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National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway and Thrownaway Children (NISMART-4)

Law Enforcement Survey – Missing Children (LES-MC)
Pilot Study Report

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National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway and Thrownaway Children (NISMART-4)

Law Enforcement Survey – Missing Children (LES-MC)
Pilot Study Report

This report is in fulfillment of Delivervable 33b Draft Report on LES-MC Pilot Findings

1. INTRODUCTION

The goal of the Law Enforcement Survey – Missing Children (LES-MC) pilot study was to assess the potential for gathering data directly from law enforcement agencies and investigators about the incidence and dynamics of MC episodes. This was a departure from previous NISMARTs, which gathered MC information from a nationally representative household survey. However, falling participation rates and climbing expense to such surveys suggested the need for a redesign. Also of consideration was the possibility that getting the information from law enforcement agencies (LEAs) would allow more analysis and understanding of how law enforcement responds to and tries to resolve these cases.

An MC was defined, consistent with previous NISMARTs, as: A child whose whereabouts are unknown to a caretaker, causing the caretaker to contact law enforcement or a missing children's agency to locate the missing child.

2. METHODOLOGY

There were three components to the data collection for the LES-MC pilot study. For the purpose of this report, it is helpful to think of these three components as three stages.

Stage 1: *Testing instrument and data collection instructions with a small number of LEAs who could provide critical comment on their challenge following instructions and completing the survey.*

The goal for Stage 1 was to locate five agencies that could carry out the proposed search for cases and to identify problems encountered in the search and identification activities. We looked for agencies with some plausible interest and investment in the study goals by consulting state level missing children assistance agencies (MCAA) that also work closely with local LEAs. This resulted in a total of 35 referrals, all from state MCAAs.

We chose the first five agencies to respond positively to our invitation. After they conducted the requested search for MC cases, we debriefed the respondent in charge of the search.

We approached the five agencies, asking each: *In 2019, did your agency respond to any cases where a child, aged 17 or younger, was reported missing from a caretaker who contacted your agency for help to either locate or recover the child?*

Each agency was asked to provide the total number of missing children for the year, and the case number and investigator contact information for up to 30 cases that occurred in September 2019.

Each agency was sent an invitation package, which included (1) a cover letter, (2) the mail survey screener with glossary of terms, and (3) frequently asked questions.

Agencies were instructed to keep track of any problems encountered and any questions raised during their search. Space was provided at the end of the screener survey (Section F) for respondents to write down their observations and questions. Respondents were told we would follow-up with a brief phone interview to ask about their experience with the process after their survey was submitted and reviewed.

Stage 2: *Testing agency response to survey procedures and response to mailed recruitment materials.*

Recruitment letters were sent to 50 additional agencies chosen at random from the National Directory of Law Enforcement Administrators. Mindful of burden, agency selection was limited to LEAs that had not been recruited earlier for the Law Enforcement Survey – Stereotypical Kidnapping (LES-SK).

The recruitment period ran from April 1, 2021 to August 31, 2021, five months, although all but one agency responded in the first two months.

Stage 3: *Testing the recruitment and performance of investigators via two data collection options (online and phone interview) for providing information on specific cases.*

Investigators were sent links to questionnaires about cases listed by their agencies in Stage 2; these were followed up by phone calls. All participating investigators were debriefed by phone or questionnaire about their experience in data collection.

3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Stage 1

LEA 1 (pop: 250K)

- Result 2019 year total: 413 cases
- September 2019: 22 cases (complete information)
- Time: Less than one hour
- Record Management System (RMS) used: Tyler Tech New World

While the entire process took less than an hour, the time to harvest data from the RMS was only 15 minutes. Three categories of output in their system were reviewed: *"missing person," "missing child"* and *"runaway."*

The analyst encountered no problems in understanding the request or filling out the questionnaire. The major issue was getting permission to participate in the search from her superiors, who had some question as to whether a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request was needed. In the end, it was not.

Permission was given to contact the investigators directly for additional information.

LEA 2 (Pop: 365K)

- Result 2019 year total: 678 cases
- September 2019: 30 cases (complete information)
- Time: 2 – 2.5 hours
- RMS system used: One-Solution

The respondent had the agency crime analyst pull the cases from the RMS system. She then took all the missing person cases and stratified them by age. According to the respondent, the process was not complicated.

For individual case details, we were advised to contact the respondent first and ask him to pull the information as he knew what information was confidential.

This is the account given by the respondent:
In 2019, missing persons cases were divided between two investigative squads for our agency: missing juveniles/children were assigned to our Family Victims Unit for follow-up while adult missing persons were assigned to our Crimes Against Persons Squad. A request had to be made by the crime analyst in order to determine the number of cases of missing juveniles for 2019 as well as going through those cases for the month of September 2019. At that time, the rise in the age [of criminal responsibility] law had not taken effect and juveniles were classified as persons 15 and under. This has been changed as the new law stipulating juveniles as 17 and under has taken effect.

In cases where a detective was not assigned to the case for follow-up, a civilian investigative aide was utilized for callbacks to parents / guardian / reporting party for repeat runaways (16-18 year olds). If an officer was assigned to the case, they did the investigation upon initial response and were able to locate the juvenile prior to the case being reviewed for follow-up. These missing children cases are worked by the Family Victims Unit, which also investigates domestic violence, sexual assault/rape, child abuse, and elder abuse.

LEA 3 (Pop: 186K)

- Result 2019 year total: 326 cases
- September 2019: 15 (complete information)
- Time: 3 hours
- RMS system used: Parallel Client – Tyler

The search in this agency had both an easy and a hard part, according to this respondent. The part that was easy was looking for missing and runaway kids. The hard part was a review of cases labeled "*suspicious reports*" that did not have an explicit runaway or missing person label. Sometimes "*suspicious*" was the label but the case qualified as an MC. Thus, some missing children were classified in some other way in the system.

She does not think that other cases were missed. However, she reviewed every suspicious report for the whole year to get to the year count. Having the requirement for the whole year made the task more time consuming.

Questionnaire problem: She was not sure if we wanted custody issue cases where they knew the child was with a parent. For them, a child is not considered missing if a parent takes a child, even if the whereabouts are unknown, unless the parental rights have been terminated.

Almost all of their MC cases are assigned to the MC coordinator for the agency.

If we needed more information on a case, we were advised to send the request, not to the investigator but to the person who provided the case number who would then go through the case file.

Some agencies may have a category of suspicious cases that end up being MC.

LEA 4 (Pop: 90K)

- Result 2019 year total: 20 cases
- September 2019: 3 cases (complete information)
- Time: 10 minutes
- RMS system used: IMC Public Safety Software

No problems were encountered in the search or completion.

LEA 5 (Pop: 231K)

- Result 2019 year total: 431 cases
- September 2019: 22 cases (three missing complete information)
- Time: about 4 hours
- RMS system used: New World

For the month requested (September) they had a total of 41 runaway cases. To arrive at the number of runaway juvenile cases, the respondent took all of the runaway and missing person cases and then eliminated the missing adults. Due to a lack of time and resources, they were unable to provide information on three of the 22 cases. She asked the records office to check her numbers (they agreed).

Stage 1 Conclusions

1. Most agencies have an easy time finding cases with our instructions and our survey form.
2. The work time for these moderate size agencies was either quick or no longer than 3-4 hours.
3. Some agencies confine the search to the cases labeled as "*missing.*" One added a search for "*runaway.*" If they add *"runaway"* or *"custodial inference"* (thinking of family abduction) or *"suspicious"* cases, it can add time. This raises the question of whether we should specify only cases labeled "*missing person,*" without requesting any search of additional category files.
4. For some agencies, the task of counting all the cases in the full year does add to their burden.

Stage 2 Screener survey component

The goal of Stage 2 was (1) to test the recruitment letters and protocols with a variety of agencies of different sizes and geographies to see if they would respond, and (2) to provide the study with in-scope cases of missing children. Recruitment letters were sent to 50 agencies chosen at random from the national data base of agencies, limiting the choice to agencies that had not been recruited for the earlier LES-SK study to avoid over-burden. (See Appendix A for the Screener Survey Invitation to Agencies, and Appendix B for the Agency Screener Survey.)

The recruitment period ran from June 1, 2021 to August 31, 2021, three months, but the majority of agencies had responded by August 1, 2021 (within two months).

Table 1. LES-MC Pilot Study Summary	Count
Stage 1 –Pre-pilot	**5**
Stage 2 – Agency screener survey	
Agencies sent request	**50**
Response	
• *Agencies reporting cases*	13
• *Agencies reporting no cases*	12
• *Refused participation*	6
• *No jurisdiction*	1
• *No response*	18
Stage 3 – Investigator case information	
Cases collected from screener survey and pre-pilot	**236**
Invitations sent to investigators	**126**
• *Completed online*	*44*
• *Completed by phone/police report*	*20*
• *Logged in, not started*	*54*
• *Refused participation*	*25*
• *No response*	*10*
• *No investigator available*	*53*
Completed surveys	**64**
In scope	*61*
• *Out of scope*	*3*
• Debriefing	**63**

As shown in Table 1, 25 of the 50 agencies completed the survey, six refused participation, one claimed no jurisdiction and 18 failed to respond, yielding an overall response rate (including the no jurisdiction agency) of 52 percent. This is not a complete response rate that can be compared to other police survey studies, because the goal in this phase was to stop when 25 agencies had provided information. If a full nonresponse conversion effort had been made, compliance could have been considerably higher and in line with other police surveys.

Of the 25 agencies to complete the survey, 13 reported cases and 12 reported no cases. A total of 171 cases with complete information was obtained.

<u>Stage 2 Conclusions</u>

1. Police survey recruitment protocols similar to those used in the LES-SK study and other police case surveys did elicit responses from agencies, which met the requested criteria. In this sense, the recruitment instrument worked.
2. The study was not designed to maximize participation rate, but rather to end when 25 agencies had responded. Nonetheless, the 52 percent response rate for a three-month period suggests that with continued contact and response conversion extending through four months, rates in the 70 percent range, comparablity to other police surveys might be achieved.
3. A police survey using protocols similar to this pilot but of national scope would yield cases on which to base a national estimate and with which to analyze case characteristics. However, the study does not provide insight into biases that might exist in the agencies complying with the request or in the cases selected for inclusion. In a full national survey, some bias adjustment could be possible based on criteria like agency size and perhaps agency features like RMS system type.
4. It is our understanding that there are many different RMS systems, and many are additionally customized by local agencies. This study was not designed to assess the influence of RMS systems or their configuration on search results, a task perhaps better addressed in a more generic survey about crime data quality in the context of the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). The NISMART study in the future could consider collecting more information about RMS systems, asking about brand of system and a few key questions about categories and search capabilities. Some preliminary work with RMS providers might be helpful to this collection. It is not certain, but it is possible, that these data could be used to minimize bias in future NISMARTs. However, it should be kept in mind that such variability in the operationalizations of crime categories is endemic to most crime data in the United States. It may be unrealistic to expect NISMART data to be any more uniformly defined and operationalized than other crime categories.

Stage 3 Case survey component

The goal of Stage 3 was to test the case data collection instrument to see if investigators would complete it and if the questions were clear and interpretable to the respondents. An important element of Stage 3 was to test whether investigators could be persuaded to fill out questionnaires online (as a cost saving) and whether online responses provided adequate information. (See Appendix C for Survey Invitation to Investigators, and Appendix D for the Investigator Survey.)

A total of 234 cases were available for Stage 3 testing (Table 1), utilizing cases provided in both the Stages 1 and 2 recruitment. After eliminating cases with insufficient contact information (n = 33) and multiple cases investigated by the same investigator (n=60), recruitment letters were sent to 126 investigators. Up to five attempts were made to reach and remind investigators to complete surveys. Surveys were ultimately completed on 63 cases for a response rate of 50 percent. The recruitment period lasted two months from July 1, 2021 to August 31, 2021. We might have had a higher response rate if the recruitment period was extended, but our target goal was to collect 30 questionnaires, which we more than surpassed with 63. If we had continued phone calling and nonresponse conversion for

another two months, we believe the response rate would have been more typical of the 75 percent range we typically achieve in police surveys.

All investigators were initially urged to fill out the online survey. This resulted in 43 online completions. (Programming detected an additional 54 other distinct investigators who logged on to look at the survey site but did not begin the survey, i.e., answer the first question.) After the start of phone follow-up, 20 additional questionnaires were filled out via phone interview. This result (68 percent online) was very close to our target rate of two-thirds of completions online. All respondents were debriefed on their experience, either responding to a set of debriefing questions at the end of the questionnaire or via a telephone call made to the respondent.

Inspection of the questionnaires showed that respondents were able to readily navigate the questionnaires and provide interpretable answers. Almost all were able to provide answers to the questions about episode dynamics. There were 65 "don't know" responses to the seven questions about what the agency did to respond to the episode (went to household, interviewed household members, got photos, collected evidence, conducted search, secured scene, responded in other ways). This uncertainty is not surprising since some of the respondents were not the episode investigators but were filling out the questionnaire based on a written report. From debriefing interviews completed with all respondents, only a few problems were articulated by investigators, such as not having access to some of the information in their case files.

Of the MC investigator interview responses that were reviewed, all but one response was appropriate to the question being asked and interpretable to reviewers. The debrief question asking if there were any questions that were difficult to answer had just one response of *"no, just the time lapse."* This investigator did not describe whether "time lapse" meant the time lapse during the episode itself or the time lapse since the episode happened, but it was probably the latter since we were asking about 2019 cases.

Of the 63 investigators who completed the debrief questions for the MC study, the majority had no problems with the survey questions. Most completed the 132 question survey in 10 to 15 minutes with the maximum being 20 minutes. There were four investigators who made comments in relation to the questions, two of which were about not knowing what a question meant: *"One about the missing children clearinghouse-unsure of what this was."* They were apparently unaware of a missing children's clearinghouse in their state; some of these agencies are one-person operations in a state bureaucracy and not well known in the local law enforcement.

Another investigator noted that no questions were difficult to answer, *"just the time lapse"* (presumably having to recall information from 2019) and another investigator stated: *"Not difficult, more so unknowns if info wasn't in report."* Another investigator noted that: *"This case is two years old and I don't have access to look up this information at all times. This survey was completed away from computer access. I don't remember many details from this long ago. These surveys should be done much sooner than a two year span."* This is a reasonable complaint and the time delay should be less of a problem in future colllections.

Similarly, most investigators did not have additional descriptive information regarding their case. There was a total of 10 investigators who had additional information to provide. These responses fell into two categories: (1) Child Had Criminal/Drug History and (2) Other. An example of a response from Child Had Criminal/Drug History includes: *"This child has been a habitual runaway for years and is currently listed as a runaway out of another jurisdiction. This child has a criminal history, is on probation, and is believed*

to now be involved in human trafficking.” One example from the Other category includes: *“Nothing I can think of. What type of equipment was used to locate child, such as K-9's/drones, would be an interesting statistic to know.”*

Finally, most investigators believed the survey was an adequate/acceptable length. Two investigators made note that it was too long and another made note that it could be condensed *“down to a scrolling document instead of clicking through several pages.”* There were 10 surveys that were completed by sending a police report.

There was a total of three cases that were deemed out of scope for the MC study. There were two investigators who answered *“no”* to question 2, which asks if the incident involved a child who was missing from a caretaker who contacted the agency for help to locate or recover the child. One of these cases was described as follows:

 "*Children were outside playing and asking neighbors for food as they were hungry. Mom called them home and put them to bed at 7 pm. At 8 pm she checked and all the kids were gone. The children were found about an hour after they left the house.*" This case may in fact qualify, but the investigator may have decided that since it was a benign situation and the children returned with no LE effort, it did not qualify.

The two other cases had more clearcut disqualifications: one was out of the timeframe; the other: "*Frequent run away who is now 19-yrs old ran away from his mother at Walmart. He was located and his mother came and picked him up.*" This missing person was possibly not a child.

CONCLUSIONS

- Searching and providing case numbers and information for missing children cases is a relatively easy task for LEAs. Compared to searching for stranger kidnapping or family abduction or child victim of sex trafficking, the category *“missing child”* is a distinct and salient category in the record management systems that can be obtained with a relatively simple search.
- Most of the agencies could readily give us a count for the year, but for some agencies this added considerable burden. This may depend on the kind of record management software. Given that there is some additional precision that can be achieved by having some full annual accounts, we should leave this request in the agency questionnaire.
- Some agencies conducted searches in other files besides “missing persons,” including suspicious cases, abductions, and custody disputes. Our recommendation is that it provides a more systematic and efficient procedure to simply ask agencies for cases deemed by the dispatcher or investigator or records management system to be an MC case.
- The online case questionnaire worked well as anticipated. Two-thirds of the respondents provided the case details online. There were few complaints about the questionnaire or signs that respondents did not understand the questions or have suitable options for answers. We concluded that the online questionnaire should be retained as part of the methodology because it reduces telephone interviewing costs and it gives respondents a ready alternative to provide information without making an appointment or at times like evenings or weekends when an interviewer might not be available.
- Respondents provided substantial information about what the agency did to investigate and locate the MC. There were some respondents who said they “did not know” about specific

agency responses. This is understandable given that some respondents were not the original investigators and were filling out the questionnaire based on what information was available in the records. Records do not systematically include all relevant actions taken. It will not be possible to always speak to the original investigating agent since there is considerable staff turnover in agencies. Moreover, even investigators may not remember what they did, although future studies will be asking about more proximate episodes, given that the current study bypassed more proximate months to avoid COVID-19 influences, and asked about events 18 months in the past. Ideally, the case window should be about three months prior to the start of data collection to allow for case resolution, but to be proximate enough to find investigators and to have memories relatively fresh. This information, nonetheless, will be valuable in better understanding how MC cases are typically handled by police.

- Some additional questions should be added to the questionnaire to better calibrate the quality of the data being collected:

  a. A set of questions for the screener questionnaire about how the search for missing children was conducted by the agency.
  b. A question about whether the respondent to the questionnaire was an investigator on the case, and whether the questionnaire was being filled out based on the record and/or the respondent's recall.

- Although there might be some efficiencies about conducting the LES-MC survey in conjunction with the LES-FA and perhaps the LES-SK surveys, we concluded that this would not be a good idea. A key issue is the different time frame for the LES-MC search (one month).

List of Appendixes

Appendix A – Screener Survey Invitation to Agencies

Appendix B – Agency Screener Survey

Appendix C – Survey Invitation to Investigators

Appendix D – Investigator Survey

Appendix A
Screener Survey Invitation to Agencies

INSERT F_NAME, MID_INIT, L_NAME]   [INSERT DATE]
[INSERT DEPT NAME]
[INSERT ADDRESS 1]
[INSERT CITY], [INSERT STATE] [INSERT ZIP]

Dear [INSERT TITLE, L_NAME],

This letter is to request your agency's participation in a study designed to estimate the number of missing and recovered children in the U.S.

It is part of the Fourth National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children (NISMART-4), a congressionally mandated research effort funded by the U.S. Department of Justice. The ultimate study will update the national estimates of the number of children who go missing and the number recovered over the course of one year. It will also determine whether there have been any changes in the overall number of victims or in specific categories of victims.

Today we are requesting your help in an important first component of this study where we want to identify how law enforcement agencies search for relevant cases in their data system and what challenges they may encounter.

Enclosed is a survey packet for your agency. The packet includes the mail survey screener, glossary of terms, and frequently asked questions.

As part of the mail survey, we will be asking you to identify a sequence of up to 30 consecutive missing children cases reported to your agency. You should start the search on this date: **[DATE]**

Record the next 30 reported missing children cases, or the number reported in the next 30 days, which may be less than 30. If you prefer you can email us a listing in Excel or your own format.
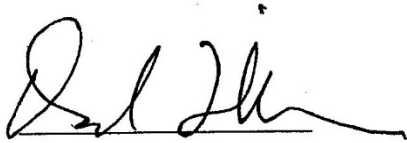
When conducting these searches please keep track of the problems you encounter and any questions you may have as we provide a place at the end of the survey where you can write these down. We anticipate that the process will take no more than 3 hours.

Your agency's participation is voluntary and will not affect the status of your agency in any way. The study avoids asking for personal identifying information about cases, such as victims' names. Throughout the research, all information that would link an agency with any specific case details will be kept in secure computer files, accessible to authorized study staff only.

Finally, federal law requires that all information be used for statistical purposes only—no specific agencies or cases will be identified in any publicized materials.

We will be happy to answer your questions about this project. Please call us at our number, 1-603-767-1010 or send an email to survey director David Finkelhor at David.finkelhor@unh.edu. Thank you so much for your assistance.

Sincerely,

David Finkelhor, Ph.D.
University of New Hampshire
Co-Principal Investigator

FEDERAL ASSURANCES OF CONFIDENTIALITY AND OTHER NOTICES

This data collection is authorized under the Missing Children's Assistance Act (see 34 U.S.C. § 11293(c)). NIJ, OJJDP, its employees, and its data collection agents will use the information you provide for statistical or research purposes only, and will not disclose your information in identifiable form without your consent to anyone outside of the research team. All personally identifiable data collected are protected under the confidentiality provisions of 34 U.S.C. § 10231, and any person who violates these provisions may be punished by a fine up to $10,000, in addition to any other penalties imposed by law. Your compliance with the request for information is entirely voluntary, and if you choose to provide information, you may discontinue at any time without penalty of any sort.

Under the Federal Paperwork Reduction Act, a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget control number. We try to create forms and instructions that are accurate, can be easily understood, and which impose the least possible burden on you to provide us with information. The completion of this task will involve possibly 3 hours of staff searching in the records management system for cases.

If you would like more information concerning this authorization or the confidentiality guarantee, have comments regarding the accuracy of the burden estimate, or have suggestions for making the form simpler, please contact Benjamin Adams, Social Science Analyst, at Benjamin.Adams@ojp.usdoj.gov . If you need assistance regarding this survey, please contact David Finkelhor at David.Finkelhor@unh.edu or call 1-603-767-1010.

Appendix B
Agency Screener Survey

NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT SURVEY ON MISSING CHILDREN & RECOVERY

Part of the 4th National Incidence Study of Missing, Abducted, Runaway & Thrownaway Children (NISMART-4)

Please provide the name, position, and contact information of the person completing this survey, in case we need to clarify responses or gather additional information.

NAME:	
POSITION OR TITLE:	
DEPARTMENT OR UNIT:	
TELEPHONE NUMBER:	( ) Ext.
EMAIL ADDRESS:	
DATE COMPLETED:	

SECTION A

1. Does your agency have jurisdiction to respond to reports of missing children?

    Yes ☐   No ☐ ————————————————→ *Skip to Section D, Page 5* ————————→

2. In 2019, did your agency respond to any cases where a child, aged 17 or younger, was reported <u>missing from a caretaker</u> who contacted your agency for help to <u>either locate or recover</u> the child?

    Yes ☐   No ☐ ——→ *Skip to Section C, Page 5*

3. Did any of these cases involve…

    a. A runaway <u>or repeat runaway</u>?.. Yes ☐   No ☐
    b. <u>A violation or alleged violation of a custodial order or agreement</u>? Yes ☐   No ☐
    c. A child who was <u>lost, stranded, injured</u> or too young to know how to return home or make contact with the caretaker?...................... Yes ☐   No ☐
    d. A child reported missing because of a <u>misunderstanding</u> or other <u>harmless circumstance</u>?.. Yes ☐   No ☐
    e. A child missing under <u>unknown circumstances</u>? .... Yes ☐   No ☐
    f. An <u>abduction by a nonfamily perpetrator</u>? .... Yes ☐   No ☐
    g. A <u>stranger abduction</u>? .... Yes ☐   No ☐

4. Indicate the total number of missing child cases that your agency investigated in 2019.

    Total Number of Missing Child Cases
    Investigated in 2019

    ☐

    <u>IMPORTANT:</u> *Please provide specific information about certain cases by completing Section B on the next page.*

SECTION B

Please give us a list of cases reported to your agency starting with September 1, 2019, listing the next 30 cases occurring on that date and subsequent days. Stop after searching 30 days even if there are fewer than 30 cases.

	a) Case Number *Provide your agency's case number for reference in our follow-up call*	b) Who was the key investigating officer or who in your agency is now the most knowledgeable person about the case?	d) When was the case reported? (MM/DD/YY)
1		Name Email	/ /
2		Name Email	/ /
3		Name Email	/ /
4		Name Email	/ /
5		Name Email	/ /
6		Name Email	/ /
7		Name Email	/ /
8		Name Email	/ /
9		Name Email	/ /
10		Name Email	/ /
11		Name Email	/ /
12		Name Email	/ /
13		Name Email	/ /
14		Name Email	/ /
15		Name Email	/ /

	a) Case Number *Provide your agency's case number for reference in our follow-up call*	b) Who was the key investigating officer or who in your agency is now the most knowledgeable person about the case?	d) When was the case reported? (MM/DD/YY)	
16		Name Email	/ /	
17		Name Email	/ /	
18		Name Email	/ /	
19		Name Email	/ /	
20		Name Email	/ /	
21		Name Email	/ /	
22		Name Email	/ /	
23		Name Email	/ /	
24		Name Email	/ /	
25		Name Email	/ /	
26		Name Email	/ /	
27		Name Email	/ /	
28		Name Email	/ /	
29		Name Email	/ /	
30		Name Email	/ /	

SECTION C

1.   Is your specific department or unit responsible for…..

    a.   Investigating missing children? .... Yes ☐   No ☐

    b.   Maintaining data on missing children? ...... Yes ☐   No ☐

SECTION D

You indicated in Section A that your agency does not have jurisdiction to respond to reports of missing children. Please describe what responsibilities do come under your agency's jurisdiction.

SECTION E

Please use this section to note the problems and questions you encountered as you tried to provide us with the requested information.

**THANK YOU FOR
COMPLETING THIS SURVEY.
PLEASE SCAN AND RETURN
THIS FORM TO
David.finkelhor@unh.edu**

**OR MAIL TO
David Finkelhor, Ph.D.
Crimes against Children Research Center
University of New Hampshire
Durham, NH 03824**

GLOSSARY OF STUDY TERMS

Child. Person under the age of 18.

Family abduction: The taking or keeping of a child by a family member in violation of a court order, written agreement or mutual understanding about custody or visitation rights

Family member: A biological, adoptive, step- or foster family member; someone acting on behalf of such a family member; or the romantic partner of a parent

Missing child: A child whose caregiver contacted the police in order to recover or locate the child.

Whereabouts unknown: The person who reported this incident did not have an address, telephone number or other information that works to contact the child or the perpetrator.

Endangerment: Caregiver believed that child was at risk of physical assault, sexual abuse, physical injury, or health problem in the company of the perpetrator.

Recovery: Child was returned or came back to the custody of the aggrieved caregiver

Violation of custody agreement: An aggrieved parent is stating that a specific part of a court order, written agreement or mutual understanding about custody or visitation rights has been violated

Appendix C
Survey Invitation to Investigators

National Law Enforcement Survey on Missing Children

Dear [INSERT NAME HERE],

We are conducting the pilot study for the National Law Enforcement Survey on Missing Children. Your agency completed a mail survey for us and gave us your name and email address so that you could complete an online survey about Case #####. The survey will take approximately **15 minutes to complete** and you will be able to pause the survey and go back to it at any time.

This study is part of the Fourth National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children (NISMART-4), funded by the US Department of Justice. The ultimate study will update the national estimates of missing children. It will determine whether there have been any changes in the overall number of victims or in specific categories of victims. It will also help improve law enforcement practice for this offense.

Your participation is voluntary and will not affect your status in your agency in any way. The study avoids asking for identifying information about cases, such as victims' names. Throughout the research, all information that would link an agency with any specific case details will be kept under lock and key or in secure computer files, accessible to authorized study staff only. Finally, federal law requires that all information be used for statistical purposes only—no specific agencies or cases will be identified in any publicized materials.

You can access the survey here:

CLICK HERE to open the survey.

If you prefer, you can also take the survey on the phone with a study interviewer. Email us if you prefer this option.

We will be happy to answer your questions about this project. Please call us at our number, 1-603-767-1010, or send an email to survey director David Finkelhor at David.Finkelhor@unh.edu. Thank you so much for your assistance.

Sincerely,

David Finkelhor, Ph.D.
University of New Hampshire
Co-Principal Investigator

FEDERAL ASSURANCES OF CONFIDENTIALITY AND OTHER NOTICES

This data collection is authorized under the Missing Children's Assistance Act (see, 34 U.S.C. § 11293(c)). NIJ, OJJDP, its employees, and its data collection agents will use the information you provide for statistical or research purposes only, and will not disclose your information in identifiable form without your consent to anyone outside of the research team. All personally identifiable data collected are protected under the confidentiality provisions of 34 U.S.C. § 10231, and any person who violates these provisions may be punished by a fine up to $10,000, in addition to any other penalties imposed by law. Your compliance with the request for information is entirely voluntary, and if you choose to provide information, you may discontinue at any time without penalty of any sort.

Under the Federal Paperwork Reduction Act, a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. We try to create forms and instructions that are accurate, can be easily understood, and which impose the least possible burden on you to provide us with information. We estimate that it will take 0.25 hours to complete this questionnaire. This estimate includes time for reviewing the instructions, searching for and gathering the data, completing the form, and reviewing answers.

If you would like more information concerning this authorization or the confidentiality guarantee, have comments regarding the accuracy of the burden estimate, or have suggestions for making the form simpler, please contact Benjamin Adams, Social Science Analyst, at Benjamin.Adams@usdoj.gov . If you need assistance regarding this survey, please contact David Finkelhor at David.Finkelhor@unh.edu or call 1-603-767-1010.

Appendix D
Investigator Survey

The Law Enforcement Survey on Missing Children (LES-MC)

MC1 Please give your <u>contact information</u> here so the researchers can reach you with any questions after they review your survey. This information will be deleted as soon as the research team verifies that your survey is complete.

MC1.1_NAME	Name _____
MC1.1_TITLE	Title _____
MC1.1 AGENCY	Agency_____
MC1.1_PHONE	Telephone number ( )_____
MC1.1_EMAIL	Email address_____

MC2 The incident number for this report is [number will be provided].

Please confirm that this incident involved a child, age 17 or younger, <u>missing from a caretaker</u> who contacted your agency for help to <u>either locate or recover</u> the child.

❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2) GO TO MC10a
❍ Don't know/Cannot determine (3

, go

MC3 Did the initial call occur between [TIME FRAME]?

❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2) GO TO END SURVEY
❍ Don't know/Cannot determine (3) GO TO END SURVEY

MC4 Did the <u>person who reported</u> this incident primarily want law enforcement to

○ Locate and recover a child whose <u>whereabouts</u> were <u>not known</u>, or (1)
○ Recover a child whose <u>whereabouts</u> were <u>known</u>? (2)
○ Don't know/Cannot determine (3)

MC5 Did the <u>person who reported</u> this incident have an address, telephone number or other information <u>that worked to contact</u> the child?

○ Yes (1)
○ No (2)
○ Don't know/Cannot determine (3)

MC5a Was this incident submitted to … (Please respond to both options)

	Yes (1)	No (2)	Don't know/Cannot determine (3)
National Crime Information Center (NCIC)? (1)	○	○	○
Missing Child Clearinghouse for your state? (2)	○	○	○

MC6 Was <u>more than one child</u> reported missing in this incident?

○ Yes, 2 children (1)
○ Yes, 3 or more children (Enter number) (2) ____ _____
○ No, 1 child (3)_____ MC9
○ Don't know/Cannot determine (4)_____MC9

MC1.6V We will be asking you a set of questions for each child victim in this incident (up to 5 child victims). In order to make it clear which child victim you are answering questions about, we would like for you to give a label or code for up to 5 child victims in the table below. We will use the label/code you provide to identify the victim (for the purposes of this survey only).

MC6.V1	
MC6.V2	
MC6.V3	
MC6.V4	
MC6.V5	

MC7 How did the children know each other?

○ Siblings or step-siblings (1)_____MC9
○ Related as family some other way, such as cousins (2)_____MC9
○ Living in a group home or treatment or detention facility for juveniles (3)___ MC9
○ Friends, acquaintances or schoolmates (4)_____ MC9
○ Something else (Please describe) (5) _____ _____ MC9
○ Don't know/Cannot determine (6)_____ MC9

MC9 How was the person who reported the incident related to the child? (If more than one child was involved, please answer about the closest relationship.)

○ Parent or step-parent (1)
○ Other relative [This option will provide a pre-coded pull down list.] (2)
       Grandmother (or1)
       Grandfather (or2)
       Aunt (or3)
       Uncle (or4)
       Sister (including Half-sister or Step-sister) (or5)
       Brother (including Half-brother or Step-brother) (or6)
       Cousin (or7)
○ Employee of school or daycare (3)
○ Employee of group home or treatment, detention or other juvenile facility (4)
○ Someone else (Please describe) (5) _____
       Adult friend (se1)
       Child's friend (other minor or youth) (se2)
       Attorney (se3)
       Social worker (se4)
       Teacher or school official (se5)
       Coach (se6)
       Leader of extracurricular activity (troop leader, etc.) (se7)

○ Don't know/Cannot determine (6)

MC10 Does the incident log or record indicate that this episode involved any of the following? (Please respond to all options.)

	Yes (1)	No (2)	Don't know/Cannot determine (3)
A runaway? (1)	○	○	○
A repeat runaway? (2)	○	○	○
A violation or alleged violation of a custodial order or agreement? (3)	○	○	○
A child who was lost, stranded, injured or too young to know how to return home or make contact with caretaker? (4)	○	○	○
A child reported missing because of a misunderstanding or other harmless circumstance? (4)	○	○	○
A child missing under unknown circumstances? (5)	○	○	○
An abduction by a nonfamily perpetrator? (6)	○	○	○
A stranger abduction? (7)	○	○	○

MC10a Please describe briefly what happened during this episode. To the best of your knowledge, how did it take place and why? What happened to the child or children during and after the incident?

[TEXT ENTRY]_____[ALLOW EQUIVALENT 1 PAGE]

If MC2 = 2, GO TO END SURVEY

32

MC11 INTRODUCTION FOR MORE THAN ONE CHILD: The next questions ask about the child victims in this incident. Since there is more than one victim in this incident please start with [TEXT FROM MC1.6V1].

MC11 Is this child male or female? (If more than one child was involved, please start with the oldest.)

❍ Male (1)
❍ Female (2)
❍ Don't know/Cannot determine (3)

.

MC12 How <u>old</u> was this child at the time of the initial call? If you are unsure of the child's age, please give your **best guess**.

❍ Less than 1 year old (1)
❍ 1 year old or older (2) **MC12-2 AGE** Please enter age in years (whole numbers only))_____
❍ Don't know/Cannot determine (3)

MC13 Is this child <u>Hispanic or Latino/a</u>?

❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)
❍ Don't know/Cannot determine (3)

MC14 What is this child's <u>race</u>?

❍ White (1)
❍ Black or African American (2)
❍ American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
❍ Asian (4)
❍ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
❍ Other (6) _____
❍ Don't know/Cannot determine (7)

MC15 Was this child <u>at risk</u> or <u>endangered</u> because of a <u>medical condition</u>, <u>disability</u> or <u>other condition or circumstance</u>, such as drug use?

❍ Yes (1) Please describe:_____
❍ No (2)
❍ Don't know/Cannot determine (3)

MC16 What was the <u>outcome</u> of this incident for this child?

○ Returned (1)_____MC19

○ Located but not returned (2)

○ Not returned and not located (3)

○ Don't know/Cannot determine (4)_____ MC21

MC17 Sometimes records are not updated to show that a child has been recovered. Which do you think is more likely?

○ This child has not returned home, or (1)_____

○ This child has returned but the record has not been updated (2)_____

○ Don't know/Cannot determine (3)_____

IF MC16 = 2 (Located but not returned), go to MC18

IF MC16 = 3 (Not returned and not located), go to MC21

MC18 Please explain why the child was not returned.

[TEXT ENTRY]_____

If MC16 = 2 (located not returned), go to MC20.

MC19 (If returned)

How much time passed from the initial call to your agency until this child's <u>return home</u>)? (Your best estimate is fine.) Please enter the number of hours, days, weeks or months below.

○ Hours (1) _____ _____MC21

○ Days (2) _____ _____MC21

○ Weeks (3) _____ _____MC21

○ Months (4) _____ _____MC21

○ Don't know/Cannot determine (5)_____ MC21

MC20 How much time passed from the initial call to your agency until <u>the child was located</u>? (Your best estimate is fine.) Please enter the number of hours, days, weeks or months below.

❍ Hours (1) _____
❍ Days (2) _____
❍ Weeks (3) _____
❍ Months (4) _____
❍ Don't know/Cannot determine (5)

MC21 Was this child reported missing at any other time between [TIME FRAME]?

❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)
❍ Don't know/Cannot determine (3)

MULTIPLE CHILDREN LOOP

If MC6 = 1 or 2 (multiple children), questions MC11—MC21 will repeat for each child.

After last child, go to MC22a.

POLICE RESPONSE

MC22 During the initial call was information logged about ... (Please respond to all options)

	Yes (1)	No (2)	Don't know/ Cannot determine (3)
Where child was <u>last seen</u>? (1)	○	○	○
<u>Who child was with</u> when last seen? (2)	○	○	○
Child's <u>physical description</u> and clothing? (4)	○	○	○
Whether child has <u>medical conditions</u>, disabilities? (5)	○	○	○
Whether child had <u>cell phone</u>? (6)	○	○	○
Any <u>mode of travel</u> for child (walking, bicycle, motor vehicle)? (7)	○	○	○

IF MC6 = 3 (1 child) or 4 (Don't know/Cannot determine), GO TO MC23

MC22a During the initial call was information logged about ... (Please respond to all options)

	Yes (1)	No (2)	Don't know/ Cannot determine (3)
Where children were <u>last seen</u>? (1)	○	○	○
<u>Who children were with</u> when last seen? (2)	○	○	○
Children's <u>physical description</u> and clothing? (4)	○	○	○
Whether children have <u>medical conditions</u>, disabilities? (5)	○	○	○
Whether children have <u>cell phones</u>? (6)	○	○	○
Any <u>mode of travel</u> for children (walking, bicycle, motor vehicle)? (7)	○	○	○

MC23 How did your agency respond to this incident? (Please answer all options.)

	Yes (1)	No (2)	Don't know/ Cannot determine (3)
<u>Sent officers to</u> a child's <u>household</u> or to the scene (1)	❍	❍	❍
<u>Interviewed</u> household members (2)	❍	❍	❍
Got child <u>photos</u> (3)	❍	❍	❍
Collected <u>other evidence</u> (4)	❍	❍	❍
<u>Conducted a search</u> (5)	❍	❍	❍
<u>Secured the scene</u> (6)	❍	❍	❍
Investigated or responded in other ways (Describe) (7)	❍	❍	❍

MC24 Did your agency bring <u>other agencies</u> into an investigation or <u>refer</u> the case to another agency?

- ❍ Yes, brought other agency or agencies into the investigation (1)
- ❍ Yes, referred the case to another agency (2)
- ❍ No (3) GO TO MC26 INTRO
- ❍ Don't know/Cannot determine (4) GO TO MC26 INTRO

MC25 What agencies were brought into the investigation or did you refer the case to? Please <u>list</u> each agency by <u>name, county and state</u>.

[TEXT ENTRY]_____

MC26 INTRODUCTION: We would now like to ask you just a few questions about your experiences answering questions about this case.

MC26   First, did you find any questions difficult to answer? If so, which ones and what made them difficult?

MC27   Are there any questions I should have asked about this case but didn't? If yes, what other parts of the case should we know about?

MC28   How did you feel about the length of the survey?

ENDSURVEY1 We are only including certain incidents in this study and this case does not qualify. There are no further questions about this case. Thank you for your time.