	01 . . .	02 . . .	03	04	05	06	07
c. Community Relations	01 . . .	02 . . .	03	04	05	06	07
d. Juvenile	01 . . .	02 . . .	03	04	05	06	07
e. Missing Persons	01 . . .	02 . . .	03	04	05	06	07

D. RECORD KEEPING

39. Column (1) below lists several categories (a-f) used in some departments to classify missing child and youth reports. Please circle the letter for each of the categories that your department uses. Add any categories that your department uses that are not listed in a-f under "g. Other:"

For each category you circle, enter the information requested in columns (2) through (4) from records where possible. Otherwise, please give your best estimate. In column (5) circle one number to indicate whether the entries are estimates or are from records.

Information is requested for the calendar year 1986. Figures entered in columns (3) and (4) should be percentages of the total number reported in column (2).

(1) Classification Category	(2) Total Number Reported (1986)	(3) % Closed Within 72 Hours (1986)	(4) % Still Open After 30 Days (1986)	(5) These Numbers Are from: Circle one	
				Estimates	Records
a. Total Missing Juvenile Cases: Person less than 18 years old reported missing.	_____	_____	_____	01	02
b. Runaways: Children and youths who have (voluntarily) run away from home.	_____	_____	_____	01	02
c. Parental Kidnappings: A parent has wrongfully taken, kept, or concealed a missing child/youth from another parent or legal custodian.	_____	_____	_____	01	02
d. Abductions by Known Individuals: A person known to the child/youth or to the parent/guardian has wrongfully taken, kept or concealed a missing child/youth.	_____	_____	_____	01	02
e. Stranger Abductions: A child/youth was taken, kept, or concealed by a person not known to him/her and not known to his/her parent or legal custodian.	_____	_____	_____	01	02
f. Unknown Missing: A child/youth is missing and the facts of the case are insufficient to determine if the child was abducted, the victim of an accident, or has left home voluntarily.	_____	_____	_____	01	02
g. Other—List and provide information.					
_____	_____	_____	_____	01	02
_____	_____	_____	_____	01	02
_____	_____	_____	_____	01	02

40. For each type of information listed below, please indicate whether your department keeps that information according to the ways shown in the column headings.

Circle all that apply for each type of information listed.

Type of Information	Hard Copy Case Files	Computer	Periodic Departmental Reports	Do Not Keep
a. Primary offense type (based on UCR categories)	01	02	03	00
b. Additional (secondary) offense types (based on UCR categories)	01	02	03	00
c. Offense status (e.g., completed/attempted/unfounded)	01	02	03	00
d. Victim characteristics (age, sex, race)	01	02	03	00
e. Offender/suspect characteristics	01	02	03	00
f. Relationship of victim to offender	01	02	03	00
g. Clearance status	01	02	03	00

41. Changes are being considered in the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) System. One change is the use of *Incident Based Reporting* for some departments. Incident based reporting would permit the official counting of multiple offenses in a single case or other elements of the incident.

a. Would your department have the information required to participate in an *Incident Based Reporting System*?

- Yes — Continue with Question 41b.
- 02 No — Go to Question 42a.
- 03 Don't know — Go to Question 42a.

b. Would you participate in an Incident Based Reporting System if requested?

- 01 Yes
- 02 No
- 03 Maybe

42a. Does your current record keeping system allow you to count violent crime incidents (homicide, sexual assault, etc.) that included an abduction?

- 01 Yes — Continue with Question 42b.
- 02 No — Go to Question 43.

b. How many violent crime incidents were reported to you in 1986 that included abduction of a child/youth?

_____ violent incidents included abduction of child/youth in 1986.

43. How many calls for service of any kind did your department receive altogether in 1986?

_____ total calls for service of any kind in 1986

44. How many calls resulted in patrol dispatch in 1986?

_____ calls resulted in patrols dispatched in 1986

45. How many total arrests were made by your department in 1986?

_____ total arrests made by department in 1986

46. How many officially recorded police contacts were made with juveniles in 1986, where the juvenile was suspected of a criminal offense?

_____ officially recorded contacts with juvenile criminal suspects in 1986

47a. Does your department keep records on incidents where juveniles are taken into custody for status offenses—that is, incidents that would not be crimes if committed by persons over 18?

01 Yes — Continue with Question 47b.

02 No — Go to Question 48.

b. What such incidents does your department keep records on? Circle all that apply.

01 Running away

02 Curfew violation

03 Liquor law violations

04 Habitual truancy

05 Incurability

06 Juvenile consensual sex offenses

07 Other—Specify below.

c. What kinds of information do you keep on file in reports of such incidents? Circle all that apply.

01 Offender characteristics (age, sex, race/ethnicity)

02 Resident status (resident/nonresident)

03 Offense/reason for contact

04 Additional offense(s)/reason(s) for contact

05 Person/agency referred to

06 Type of detention/confinement

07 Reason for detention/confinement

08 Person/agency released to

09 Other—Specify below.

48. Please send copies of your department's written policies regarding missing children and runaway/homeless youth with this questionnaire. It would also be helpful if you would include copies of blank forms pertaining to these types of cases. We have found in other studies that such information is useful for coding and interpreting responses correctly.

Please circle the type of written materials and forms you are returning with this questionnaire.

- 01 General orders pertaining to missing person cases
- 02 Other written policy pertaining to missing person cases; e.g., standard operating procedural manual(s)
- 03 Any (other) general orders pertaining to runaways
- 04 Any (other) written policy pertaining to runaways
- 05 Incident/arrest report form(s)
- 06 Juvenile contact report form(s)
- 07 Training handbooks
- 08 Computer coding forms, codes
- 09 Manual or forms(s) used when screening calls for service for police differential responses
- 10 Organizational chart(s)

49. Please indicate the name, title, and telephone number of the person(s) who completed this questionnaire, together with the section(s) and/or question(s) completed.

Information Supplied by:	Section(s)/Question(s) Answered:
(1) Name: _____	_____
Title: _____	_____
Phone: () _____	_____
(2) Name: _____	_____
Title: _____	_____
Phone: () _____	_____
(3) Name: _____	_____
Title: _____	_____
Phone: () _____	_____

Thank you for your time and effort in cooperating in this survey. Please enter any comments you may have in the space provided below. If additional space is needed for comments, continue on a separate piece of paper.

COMMENTS: _____

Appendix B

Mail Questionnaire Editing Specifications

Step 1e (fail edit)

Check to see that one and only one answer for question 1 is circled.

Problem 1: Neither or both answers have been circled. Check question 9A-D to see if they have been answered. If the answers to any of 9A-D is yes, circle code 01 in question 1. If all of the answers to 9A-D are no, circle code 02 in question 1. If 9A-D is blank, complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 2e (fail edit)

Check to see that one and only one answer is circled for question 2.

Problem 1: More than one answer has been circled. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Problem 2: Neither answer has been circled. Check question 1 to see if the question should have been skipped. If not, complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 3e (fail edit)

Check question 2b to see that one and only one answer is circled.

Problem 1: Both answers have been circled. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Problem 2: Neither answer has been circled. Check questions 1 and 2a to see if the question should be skipped. If not, or if you are not sure, complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 4c

Check question 2d to see if there is an entry for code 03. If so, code the entry.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 5e

Check question 4 to verify that all responses are from 1 to 5.

Problem 1: A response is out of range. Cross through the entry and enter 95 for bad data.

Step 6e

Check question 4 to see if there is an entry for code g, "other action(s)." If nothing is entered, go to Step 7e. If anything is entered, check to see if a code (1-5) has been assigned.

Problem 1: There is an entry but no code has been assigned. Code the written information as bad data (95) in the left hand column next to the entry.

Step 6c

If there is an "other action" entry in question 4 and a code (1-5) has been assigned for that action, code the action.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 7e

Verify that the response for question 5b is in days. Code any entry greater than 900 as 900.

Problem 1: The answer is blank. Code 98 for missing data unless question 5a is no.

Problem 2: The response is something other than days. Convert the answer as follows: for weeks, multiply by 7, for months, multiply by 30; for years, multiply by 365. If the response is "until they are no longer a juvenile", or "adult status" code as 901. If the response is "no time limit" or "as long as it takes," then the answer to 5a should be changed to 02.

Step 8e (fail edit)

Check question 6 to see if codes from 1-5 have been assigned for items a-e.

Problem 1: No codes have been assigned. Complete an Editing Problem Report Form.

Problem 2: Some items have been assigned codes but some have not. If three or more items have been answered, code the blank answers as 98. Document on an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Problem 3: A response is less than 1 or greater than 5. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 9e

Check question 6 to see if there is an entry in item f, "other closeout procedure." If nothing is entered, continue to Step 9e. If anything is entered, check to see if a number has been assigned.

Problem 1: An entry has been made but there is no number assigned. Code the written information as bad data (95).

Step 9c

If there is an "other closeout procedure" entered in question 6 and a number is assigned, code the entry.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 10e

Check question 7a-b to see if there are responses for each.

Problem 1: Written comments indicate that the agency does not classify cases. Code the answer 993 in the left hand margin and draw a single line through the written comments.

Problem 2: The response is less than 1%. Code as 1%.

Problem 3: Nothing has been entered. Code 998.

Step 11c

Check question 8b to see if anything has been entered under "other." If so, code the response.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 12c

Check question 8d to see if anything has been entered under "other." If so, code the response.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 13e (fail edit)

Check question 10 to see if all four columns either have at least one response or there is a line drawn through the column.

Problem 1: A column is blank. Check questions 9A-D to see if the agency has investigated that type of case. If not, draw a line through the column. If they have investigated that type of case, (code 01 - yes is circled) complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 14e (fail edit)

Check question 10 to see that each column has up to ten factors ranked with each number used only once.

Problem 1: More than ten factors are ranked. As long as each number is only used once, up to ten are acceptable. Cross out any over 10.

Problem 2: Numbers have been used more than once per column. Complete an Edit Problem Reporting Form.

Problem 3: Numbers which have been used are not in numerical order (e.g., a 2 and 3 have been entered but no 1). Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 15e

Review question 10 to see if anything has been written in item r, "other". If not, go to Step 16e. If so, check, to see if a ranking has been assigned.

Problem 1: Something has been entered but no ranking has been given. Cross through the response and code the response 95.

Step 15c

Code the answer in item r, "other" in question 10.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 16e (fail edit)

Verify that question 11 has responses for each of the categories a-cc in each column and that these responses are between 1 and 5, or that there is a line drawn through the entire column.

Problem 1: An entire column is blank. Check questions 9A-D to see if the agency has investigated that type of case. If not, draw a line through the column. If they have investigated that kind of case, complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Problem 2: Some categories have a response in the column and some are blank. If at least 11 categories have been answered per column, continue to the next step. If less than 11 categories have been answered per column, complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Problem 3: A response is not between 1 and 5. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 17e

In question 11, check to see if an entry has been entered in item dd, "other". If not, go to Step 18e. If so, check to see if a number has been assigned.

Problem 1: A response has been entered but no code has been assigned. Cross through the response and code the answer 95.

Step 17c

Code the response in item dd, "other" in question 11.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 18e (fail edit)

Check question 12 to see if categories A-C either have a line drawn through the ranking column or there is at least one item ranked for each type of missing child case.

Problem 1: A column is blank. Check question 9 A-C to see if the agency has investigated a case of this type. If they have not investigated one, draw a line through the column. If they have investigated a case of this type, complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 19e (fail edit)

Check question 12 to see that each column has up to ten obstacles ranked with each number used only once.

Problem 1: More than ten obstacles are ranked. As long as each number is used only once, up to 10 are acceptable. Cross out any over 10.

Problem 2: Numbers have been used more than once per column. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Problem 3: Numbers which have been used are not in numerical order (e.g., a 2 and 3 have been entered but no 1). Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 20e

In question 12, check to see if there is an entry in item m (runaways), j (parental abduction), or h (stranger abduction) "other". If not, go to Step 21e. If so, check to see if a number has been entered.

Problem 1: There is an entry but no code has been assigned. Cross through the entry and code the answer 95.

Step 20c

Code the response in the "other" categories in question 12.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 21e (fail edit)

Check question 14a to see if a number has been entered in at least one of the categories a-h.

Problem 1: Percentages have been entered. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Problem 2: The entire question is blank. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Problem 3: A mark other than a number (such as a check) was used. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 22e

In question 14a, check to see if there is an entry for items i or j "other". If not, go to Step 23e. If so, check to see if a code has been assigned.

Problem 1: There is an entry but no code has been assigned. Cross through the entry and code the answer 95.

Step 22c

Code the response in items i and j "other" in question 14a.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 23e

Look at question 15b to see if there is an entry in items 05 and 07 "other". If so, code the responses.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 24e

In question 16, check to see if there is an entry in item m "other" and a rank has been assigned. If nothing is entered, skip to Step 25e.

Problem 1: A response is entered but not ranked. Cross through the response and code the answer 95.

Step 24c

Code the response in item m "other" for question 16.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 25e (fail edit)

Check question 17 to see if a number between 0 and 5 has been entered for a-1 in all three categories or a line has been drawn through the column.

Problem 1: An entire column is blank. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Problem 2: Individual responses in a column are missing. If at least seven categories per column have been answered, code the missing information 0. If less than seven categories per column have been answered, complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Problem 3: A response is out of range (greater than 5). If at least seven categories per column are correctly answered, draw a single line through the out of range response and write in 95 to the left of the crossed out entry. If less than seven categories per column have been answered correctly, complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 26e

In question 17, check to see if there is an entry for item m "other" and that response has a number entered. If nothing is entered, go to Step 27e.

Problem 1: There is an entry but no code has been assigned. Cross through the response and code the answer 95.

Step 26c

Code the response entered for item m "other" in question 17.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 27e

Check questions 21-23 to see that only one answer has been circled for each.

Problem 1: The answer is blank. Go to next step.

Problem 2: A circle falls between two numbers. Circle the higher number.

Step 28c

Check question 25a to see if there is an entry for the category "other." Code the response.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 29c

Check question 25b to see if there is an entry for the category "other." Code the response.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 30c

Check question 27 to see if there is an entry for item 09 "other." Code the response.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 31c

Check question 29 to see if there is an entry for item 09 "other." Code the response.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 32c

Check question 30 to see if there is an entry for item 22 "other." Code the response.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 33c

Check question 31b to see if there is an entry for item 04 "other." Code the response.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 34c

Check question 34 to see if there is an entry for item 10 "other." Code the response.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 35e (fail edit)

Check question 38 to verify that each item (a-e) has one and only one answer.

Problem 1: The entire question is blank. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Problem 2: One category is blank. If up to two are blank, code those categories 01. If more than two are blank, complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Problem 3: More than one response has been circled for a category. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 36e (fail edit)

Check question 39 to see if there is an entry for categories a-f in columns 2, 3, and 5.

Problem 1: Data is missing from these columns. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 37e (fail edit)

In question 39, check column 3 to see that the response doesn't exceed 100.

Problem 1: An entry exceeds 100. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 38e

Check item g "other" in question 39 to see if an entry has been made. If so, there should be responses entered in columns 2, 3, and 5. If there is no entry in item g "other", skip to Step 37c.

Step 38c

Code the response in item g "other" for question 39.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 39c

Check question 47b to see if an entry has been made in the "other" category. Code the response.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Step 40c

Check question 47c to see if an entry has been made in the "other" category. Code the response.

Problem 1: No previously established codes apply. Complete an Editing Problem Reporting Form.

Appendix C

Legal Context Variables

Code Sheet, Selected Frequencies and Tables

Appendix C

STATUTORY INFORMATION CODE SHEET
Note: Variable name in parenthesis.

STATE:

1. What is the statutory age at which young people become accountable to the adult justice system in your state? (SAGE)

2. Does the statutory definition of status offense or delinquency include running away? (RUNAWAY)

- 01 Yes
02 Yes, with qualifications
03 No

3. Are certain actions legally mandated for missing child or youth cases in your state?

- 01 Yes
02 No

4. What actions are legally required? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.

- 01 take written report (AREPRT)
02 conduct investigation (AINVEST)
03 no waiting period for police action (APERIOD)
04 report to state information system (ASTATE)
05 report to National Crime Information Center (ANATNL)
06 notify on-duty officers in jurisdiction (AONDUTY)

- 07 obtain dental records at some point (ADENTAL)
 - 08 notify parents of certain information during investigation (APARNTS)

 - 10 specifies certain actions for non-police personnel (ANONPOL)
-

5. How many actions are legally mandated for police by your state? Count the number circled above, excluding 10. (ACTCNT)

6. Has an information clearinghouse or state information system been established in your state? (INFORM)

- 01 Yes
- 02 No

7. Is there a custodial interference law in your state? (LAW)

- 01 Yes
- 02 No

8. How is the offense classified? (CLASS)

- 01 Felony
- 02 Misdemeanor
- 03 Both

9. Does the offense classification change with interstate flight? (CHANGE)

- 01 Yes
- 02 No

10. Elements of Offense. CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.

- 01 Violation of court order required (COURT)
- 02 Prohibits taking from lawful custody (CUSTODY)
- 03 Prohibits taking without legal right (RIGHT)

11. What is the age limit for parental kidnapping? (LIMIT)

__ (2 digits)

12. Other elements of offense. CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.

- 01 Protects visitation rights (VISIT)
- 02 Applies to joint custody (JOINT)
- 03 Applies to agents (AGENTS)
- 04 Applies to any person (ANY)

13. Defenses to the offense. CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.

- 01 Return child (RETURN)
- 02 Teenager leaves on own instigation (OWN)
- 03 Protect child from imminent danger (DANGER)

14. Does statute call for reimbursement of victims' expenses? (EXPENSES)

- 01 Yes
- 02 No

LEGAL CONTEXT VARIABLES: SELECTED FREQUENCIES

1. What is the statutory age at which young people become accountable to the adult justice system in your state?

<u>Age</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
16	3	6.0
17	7	14.0
18	39	78.0
19	1	2.0
	<u>50</u>	

2. Does statutory definition of status offense or delinquency include running away?

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	29	60.0
No	<u>20</u>	<u>40.0</u>
	49	100.0

3. Are certain actions legally mandated for missing child or youth cases in your state?

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	28	57.2
No	<u>21</u>	<u>42.8</u>
	49	100.0

4. What actions are legally required?

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Take written report	10	35.7
Conduct investigation	14	50.0
No waiting period	15	53.6
Report to state information system	23	82.1
Report to NCIC	16	57.1
Notify on-duty officers	8	28.6
Obtain dental records at some point	8	28.6
Notify parents of progress	4	14.3

5. Has an information clearinghouse or state information system been established in your state?

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	29	59.2
No	<u>20</u>	<u>40.8</u>
	49	100.0

6. How is the offense of parental kidnapping defined?

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Exclusively felony	18	36.0
Exclusively misdemeanor	3	6.0
Both felony and misdemeanor	28	56.0
Not defined as an offense	<u>1</u>	<u>2.0</u>
	50	100.0

7. Elements of offense.
(language from statutes)

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Prohibits taking from lawful custody	25	51.0
Violation of court order required	17	34.7
Prohibits taking without legal right	25	51.0

Table C.1. Effects of Statutory Mandates on Existence of Written Policies and Case Intake Procedures: All Departments

Statute Related to Missing Children	Yes	No
Statute Related to Missing Children Exists	<u>Policy Existence of Written</u>	
Yes	26.6	73.4
No	26.7	73.3
Statute Requires Taking Written Report	<u>Cases in Which Department Takes Written Report</u>	
Yes	87.0	13.0
No	88.5	11.5
Statute Prohibits Waiting Period	<u>No Waiting Period</u>	<u>Waiting Period</u>
Yes	94.7	5.3
No	88.5	11.5

Table C.2. Statutory Classification of Parental Kidnapping Offense and Department Size and Type by Action Intensity

Offense Classification	Number of Actions Taken Always or Usually			
	1-10	11-15	16-20	21-28
All Departments				
Felony	4.5	52.9	30.2	12.4
Misdemeanor	6.1	36.6	39.2	18.0 ^a
Both	8.2	41.1	34.8	15.9

Table C.3 Investigative Action Intensity for Case Types by Number of Actions Mandated by Law: Percent of Departments Having Such A Case in the Last Five Years

Number of Actions	NUMBER OF ACTIONS TAKEN ALWAYS OR USUALLY															
	Runaways				Parental Abductions				Stranger Abductions				Unknown Missing			
	1-10	11-15	16-20	21-28	1-10	11-15	16-20	21-28	1-10	11-15	16-20	21-28	1-10	11-15	16-20	21-28
All Departments																
0	19.8	43.7	30.1	8.8	5.2	45.7	39.4	9.7	0.5*	19.1*	48.8	31.7	1.8	27.6	36.1	34.5
1-3	15.8	39.2	34.3	10.9	9.8	40.9	29.7	19.7	0.0*	3.2	48.4	48.3	9.7	21.8	39.4	29.2
4-7	12.8	47.5	29.1	10.9	8.9	43.8	32.5	15.0	0.8*	1.2*	33.7	64.5	3.4	31.9	29.8	34.9

Table C.4. Effect of State Law on Reporting to NCIC for Case Types by Department Size and Type

	Percent of Departments That Usually or Always Report to NCIC							
	Runaways		Parental Abductions		Stranger Abductions		Unknown Missing	
	Required by State Law	Not Required by State Law	Required by State Law	Not Required by State Law	Required by State Law	Not Required by State Law	Required by State Law	Not Required by State Law
All Departments	83.2	88.9	87.2	86.7	99.4	99.6	93.3	93.1
Department Size								
0-49	82.6	88.5	87.0	85.9	100.0	100.0	92.8	92.5
50-99	90.2	88.9	90.2	90.9	96.9	97.5	100.0	95.8
100-299	86.3	95.4	88.1	91.2	98.4	98.0	93.3	95.0
300+	88.1	91.4	85.1	92.4	100.0	100.0	92.1	100.0
Department Type								
Municipal	81.2	88.1	83.4	89.6	99.5	99.5	99.7	91.2
County	91.7	91.7	98.0	78.5	99.2	100.0	70.3	99.6
State	92.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	92.1	100.0

Appendix D

Tables

Table D1. Factors Determining Investigative Priority by Department Size and Type: Runaways

Factors Determining Investigative Priority	Department Size								Department Type					
	0-49		50-99		100-299		300+		Municipal		County		State	
	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score
a. Child 8 or younger	88.5	2.0	78.7	2.0	83.1	1.7	85.6	1.7	69.9	2.0	70.4	1.9	75.7	2.5
b. 9-13 year-old child	23.0	3.3	27.1	3.2	29.8	3.2	33.2	3.2	24.9	3.2	19.1	3.4	23.8	4.7 ^a
c. Gender	6.7	3.3 ^a	6.0	3.2	7.4	3.8	5.1	3.0 ^a	8.1	3.3	1.8	3.1	0.0	b
d. Child/youth has condition requiring prescription medication	62.5	2.5	72.7	2.5	74.1	2.9	77.0	2.6	67.0	2.5	52.3	2.7	69.0	1.9
e. Child/youth mentally handicapped or disabled	67.5	2.8	76.4	2.7	80.5	2.7	86.8	2.7	70.8	2.9	61.7	2.7	87.1	2.7
f. Child/youth gone 5 hours or less	8.9	4.1	7.3	3.7	10.5	3.5	7.8	3.7	8.9	3.9	8.7	4.4	3.5	1.0 ^a
g. Child/youth gone 24-48 hours	27.9	3.2	19.0	3.7	18.6	3.5	10.3	3.8	27.2	3.2	24.9	3.6	7.4	4.5 ^a
h. Child/youth gone over 48 hours	22.6	3.3	17.4	3.6	17.4	3.7	13.6	4.2	23.5	3.5	16.3	2.4	12.9	3.3 ^a
i. Child/youth has not run away before	36.5	3.4	29.7	3.6	34.2	3.9	32.7	3.7	35.3	3.6	38.2	2.8	25.3	3.1 ^a
j. Child/youth has run away once before	5.4	3.7 ^a	6.3	4.0	5.1	3.2	3.9	2.4 ^a	6.6	3.7	0.9	3.4 ^a	7.0	3.0 ^a
k. Reporting parent is very upset	16.7	3.5	10.0	3.8	10.0	3.8	7.9	3.9	15.8	3.7	16.3	2.9	3.5	5.0 ^a
l. You have eyewitness account	21.8	3.0	18.2	3.4	15.4	3.5	8.6	4.1	19.7	2.8	26.2	3.7	18.2	4.4 ^a
m. You have physical evidence	26.1	3.8	16.2	3.4	7.2	3.6	8.7	4.0	23.0	3.6	29.9	4.3	16.8	5.0 ^a
n. Family history of abusing child/youth	32.3	3.6	40.7	3.5	39.1	3.4	32.9	3.9	34.3	3.7	29.0	3.0	32.2	2.8 ^a
o. Child/youth in danger of sexual exploitation	44.5	2.6	54.4	3.0	53.5	3.1	59.7	3.3	43.3	2.6	54.1	2.9	72.9	2.9
p. Reporting parent has legal custody	8.0	3.8	5.0	3.9	6.6	3.5	3.3	3.8 ^a	8.4	3.8	5.0	3.8	0.0	b
q. Reporting parent has no formal custody order	2.4	4.3 ^a	1.4	3.7 ^a	3.0	3.5 ^a	0.7	5.0 ^a	2.8	4.3 ^a	0.8	3.5 ^a	0.0	b

Table D2. Factors Determining Investigative Priority by Department Size and Type: Parental Abduction

Factors Determining Investigative Priority	Department Size								Department Type					
	0-49		50-99		100-299		300+		Municipal		County		State	
	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score
a. Child 8 or younger	48.2	2.8	42.1	2.9	47.4	2.7	35.8	2.5	49.9	2.7	41.1	3.2	40.3	3.3 ^a
b. 9-13 year-old child	7.4	4.3 ^a	8.7	3.3	11.2	2.9	11.0	3.5	9.0	4.1	4.5	3.8	7.8	5.0 ^a
c. Gender	5.8	3.0 ^a	3.6	3.6 ^a	3.7	3.5 ^a	2.1	3.4 ^a	6.2	3.2	3.6	2.2 ^a	4.1	4.0 ^a
d. Child/youth has condition requiring prescription medication	57.3	3.0	54.7	2.9	55.2	3.4	61.1	2.9	56.8	2.9	57.7	3.3	64.6	3.0
e. Child/youth mentally handicapped or disabled	42.2	3.5	39.5	3.6	33.5	3.4	42.9	3.2	42.9	3.3	44.1	4.0	40.8	3.2 ^a
f. Child/youth gone 5 hours or less	5.7	4.1 ^a	5.8	3.8	5.2	3.1	5.4	3.1 ^a	4.8	4.4	7.9	3.3	3.7	2.0 ^a
g. Child/youth gone 24-48 hours	12.8	3.7	6.3	4.1	8.8	3.6	2.7	4.0 ^a	12.0	3.7	11.8	3.6	0.0	b
h. Child/youth gone over 48 hours	13.2	3.8	13.4	3.8	15.1	3.6	6.0	3.5 ^a	12.8	4.1	14.2	2.1	3.8	5.0 ^a
i. Child/youth has not run away before	5.2	4.0 ^a	6.0	3.5	4.1	3.7 ^a	6.2	2.9 ^a	5.6	3.7	4.4	4.8	11.5	2.9 ^a
j. Child/youth has run away once before	0.9	5.0 ^a	1.5	4.6 ^a	1.8	4.3 ^a	1.4	4.5 ^a	1.2	4.9 ^a	0.5	4.5 ^a	0.0	b
k. Reporting parent is very upset	10.1	3.7	11.0	4.1	11.5	3.8	10.6	3.7	11.0	3.9	8.1	3.3	0.0	b
l. You have eyewitness account	35.6	3.2	41.6	3.2	39.1	3.2	28.6	3.8	35.7	3.4	37.3	2.8	36.9	3.4 ^a
m. You have physical evidence	30.4	3.3	27.2	3.1	22.7	3.6	19.1	3.5	32.2	3.4	22.8	2.8	21.6	3.4 ^a
n. Family history of abusing child/youth	68.8	2.7	77.4	2.6	74.6	2.4	76.0	2.5	68.4	2.8	73.6	2.4	86.3	2.6
o. Child/youth in danger of sexual exploitation	59.4	2.4	68.7	2.5	70.6	2.3	72.5	2.5	59.4	2.4	64.4	2.4	78.1	2.3
p. Reporting parent has legal custody	65.7	2.4	55.9	2.4	60.2	2.5	59.2	2.8	63.7	2.2	66.5	2.9	63.0	3.1
q. Reporting parent has no formal custody order	12.8	3.5	12.4	3.0	11.3	3.1	16.3	3.6	12.8	4.2	12.9	1.4	8.1	1.5 ^a

Table D3. Factors Determining Investigative Priority by Department Size and Type: Stranger Abduction

Factors Determining Investigative Priority	Department Size								Department Type					
	0-49		50-99		100-299		300+		Municipal		County		State	
	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score
a. Child 8 or younger	75.2	2.6	60.0	2.3	62.2	2.4	68.4	2.1	74.0	2.3	65.6	3.3	65.8	2.7
b. 9-13 year-old child	28.4	3.9 ^a	22.7	3.3	24.3	3.1	29.5	3.0	23.7	3.4	37.7	4.1	25.0	3.9 ^a
c. Gender	10.7	3.7 ^a	6.1	3.2 ^a	9.1	3.6	3.0	3.8 ^a	6.0	2.3	19.9	2.8 ^a	0.0	b
d. Child/youth has condition requiring prescription medication	51.8	2.7	59.8	3.1	63.7	3.4	56.9	3.1	57.6	3.0	44.1	2.5	76.9	2.8
e. Child/youth mentally handicapped or disabled	49.7	3.6	46.1	3.8	50.2	3.6	50.2	3.5	55.6	3.6	31.4	3.6	69.3	3.8
f. Child/youth gone 5 hours or less	27.6	3.4 ^a	20.7	3.8	20.0	3.0	25.4	3.6	20.4	3.7	16.3	3.1	25.3	4.0 ^a
g. Child/youth gone 24-48 hours	0.0	b	8.3	4.0 ^a	8.4	3.0	7.5	4.2 ^b	2.5	3.7	1.5	3.2 ^a	3.7	5.0 ^a
h. Child/youth gone over 48 hours	6.2	1.5 ^a	12.1	3.1	12.5	3.3	6.2	4.1 ^a	9.3	3.2	2.5	3.6 ^a	7.3	4.5 ^a
i. Child/youth has not run away before	17.0	3.9 ^a	14.4	3.5	9.2	3.7	11.0	3.3	15.6	3.8	15.9	4.0 ^a	11.5	2.3 ^a
j. Child/youth has run away once before	0.0	b	0.0	b	3.1	3.1 ^a	0.8	5.0 ^a	0.4	2.9 ^a	0.3	5.0 ^a	0.0	b
k. Reporting parent is very upset	0.0	b	5.0	4.0 ^a	5.2	2.4 ^b	3.1	5.0 ^a	1.2	3.3 ^a	1.6	2.9 ^a	0.0	b
l. You have eyewitness account	64.5	2.5	71.3	2.2	77.5	2.0	73.1	2.2	61.7	2.6	81.6	1.9	70.8	2.1
m. You have physical evidence	53.6	2.8	56.6	3.0	64.2	2.9	54.1	2.9	49.7	3.0	69.9	2.5	57.0	2.7
n. Family history of abusing child/youth	3.4	2.0 ^a	11.8	3.3	15.0	3.2	4.8	3.9	6.4	2.7	3.6	3.1 ^a	0.0	b
o. Child/youth in danger of sexual exploitation	67.7	2.4	67.4	2.6	56.3	2.7	54.9	3.0	60.5	2.4	80.6	2.8	67.5	2.7
p. Reporting parent has legal custody	4.6	4.0 ^a	6.5	3.7 ^a	3.6	2.8 ^a	1.6	2.9 ^a	5.4	3.9 ^a	2.3	3.6 ^a	0.0	b
q. Reporting parent has no formal custody order	4.6	5.0 ^a	2.0	4.5 ^a	2.2	2.0 ^a	1.7	1.7 ^a	5.2	4.8 ^a	0.5	4.4 ^a	0.0	b

Table D4. Factors Determining Investigative Priority by Department Size and Type: Unknown Missing

Factors Determining Investigative Priority	Department Size								Department Type					
	0-49		50-99		100-299		300+		Municipal		County		State	
	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score	% Ranking	Mean Score
a. Child 8 or younger	77.9	2.3	81.6	2.1	89.0	1.6	84.5	1.6	81.4	2.3	70.9	2.0	78.1	2.6
b. 9-13 year-old child	18.5	3.8	22.6	3.0	28.3	2.9	29.8	2.9	19.7	4.0	19.4	2.2	21.4	2.9 ^a
c. Gender	2.7	4.0 ^a	8.2	4.0 ^a	8.2	3.2	4.8	3.5 ^a	3.8	4.0	2.6	3.4	0.0	b
d. Child/youth has condition requiring prescription medication	89.5	2.4	69.0	2.6	70.9	3.0	77.2	2.7	73.5	2.4	56.0	2.5	75.9	2.6
e. Child/youth mentally handicapped or disabled	73.3	2.9	71.7	3.0	72.5	2.8	75.8	2.9	74.5	2.9	68.5	2.8	71.8	2.9
f. Child/youth gone 5 hours or less	10.9	3.4 ^a	12.5	3.6	11.8	3.2	15.3	3.9	11.9	3.2	8.9	4.4	7.6	3.0 ^a
g. Child/youth gone 24-48 hours	18.8	3.3	13.7	3.6	11.6	3.9	13.7	3.8	20.5	3.3	8.5	4.0	4.1	5.0 ^a
h. Child/youth gone over 48 hours	25.4	3.6	18.0	3.5	20.3	3.5	10.5	3.5	27.1	3.8	13.1	2.5	14.0	2.3 ^a
i. Child/youth has not run away before	32.4	3.8	28.7	3.2	42.8	3.7	39.4	3.8	30.5	3.7	40.5	3.9	45.0	3.1
j. Child/youth has run away once before	2.2	5.0 ^a	3.3	3.2 ^a	2.7	2.7 ^a	4.2	4.4 ^a	0.5	3.3 ^a	9.0	4.9 ^a	4.1	5.0 ^a
k. Reporting parent is very upset	12.5	3.1 ^a	7.5	3.8 ^a	8.9	3.8	5.8	3.4 ^a	14.0	3.1	3.5	3.8	6.3	4.0 ^a
l. You have eyewitness account	31.5	2.9	31.6	3.0	28.2	3.1	21.5	3.0	28.8	2.9	38.7	2.9	19.1	2.8
m. You have physical evidence	37.5	2.9	26.5	3.5	24.2	3.5	17.9	3.3	29.5	3.0	56.0	3.1	33.4	4.2 ^a
n. Family history of abusing child/youth	21.3	3.1	36.4	3.3	25.2	3.7	18.6	3.3	19.4	3.0	34.7	3.5	15.7	2.7 ^a
o. Child/youth in danger of sexual exploitation	30.1	2.9	48.7	3.2	37.3	3.1	42.9	3.6	32.9	2.9	30.0	3.3	56.6	2.5
p. Reporting parent has legal custody	7.7	3.6 ^a	6.8	3.5 ^a	4.7	4.4 ^a	4.9	3.3 ^a	9.0	3.6	1.5	4.3 ^a	10.4	3.8 ^a
q. Reporting parent has no formal custody order	3.9	5.0 ^a	3.3	2.8 ^a	1.5	2.0 ^a	0.0	b	4.5	4.8 ^a	0.2	2.0 ^a	0.0	b

Table D5. Investigative Actions: Runaways

Investigative Actions	Department Size								Department Type					
	0-49		50-99		100-299		300+		Municipal		County		State	
	% Always Usually	% Mean Score												
a. Take report only on the phone	14.2	2.1	12.3	2.0	21.6	2.4	20.6	2.3	12.7	2.0	20.9	2.5	10.8	2.0
b. Send a car to the scene	84.7	4.4	83.0	4.3	69.1	4.0	62.3	3.8	89.5	4.5	61.5	3.9	63.5	3.7
c. Interview parents or guardian in person	94.6	4.7	90.0	4.5	77.9	4.3	75.7	4.3	95.7	4.7	84.8	4.5	77.0	4.2
d. Search home of child/youth	41.7	3.3	35.5	3.2	38.9	3.2	28.8	3.1	44.4	3.4	27.8	3.0	33.3	3.0
e. Get description of child/youth	100.0	5.0	100.0	5.0	99.6	5.0	97.6	4.9	100.0	5.0	100.0	5.0	98.6	4.9
f. Get photograph of child/youth, if available	95.9	4.7	93.6	4.6	90.2	4.5	80.1	4.3	95.9	4.7	93.3	4.6	79.1	4.4
g. Call for search of area	43.2	3.3	29.9	3.1	18.2	2.8	45.8	3.4	45.8	3.4	22.9	2.9	24.3	2.8
h. Issue all points bulletin	81.6	4.3	72.0	4.1	76.5	4.2	68.0	4.0	83.1	4.3	71.2	4.2	71.9	4.1
i. Set up command post	5.6	1.8	1.8	1.7	0.0	1.6	3.1	1.7	5.5	1.8	3.8	1.7	0.0	1.6
j. Call investigative specialists	13.7	2.1	10.7	2.2	17.3	2.3	28.1	2.7	14.0	2.0	13.8	2.0	6.8	1.9
k. Gather physical evidence	51.2	3.4	35.4	3.1	31.1	2.9	28.1	2.9	51.0	3.5	41.6	3.0	37.2	3.0
l. Question available suspect(s)	81.3	4.4	64.5	3.8	58.6	3.7	58.6	3.6	78.9	4.1	80.5	4.1	39.2	3.1
m. Notify surrounding jurisdictions (e.g., by teletype)	92.4	4.7	79.0	4.4	80.5	4.3	69.8	4.2	90.0	4.6	93.8	4.6	92.4	4.5
n. Interview available neighbors	62.5	3.9	45.4	3.4	37.4	3.3	37.9	3.4	62.1	3.9	53.0	3.8	38.0	3.3
o. Interview child's friends/siblings (if any)	82.5	4.3	67.6	3.9	60.1	3.8	63.1	3.8	82.1	4.3	74.2	4.0	59.6	3.7
p. Interview other available relatives	48.7	3.5	43.4	3.4	39.4	3.3	41.1	3.4	46.1	3.5	54.9	3.5	50.6	3.5
q. Interview school personnel	41.8	3.4	38.5	3.4	35.2	3.3	35.4	3.5	40.3	3.4	45.2	3.3	16.9	3.1
r. Check hospitals	40.5	3.3	28.7	3.0	24.3	2.9	29.3	3.1	39.0	3.3	38.8	3.1	43.1	3.4
s. Check runaway shelter(s)/social service agencies	32.0	3.1	37.5	3.2	38.0	3.2	46.3	3.5	34.3	3.1	26.3	2.9	59.5	3.8
t. Check known juvenile haunts	82.9	4.2	72.9	4.0	63.5	3.8	62.8	3.8	82.7	4.2	78.0	4.0	63.6	3.9
u. Report to state missing persons file	80.8	4.4	80.7	4.3	80.6	4.4	85.4	4.5	80.8	4.3	81.2	4.4	86.8	4.7
v. Enter report into NCIC missing persons file	85.7	4.5	89.0	4.6	90.7	4.6	88.2	4.6	85.2	4.5	89.5	4.6	96.5	4.8
w. Report case to National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)	22.2	2.4	22.1	2.5	18.4	2.4	15.0	2.5	20.8	2.4	26.6	2.5	26.2	2.8
x. Report to FBI	9.9	1.9	10.6	2.0	11.5	2.1	9.3	2.0	10.4	1.9	8.31	1.8	11.3	2.0
y. Circulate child/youth's photo to law enforcement agencies	24.5	2.9	18.4	2.8	17.2	2.7	14.9	2.8	24.9	2.9	18.5	2.6	38.0	3.1
z. Get child/youth's dental records	9.8	2.0	13.0	2.3	12.6	2.3	17.3	2.6	10.0	2.0	10.7	2.1	14.7	2.5
aa. Give copy of incident report to parent/guardian	16.7	2.3	7.0	1.9	12.0	2.1	9.9	1.9	13.7	2.2	24.4	2.4	20.5	2.1
bb. Obtain search warrant/subpoena to examine suspect's record	7.8	1.8	5.1	1.8	4.1	1.7	2.4	1.7	7.5	1.8	7.3	1.9	0.0	1.3
cc. Maintain cases as open until child/youth returned	98.5	4.9	98.1	4.8	98.4	4.9	95.4	4.8	98.2	4.9	99.4	4.9	98.0	4.7

Table D8. Investigative Actions: Parental Abduction

Investigative Actions	Department Size								Department Type					
	0-49		50-99		100-299		300+		Municipal		County		State	
	% Always Usually	% Mean Score												
a. Take report only on the phone	13.5	1.9	8.8	1.7	7.5	1.7	5.5	1.6	8.34	1.8	24.2	2.4	14.1	1.8
b. Send a car to the scene	86.0	4.4	92.2	4.6	85.8	4.4	84.6	4.3	92.1	4.6	70.5	4.1	29.2	4.0
c. Interview parents or guardian in person	98.0	4.8	96.4	4.8	97.7	4.8	96.1	4.8	99.7	4.9	92.6	4.7	93.1	4.6
d. Search home of child/youth	41.6	3.3	3.3	3.4	45.0	3.3	31.0	3.0	42.3	3.3	40.8	3.8	33.5	3.0
e. Get description of child/youth	100.0	5.0	100.0	5.0	99.3	5.0	98.6	4.9	99.9	5.0	100.0	5.0	100.0	5.0
f. Get photograph of child/youth, if available	98.4	4.8	95.9	4.8	94.1	4.7	85.8	4.5	96.9	4.8	93.9	4.7	96.3	4.9
g. Call for search of area	47.9	3.4	38.4	3.3	30.5	3.1	25.6	2.9	49.1	3.4	37.4	3.2	30.1	2.8
h. Issue all points bulletin	84.9	4.3	84.4	4.4	84.0	4.4	75.0	4.2	85.8	4.5	81.4	4.5	84.2	4.4
i. Set up command post	9.4	1.9	3.6	1.9	3.0	1.9	1.4	1.7	7.3	1.8	12.1	2.2	0.0	1.8
j. Call investigative specialists	23.7	2.5	27.1	2.7	35.7	3.0	48.8	3.5	24.6	2.5	26.2	2.5	26.3	3.0
k. Gather physical evidence	64.1	3.8	60.7	3.8	54.2	3.7	55.4	3.6	68.2	3.9	48.6	3.5	60.9	3.6
l. Question available suspect(s)	92.9	4.6	90.5	4.6	89.7	4.5	88.9	4.5	94.2	4.6	87.7	4.4	82.6	4.2
m. Notify surrounding jurisdictions (e.g., by teletype)	94.3	4.7	90.7	4.6	87.9	4.5	77.2	4.3	91.7	4.7	98.1	4.7	96.2	4.8
n. Interview available neighbors	75.6	4.2	75.3	4.1	66.1	3.9	60.5	3.7	80.0	4.2	60.5	3.9	74.7	3.9
o. Interview child's friends/siblings (if any)	77.3	4.1	74.4	4.1	65.0	3.9	55.3	3.7	79.6	4.2	66.4	3.8	68.7	3.7
p. Interview other available relatives	63.7	3.9	75.6	4.1	67.9	3.9	64.4	3.9	64.7	4.0	64.2	3.8	80.4	4.3
q. Interview school personnel	50.9	3.6	52.9	3.7	53.8	3.6	41.3	3.4	53.3	3.7	44.8	3.3	43.9	3.5
r. Check hospitals	37.2	3.2	33.4	3.1	26.8	2.9	21.8	2.7	35.6	3.2	37.8	3.1	33.2	3.1
s. Check runaway shelter(s)/social service agencies	22.9	2.7	27.6	2.9	20.9	2.6	22.2	2.7	24.3	2.7	19.8	2.6	27.4	2.9
t. Check known juvenile haunts	39.8	3.0	32.7	3.0	26.0	2.7	16.8	2.4	41.0	3.1	30.6	2.8	27.0	2.9
u. Report to state missing persons file	86.4	4.5	85.0	4.5	84.1	4.5	83.7	4.5	88.3	4.5	29.8	4.4	96.2	4.9
v. Enter report into NCIC missing persons file	88.9	4.7	91.2	4.7	91.0	4.7	88.1	4.6	88.2	4.7	91.4	4.7	100.0	4.9
w. Report case to National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)	32.3	2.8	37.7	3.0	34.2	3.0	29.5	2.9	35.0	2.9	25.7	2.7	40.3	3.2
x. Report to FBI	21.7	2.5	27.1	2.7	27.9	2.8	20.9	2.7	23.0	2.6	20.7	2.5	25.5	2.9
y. Circulate child/youth's photo to law enforcement agencies	36.7	3.1	45.4	3.5	37.0	3.3	37.5	3.3	39.8	3.2	30.3	3.0	75.6	4.0
z. Get child/youth's dental records	13.4	2.2	22.6	2.7	17.6	2.5	15.2	2.6	14.9	2.2	12.4	2.3	25.1	2.9
aa. Give copy of incident report to parent/guardian	23.4	2.5	9.0	2.0	14.0	2.2	12.4	2.0	19.4	2.4	28.0	2.5	24.0	2.3
bb. Obtain search warrant/subpoena to examine suspect's record	13.4	2.1	24.8	2.6	16.2	2.4	17.0	1.7	15.8	2.2	12.6	2.2	7.9	2.4
cc. Maintain cases as open until child/youth returned	98.0	4.9	98.5	4.9	97.9	4.9	94.4	4.8	97.5	4.9	99.3	4.8	96.0	4.7

Table D7. Investigative Actions: Stranger Abduction

Investigative Actions	Department Size								Department Type					
	0-49		50-99		100-299		300+		Municipal		County		State	
	% Always Usually	% Mean Score												
a. Take report only on the phone	9.9	1.5	9.6	1.5	9.3	1.5	6.6	1.4	6.6	1.4	18.7	1.9	6.7	1.5
b. Send a car to the scene	95.0	4.8	98.0	4.9	99.3	4.9	97.8	4.9	99.6	4.9	84.2	4.4	96.8	4.8
c. Interview parents or guardian in person	100.0	5.0	100.0	5.0	99.3	4.9	98.6	4.9	99.9	5.0	100.0	4.9	1.0	4.8
d. Search home of child/youth	50.2	3.5	59.6	3.7	68.2	3.9	59.6	3.8	53.3	3.6	52.4	3.5	58.3	3.8
e. Get description of child/youth	100.0	5.0	100.5	5.0	99.3	5.0	98.6	4.9	99.8	5.0	100.0	5.0	100.0	5.0
f. Get photograph of child/youth, if available	100.0	4.9	100.0	4.9	99.3	4.9	99.3	4.9	99.9	4.9	100.0	4.8	100.0	5.0
g. Call for search of area	90.4	4.7	84.7	4.5	92.1	4.7	91.8	4.7	92.3	4.7	82.6	4.4	96.8	4.7
h. Issue all points bulletin	98.0	4.9	97.1	4.9	98.5	4.9	97.8	4.9	99.4	4.9	91.9	4.8	96.8	4.9
i. Set up command post	29.0	2.7	32.3	2.9	44.5	3.3	50.4	3.5	34.4	2.8	21.6	2.8	62.8	3.7
j. Call investigative specialists	58.2	3.4	59.3	3.8	72.1	4.0	87.2	4.5	57.9	3.5	68.6	3.6	86.3	4.4
k. Gather physical evidence	93.0	4.8	87.5	4.6	93.8	4.7	4.7	4.8	93.3	4.8	90.0	4.7	1.0	4.8
l. Question available suspect(s)	76.9	4.9	98.1	4.9	99.3	4.9	98.6	4.9	99.7	4.9	99.8	4.9	96.8	4.9
m. Notify surrounding jurisdictions (e.g., by teletype)	100.0	5.0	98.2	4.9	99.3	4.9	96.2	4.9	99.3	5.0	99.5	5.0	100.0	5.0
n. Interview available neighbors	96.6	4.8	96.9	4.8	98.6	4.8	95.5	4.8	96.1	4.8	99.0	4.8	96.6	4.8
o. Interview child's friends/siblings (if any)	94.1	4.6	95.0	4.7	92.4	4.7	91.8	4.6	92.6	4.7	98.5	4.6	89.4	4.5
p. Interview other available relatives	63.7	4.1	80.9	4.4	83.6	4.5	79.7	4.4	66.7	4.2	70.7	4.1	85.1	4.5
q. Interview school personnel	68.6	4.1	71.6	4.1	72.1	4.2	67.8	4.0	69.6	4.1	61.3	3.9	75.5	4.2
r. Check hospitals	57.0	3.8	57.9	3.8	57.7	3.7	55.8	3.7	59.3	3.9	50.1	3.6	68.5	4.2
s. Check runaway shelter(s)/social service agencies	33.0	3.0	43.6	3.2	34.7	3.1	37.0		36.3	3.2	28.3	2.7	45.7	3.2
t. Check known juvenile haunts	60.7	3.6	50.2	3.5	47.0	3.3	33.6	3.1	59.0	3.6	52.0	3.4	60.2	3.8
u. Report to state missing persons file	100.0	4.9	95.0	4.8	92.4	4.7	94.5	4.8	98.6	4.8	98.6	4.9	100.0	5.0
v. Enter report into NCIC missing persons file	100.0	5.0	95.8	4.9	98.6	4.9	99.3	4.9	99.5	5.0	99.3	5.0	100.0	5.0
w. Report case to National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)	40.9	3.0	55.6	3.4	58.9	3.6	54.1	3.5	44.2	3.2	44.0	2.9	68.1	3.8
x. Report to FBI	50.5	3.5	66.6	3.8	60.8	3.8	69.3	4.1	54.5	3.6	51.0	3.5	79.6	4.2
y. Circulate child/youth's photo to law enforcement agencies	54.2	3.6	74.7	4.2	79.5	4.3	82.3	4.4	54.9	3.8	72.2	3.7	1.5	4.8
z. Get child/youth's dental records	51.7	3.3	58.3	3.7	48.2	3.5	60.5	3.9	48.9	3.3	63.8	3.4	72.3	4.2
aa. Give copy of incident report to parent/guardian	19.8	2.5	7.8	2.0	19.6	2.3	10.6	2.0	17.3	2.3	20.2	2.5	20.5	2.2
bb. Obtain search warrant/subpoena to examine suspect's records	28.5	2.8	46.7	3.3	44.1	3.2	54.4	3.4	31.7	2.9	34.1	2.8	64.5	3.7
cc. Maintain cases as open until child/youth returned	100.0	5.0	100.0	5.0	98.6	5.0	99.3	4.9	100.0	5.0	99.5	5.0	0.9	5.0

Table D8. Investigative Actions: Unknown Missing

Investigative Actions	Department Size								Department Type					
	0-49		50-99		100-299		300+		Municipal		County		State	
	% Always Usually	% Mean Score												
a. Take report only on the phone	13.8	1.9	10.9	1.7	10.3	1.8	11.5	1.9	13.1	1.8	14.2	2.2	14.6	1.9
b. Send a car to the scene	95.1	4.7	89.3	4.5	85.7	4.5	84.0	4.4	96.7	4.7	84.8	4.4	89.0	4.4
c. Interview parents or guardian in person	97.3	4.8	98.5	4.8	89.2	4.6	86.9	4.6	98.3	4.8	98.4	4.7	88.3	4.5
d. Search home of child/youth	47.1	3.4	58.7	3.8	66.9	3.9	68.7	4.0	51.9	3.6	40.9	3.3	74.6	3.9
e. Get description of child/youth	100.0	5.0	100.0	5.0	98.7	5.0	97.1	4.9	99.9	5.0	99.8	5.0	0.5	5.0
f. Get photograph of child/youth, if available	98.7	4.8	98.5	4.8	95.5	4.7	91.7	4.7	98.2	4.8	98.9	4.9	96.2	4.9
g. Call for search of area	68.1	4.0	70.9	3.3	69.1	4.1	72.8	4.1	68.8	4.0	67.1	4.0	82.2	4.3
h. Issue all points bulletin	87.6	4.6	85.8	4.5	87.8	4.6	87.5	4.5	88.0	4.6	85.5	4.6	92.8	4.6
i. Set up command post	11.1	2.2	19.0	2.6	21.9	2.8	26.8	2.9	13.1	2.2	11.1	2.3	13.8	2.8
j. Call investigative specialists	32.3	2.8	37.9	3.1	48.5	3.4	59.3	3.9	33.3	2.9	36.9	2.8	50.8	3.6
k. Gather physical evidence	71.8	4.1	72.8	4.1	70.1	4.1	72.4	4.2	73.0	4.1	67.7	4.2	76.0	4.3
l. Question available suspect(s)	98.7	4.8	88.6	4.6	91.5	4.7	85.1	4.6	97.1	4.7	98.2	4.7	83.4	4.4
m. Notify surrounding jurisdictions (e.g., by teletype)	93.8	4.7	90.8	4.6	85.7	4.6	87.7	4.6	91.7	4.7	97.4	4.8	96.1	4.8
n. Interview available neighbors	86.0	4.4	80.0	4.3	80.9	4.4	76.3	4.3	83.7	4.4	89.5	4.5	84.6	4.4
o. Interview child's friends/ siblings (if any)	92.6	4.6	82.1	4.4	82.8	4.4	81.0	4.3	89.5	4.5	96.5	4.6	85.5	4.3
p. Interview other available relatives	70.2	4.1	73.5	4.2	76.1	4.2	74.7	4.2	68.2	4.1	79.4	4.2	0.7	4.6
q. Interview school personnel	65.2	4.0	62.1	3.9	66.6	4.0	67.8	4.0	63.0	4.0	71.9	4.0	76.0	4.2
r. Check hospitals	58.8	3.8	59.2	3.8	56.8	3.7	59.5	3.8	62.0	3.9	47.5	3.6	61.5	4.0
s. Check runaway shelter(s)/social service agencies	44.8	3.3	53.1	3.6	49.5	3.6	58.7	3.7	46.2	3.4	45.5	3.2	58.1	3.7
t. Check known juvenile haunts	80.2	4.2	72.9	4.1	68.2	4.0	66.5	4.0	80.3	4.3	73.3	3.9	77.3	4.2
u. Report to state missing persons file	84.6	4.5	87.3	4.5	88.3	4.6	89.3	4.7	88.4	4.6	73.6	4.2	96.1	4.8
v. Enter report into NCIC missing persons file	93.5	4.8	95.1	4.8	93.4	4.8	95.2	4.8	94.9	4.8	89.6	4.7	96.3	4.9
w. Report case to National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)	3.15	2.7	39.6	3.1	42.2	3.2	34.2	3.1	32.3	2.8	33.5	2.8	55.7	3.3
x. Report to FBI	30.3	2.5	32.3	2.9	28.8	2.9	30.3	3.0	33.6	2.7	19.8	2.3	24.4	2.9
y. Circulate child/youth's photo to law enforcement agencies	41.3	3.2	54.9	3.6	52.8	3.7	57.1	3.8	43.3	3.4	42.3	3.0	86.0	4.6
z. Get child/youth's dental records	27.3	2.5	37.9	3.1	36.8	3.1	43.8	3.4	27.6	2.6	33.5	2.6	46.7	3.6
aa. Give copy of incident report to parent/guardian	17.7	2.3	5.5	1.9	16.1	2.2	12.4	2.0	17.8	2.3	12.4	2.1	21.2	2.2
bb. Obtain search warrant/subpoena to examine suspect's record	21.9	2.4	29.0	2.8	27.4	2.7	29.7	2.8	25.2	2.5	14.9	2.1	32.4	3.0
cc. Maintain cases as open until child/youth returned	100.0	4.9	98.4	4.9	98.7	5.0	96.1	4.8	99.9	5.0	99.3	4.9	95.9	4.7

Table D9. Closeout Procedures by Department Size and Type

Closeout Procedures	Department Size								Department Type					
	0-49		50-99		100-299		300+		Municipal		County		State	
	% Always Usually	% Mean Score												
a. Verify that child/youth has returned	95.5	4.8	96.4	4.8	97.5	4.9	97.5	4.9	96.2	4.9	93.8	4.7	87.2	4.6
b. Interview the child/youth	53.4	3.7	42.6	3.4	33.8	3.2	29.6	3.1	56.7	3.7	32.1	3.3	30.3	2.9
c. Obtain medical examination for the child/youth	6.5	2.1	1.9	2.1	1.9	2.0	1.3	2.1	22.8	5.8	22.4	6.7	42.3	0.0
d. Refer child/youth/family to social service agency for counseling	51.0	3.6	44.6	3.5	43.9	3.4	36.8	3.4	48.5	3.6	56.9	3.6	26.3	3.2
e. Remove case from information files (e.g., state police, NCIC, NCMEC)	95.1	4.8	96.0	4.8	95.5	4.8	96.3	4.8	95.1	4.8	95.8	4.8	89.5	4.7
f. Interview Family	50.0	a	0.0	a	51.5	a	0.0	a	100.0	a	48.2	a	0.0	a
g. Refer to juvenile court	100.0	a	81.8	a	71.0	a	100.0	a	100.0	a	93.4	a	0.0	a

Table D10. Followup Actions by Department Size and Type (Percent of Departments and Mean Score)

Followup Actions	Department Size								Department Type					
	0-49		50-99		100-299		300+		Municipal		County		State	
	% Always Usually	% Mean Score												
a. Periodic contact with family	91.1	4.5	93.0	4.5	91.2	4.6	96.1	4.7	91.3	4.6	91.0	4.4	90.6	4.4
b. Investigate new leads	94.1	4.7	95.1	4.7	94.4	4.8	98.1	4.9	94.4	4.8	93.6	4.7	100.0	4.9
c. Reinterview witnesses	46.9	3.6	41.8	3.4	43.1	3.5	41.3	3.5	47.3	3.6	42.8	3.5	33.4	3.3
d. Circulate posters	25.7	2.6	16.7	2.7	21.9	2.8	28.8	3.1	27.4	2.7	15.6	2.4	41.4	3.4
e. Check with runaway shelters/ social service agencies	44.4	3.3	45.1	3.4	50.4	3.5	81.9	3.7	45.0	3.4	44.3	3.1	63.4	3.7
f. Check with information resources such as locator service	26.8	2.7	25.5	2.7	26.7	2.7	29.7	2.9	28.5	2.7	20.2	2.5	40.5	3.3

Table D11. Obstacles to Successful Investigation of Missing Child or Youth Cases by Department Size and Type: Runaways

Obstacles to Successful Investigations	Department Size								Department Type					
	0-49		50-99		100-299		300+		Municipal		County		State	
	% Always Usually	% Mean Score	% Always Usually	% Mean Score	% Always Usually	% Mean Score	% Always Usually	% Mean Score	% Always Usually	% Mean Score	% Always Usually	% Mean Score	% Always Usually	% Mean Score
a. Running away not a criminal offense	52.0	2.5	57.3	2.3	66.7	2.3	70.7	2.4	51.6	2.5	59.0	2.2	65.2	2.5
b. Lack of family cooperation	28.6	3.0	32.4	2.9	28.6	3.3	29.9	3.1	30.5	2.9	22.6	3.3	20.9	3.1
c. Age/independence/mobility of child/youth	71.8	2.3	71.1	2.3	79.1	2.5	69.9	2.4	72.4	2.4	70.7	2.2	67.6	2.3
d. Lack of cooperation from other jurisdictions	20.6	3.2	26.1	3.4	22.8	3.6	25.7	3.4	18.4	3.4	31.2	3.0	34.0	3.3
e. Difficulty of knowing whether child or youth is voluntarily absent--difficulty in classifying case	57.7	2.9	43.4	3.0	38.6	2.9	35.0	3.0	57.7	2.9	48.4	2.9	44.7	3.2
f. Inadequate information available to locate children or youth outside jurisdiction	54.7	2.8	54.8	2.9	50.3	3.0	52.2	3.1	55.7	2.8	49.8	2.9	58.7	2.9
g. Lack of police resources	42.9	3.0	32.1	3.5	34.5	3.2	33.8	3.1	42.6	3.0	38.8	3.3	41.6	2.6
h. Lack of cooperation from social service agencies	19.0	3.5	23.5	3.6	15.9	3.4	20.4	3.4	22.8	3.3	5.5	3.5	19.4	4.1
i. Parental discretion--lack of parental cooperation	38.4	3.1	29.4	3.2	30.2	3.1	26.8	3.4	36.0	3.1	42.8	3.1	10.6	4.0
j. Low departmental priority--not important police matter	13.6	3.8	22.7	3.6	25.8	3.8	28.2	3.4	14.7	3.7	15.6	4.0	29.6	3.3
k. Lack of judicial cooperation	17.1	3.5	26.4	3.4	23.3	3.5	26.4	3.7	20.5	3.4	8.8	3.7	27.0	3.2 ^a
l. Inability to detain youth	38.7	2.9	46.8	2.9	52.3	2.7	60.5	2.6	40.4	3.0	39.0	2.8	48.1	2.9
m. Lack of cooperation from friends and peers	0.5	5 ^a	2.5	1.8 ^a	1.8	2.3 ^a	1.9	4.0	0.3	2.3 ^a	2.5	4.7	3.4	3.0 ^a
n. Number or volume of runaways	0.0	-	0.5	3.0 ^a	0.5	5 ^a	0.0	-	0.0	5 ^a	0.1	3 ^a	0.0	-

Table D13. Obstacles to Successful Investigation of Missing Child or Youth Cases by Department Size and Type: Stranger Abduction

Obstacles to Successful Investigation	Department Size								Department Type					
	0-49		50-99		100-299		300+		Municipal		County		State	
	% Always Usually	% Mean Score	% Always Usually	% Mean Score	% Always Usually	% Mean Score	% Always Usually	% Mean Score	% Always Usually	% Mean Score	% Always Usually	% Mean Score	% Always Usually	% Mean Score
a. Difficulty in classifying case-- insufficient information	91.5	2.1	77.9	2.2	81.0	2.6	73.1	2.5	86.7	2.1	94.2	2.2	79.9	2.8
b. Difficulty in securing witnesses	96.6	1.9	94.7	1.8	94.9	1.9	95.5	1.8	98.7	1.9	88.8	1.8	100.0	2.2
c. Difficulty in obtaining physical evidence	94.1	2.4	90.4	2.3	93.6	2.2	97.0	2.1	95.9	2.3	87.7	2.4	96.5	2.1
d. Lack of cooperation from family	38.3	3.7	37.7	4.1	33.1	3.5	29.8	4.0	36.0	3.4	42.0	4.4	29.2	3.9
e. Lack of cooperation from other law enforcement agencies	52.2	4.2	35.2	4.1	31.3	4.3	35.5	3.8	45.3	4.4	57.0	3.7	31.2	4.7
f. NCIC information not adequate-- or access difficult	21.5	3.6	28.9	3.8	25.3	4.0	26.4	3.7	21.0	3.4	27.7	4.3	27.3	3.7
g. Other departmental priorities compete for personnel or resources	32.0	4.4	26.6	3.5	29.4	3.5	33.5	3.9	30.1	4.6	34.7	3.4	36.6	3.2 ^a
h. Other	0.0	-	1.0	5 ^a	0.7	5 ^a	0.0	-	0.1	5 ^a	0.2	5 ^a	0.0	-

Table D14. Actions Regarding Runaway or Homeless Youth by Department Size and Type: Walk-ins

Investigative Actions	Department Size								Department Type					
	0-49		50-99		100-299		300+		Municipal		County		State	
	% Always Usually	% Mean Score												
a. Arrange transportation home	88.0	3.9	82.9	3.8	59.9	3.7	2.4	3.9	65.1	3.8	67.1	4.0	71.4	4.1
b. Attempt to locate and notify parents	93.1	4.6	91.9	4.7	93.0	4.7	95.4	4.8	91.8	4.6	92.6	2.1	95.1	4.7
c. Refer case to juvenile division or specialists employed by department	53.2	3.5	71.5	4.0	66.9	3.9	66.6	4.0	51.1	3.5	75.1	3.8	44.0	3.6
d. Refer case to local social service agencies, runaway shelters, etc.	53.2	3.5	71.5	4.0	66.9	3.9	66.6	4.0	51.1	3.5	75.1	3.8	44.0	3.6
e. Notify home jurisdiction	88.3	4.5	86.4	4.5	84.5	4.5	85.1	4.5	89.5	4.5	81.8	4.3	80.5	4.3
f. Detain juvenile in secure facility	17.3	2.5	17.0	2.5	12.4	2.3	14.6	2.3	15.2	2.4	25.0	2.6	5.4	21.4
g. Detain juvenile in nonsecure facility	27.4	2.8	23.0	3.0	27.6	2.9	30.2	3.1	27.9	2.8	23.5	2.7	32.8	3.1
h. Check with State Crime Information Center (SCIC) or state police	71.8	4.0	69.8	4.0	59.2	3.7	68.9	4.0	75.2	4.0	54.1	3.8	0.5	4.8
i. Check with state clearinghouse for missing children	34.3	3.0	40.7	3.2	35.3	3.0	44.3	3.3	35.0	3.1	34.5	2.6	93.5	4.5
j. Check National Crime Information Center's (NCIC) Missing Person File	78.5	4.3	83.8	4.4	79.4	4.3	89.0	4.6	80.3	4.3	74.6	4.2	100.0	4.9
k. Check with National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)	26.5	2.7	21.1	2.6	19.7	2.6	17.8	2.7	27.9	2.8	16.2	2.4	20.5	2.9
l. None of the activities listed above	13.2	1.9	0.0	1.1	13.9	1.6	0.0	1.1	15.1	1.9	2.3	1.5	0.0	1.0

Table D17. Obstacles to Having Youth Returned Home by Department Size and Type

Obstacles to Having Youth Returned Home	Department Size								Department Type					
	0-49		50-99		100-299		300+		Municipal		County		State	
	% Always Usually	% Mean Score												
a. Running away not a criminal offense	61.8	2.0	58.0	2.4	70.1	2.3	70.0	2.1	60.2	2.0	68.3	2.0	78.1	1.9
b. Age/independence/mobility of child/youth	61.0	3.0	71.4	2.5	77.2	2.6	75.3	2.7	60.4	3.0	70.6	2.8	78.0	2.5
c. Too much paperwork involved	6.5	3.6	2.1	4.0	2.4	3.7	2.2	4.5	5.7	3.5	6.7	4.0	0.0	b
d. Youth involved in criminal activities	44.8	3.3	45.5	3.3	36.6	3.1	35.0	3.7	44.1	3.2	43.8	3.8	57.3	3.4
e. Statutes that prohibit taking youth into custody	47.5	2.4	38.0	2.6	44.6	2.6	47.6	2.5	40.1	2.6	70.9	2.2	58.2	2.8
f. Lack of cooperation from family	62.1	2.7	45.3	3.0	45.0	3.3	45.5	3.2	63.8	2.7	44.7	3.1	67.6	3.9
g. Lack of cooperation from other law enforcement agencies	17.6	3.6	10.5	3.9	13.9	3.7	15.5	3.8	18.2	3.7	12.6	3.1	16.3	4.7
h. Not enough shelters	44.8	2.9	71.4	2.5	52.6	2.9	57.3	2.8	48.4	3.1	41.4	2.1	54.7	3.5
i. Lack of cooperation from social service agencies	29.9	3.1	40.6	3.5	26.4	3.2	37.2	3.5	34.9	3.2	15.0	2.8	16.3	2.0
j. Special problems handling youth from outside jurisdiction	37.4	3.1	26.8	3.7	25.5	3.3	34.9	3.3	33.3	3.0	47.1	3.6	26.7	3.4
k. Low priority in department (not an important police matter)	5.5	4.5	8.6	3.9	13.9	4.1	6.9	4.2	2.7	3.9	19.3	4.6	0.0	b
l. Youth has run away from an abusive environmental family situation	45.9	3.4	40.5	3.3	38.6	3.2	34.8	3.0	47.3	3.2	36.2	4.3	41.5	2.7

bN is less than .05.