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OJJDP NEWS @ a Glance

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Attorney General Appoints AAG Daniels National Coordinator for AMBER Alert

On October 2, 2002, Attorney General John Ashcroft designated Deborah J. Daniels, Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs, to serve as AMBER Alert National Coordinator at the Department of Justice. AMBER Alert plans are voluntary partnerships between law enforcement agencies and public broadcasters to notify the public when a child has been abducted. The first AMBER plan was introduced in Texas in 1996 in memory of Amber Hagerman, a young Dallas girl who was kidnapped and murdered. Since then, more than 60 plans have been established at the local, regional, and state levels. Twenty-four states have statewide plans in place.

President Bush highlighted the AMBER Alert concept at the October 2 White House Conference on Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Children. In reference to the Attorney General's appointment of a National Coordinator for AMBER Alert, the President said, "We should not allow another day to go by without taking steps to expand the AMBER plans' reach all across our country."

As National Coordinator, Ms. Daniels will help develop, enhance, and coordinate AMBER plans nationwide. She will serve as a central point of contact, working with states and localities to increase the number of AMBER plans and ensuring that these plans work together to create a national network.



Deborah J. Daniels, Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs.

"Our intent is not to make AMBER a federal program," said Ms. Daniels. "Rather, we want to help communities, states, and regions to develop effective AMBER Alert plans and collaborations among themselves. It is critical that we assist communities throughout the nation in being prepared to act in those decisive first hours after an abduction." Statistics indicate that children are at greatest risk of harm in the first hours after an abduction: of those children who are killed by their abductor, 74 percent are killed within 3 hours, and 99 percent within 24 hours.

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AMBER Alert (continued from page 1)

In announcing Ms. Daniels's appointment, Attorney General Ashcroft noted, "Few things grip law enforcement with more urgency than finding a missing child. Rapid response is vital in abduction cases, and taking the acclaimed AMBER Alert system nationwide will save lives and thwart would-be predators." The Attorney General will provide approximately \$3 million to deliver AMBER Alert training and technical assistance resources to front-line authorities, develop voluntary standards for activating alerts, and support software upgrades for emergency alert systems. The U.S. Department of Transportation has pledged an additional \$7 million to assist communities with AMBER Alert activities.

"AMBER" stands for **A**merica's **M**issing: **B**roadcast **E**mergency **R**esponse. AMBER Alert plans activate urgent bulletins in the

most serious cases of child abduction, with the goal of instantly galvanizing the entire community to assist in the search for and safe return of the child. The plans use the same Emergency Alert System (EAS) deployed in severe weather emergencies. When a law enforcement agency confirms that a child has been abducted, it notifies a designated primary EAS radio station, which relays the information to all area radio and TV stations and cable systems. Radio stations then interrupt their programming with the alert, and TV stations and cable systems run a "crawl" message on the screen (often with a photo of the child). Some AMBER plans also use electronic highway billboards to disseminate the alerts.

Interest in AMBER Alert is growing steadily. A National AMBER Alert Network Act has been passed by the U.S. Senate and is pending in the House of Representatives.

Recently, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and America Online, Inc., announced the launch of "AOL AMBER Alert," which expands the reach of AMBER bulletins via the Internet. Regional conferences are being held to facilitate greater collaboration among AMBER Alert plans of neighboring states, and new successes provide an impetus for the addition of new communities to the effort. Since the establishment of the first AMBER Alert plan in 1996, 32 abducted children have been successfully recovered as a direct result of the prompt response of communities using their AMBER Alert plans.

"These successes," said Ms. Daniels, "demonstrate that the AMBER Alert plan can save the lives of children all over the country. We will do everything we can to see that our communities are fully prepared to protect these, our most vulnerable and precious citizens." ■

OJJDP Highlights for 2002

The year 2002 has seen challenges, accomplishments, and new directions at OJJDP. This article summarizes some of the year's highlights.

As 2001 drew to a close, mail service to OJJDP and other federal offices was severely disrupted by the September 11 terrorist acts and subsequent anthrax attacks. OJJDP staff faced a huge backlog of mail, which delayed the release of the **FY 2002 Final Program Plan** until mailed comments on the proposed plan could be reviewed. The final plan, which appeared in the *Federal Register* on June 5, 2002, outlined OJJDP's priorities related to offender reentry, capacity building in community- and faith-based organizations, and the prevention of juvenile drug use and school violence.

Throughout 2002, OJJDP placed high priority on ensuring that serious and violent juvenile offenders could safely and successfully return to their communities after leaving correctional facilities. The Office was one of many federal partners in the new

Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative, an innovative program that awarded more than \$100 million in funding to 68 programs throughout the country. OJJDP also continued to work with other federal agencies to address youth-related issues through the **Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention**.

In April, **J. Robert Flores** was sworn in as OJJDP's new Administrator. Setting forth the goals for his tenure at OJJDP, Mr. Flores emphasized the importance of protecting public safety and the significance of failing to prevent delinquency. "When we fail with children, the economic costs are great, but the costs in terms of lost opportunity are astronomical," he noted.

On May 23, OJJDP and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) marked the 20th anniversary of the Missing Children's Act at the annual **National Missing Children's Day** ceremony in Washington, DC. During the ceremony, several

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AMBER Alert: Success Stories and Related Resources

Success Stories

These are a few of the AMBER Alert success stories documented by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).

- **August 2002: Orange County, California.** Late one night, 16-year-old Tamara Brooks and 17-year-old Jacqueline Marris were parked at a local “lovers’ lane” with their boyfriends, in two separate cars. A man came out of the bushes, held all four teens at gunpoint, then tied up both boys, put the girls in one of the cars, and sped off. As soon as authorities were alerted and confirmed that the girls were in danger, an AMBER Alert was issued across the region describing the girls, suspect, and vehicle (including the license plate number). An animal control agent, who had seen the license number in an AMBER Alert on an electronic highway sign, spotted the vehicle and called authorities. Law enforcement officers were soon at the scene, and the girls were safely recovered.
- **August 2002: Riverside, California.** After 10-year-old Nichole Timmons was reported missing by her mother early one morning, law enforcement officers went door-to-door attempting to

obtain information and soon concluded that a former babysitter had taken Nichole and was capable of harming her. Officials immediately issued an AMBER Alert, and the California Highway Patrol also requested activation of the Emergency Alert System in neighboring Nevada. That afternoon, a motorist in Hawthorne, NV, recognized the suspect’s vehicle from the alert and notified authorities. The abductor was apprehended, and Nichole was safely reunited with her mother.

- **April 2001: Houston, Texas.** A man enticed five young children into an ambulance by saying it was a playroom. Before the ambulance drove off, all of the children managed to escape—except 5-year-old Maria Cuellar. An AMBER Alert was broadcast almost immediately throughout the region describing Maria, her abductor, and the ambulance. Soon, a citizen reported seeing a child with someone matching the broadcasters’ description of the suspect, and police quickly searched the area where the child was seen. Within a matter of 3 hours, the abductor was apprehended and Maria was reunited with her family. ■

Related Resources

Information about AMBER Alert and missing children is available from the sources described below.

- For complete details about AMBER Alert, visit the NCMEC Web site at missingkids.com. The NCMEC site includes guidelines for establishing a local AMBER Alert plan, an “AMBER Alert Kit” for law enforcement agencies and broadcasters, and information on AMBER Alert plan locations.
- The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) produces a number of publications related to missing children, including OJJDP’s recently updated *When Your Child Is Missing: A Family Survival Guide* and a new series of bulletins based on the Second National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children (NISMAART-2). For online access to all OJP publications on this topic, visit the OJP Web site at www.ojp.usdoj.gov.
- Visit the OJP Web site for news from the recent White House Conference on Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Children and the 2002 National Missing Children’s Day ceremony commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Missing Children’s Act. At www.ojp.usdoj.gov, go to the Bureaus and Offices pulldown menu and select Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. ■

OJJDP Highlights (continued from page 2)

law enforcement officers were honored for their efforts on behalf of missing and exploited children.

During June, OJJDP participated in the first **National Youth Summit**, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in collaboration with several other federal agencies. At the 3-day event, which took place in Washington, DC, a diverse group of young people and adults gathered to promote the concept of positive youth development. June also brought the third OJJDP National Youth Gang Symposium, which was held in Orlando, FL, and drew more than 1,200 participants. In August, more than 2,000 professionals from the law enforcement and child protection communities gathered in Dallas, TX, for the 14th Annual Crimes Against Children Conference, sponsored by OJJDP. Administrator Flores challenged conference participants to “leave no child unprotected” from the dangers of child abuse, child pornography and prostitution, and other crimes.

OJJDP and the National Youth Court Center (NYCC) designated September as the first **National Youth Court Month**. As part of the observance, NYCC disseminated an online Action Kit to help communities promote youth courts. Earlier in the year, OJJDP’s Youth Court program was recognized at the United Nations’ Special Session on Children, and the OJJDP-funded Youth Court Training Package received a prestigious national award from the Association of Educational Publishers.

The first **White House Conference on Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Children** was held on October 2 in Washington, DC. OJJDP and NCMEC joined the White House in sponsoring the conference, which was designed to raise public awareness and give practitioners and others an opportunity to share progress and ideas. President Bush presented keynote remarks, and several top-ranking federal officials — Attorney General John Ashcroft, Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson, Education

Secretary Rod Paige, FBI Director Robert Mueller, and Secretary of State Colin Powell — provided a variety of perspectives on the issue. In connection with the conference, OJJDP released a major new series of bulletins summarizing findings from the Second National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children (NISMART-2).

OJJDP’s **information dissemination** activities during 2002 included inauguration of a series of bulletins on youth violence research, produced in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In connection with its growing emphasis on electronic dissemination, OJJDP moved forward with major redesign work on the Office’s Web site and an ancillary site, the Statistical Briefing Book. The year 2002 also marked the introduction of *OJJDP News @ a Glance*. To read more about OJJDP’s activities in the online versions of *News @ a Glance*, visit ojjdp.ncjrs.org/about/newsletter.html. ■

In the Publications Pipeline

Among the publications currently in the production pipeline at OJJDP is a new series of bulletins on child delinquency, highlighted below. For the latest information on recent publications, be sure to check the OJJDP Web site’s “New Releases” page at ojjdp.ncjrs.org/pubs/new.html.

New Series on Child Delinquency

Compared with juveniles whose delinquent behavior starts later in adolescence, child delinquents

(those younger than 13) face a greater risk of becoming serious, violent, and chronic juvenile offenders. An understanding of the nature of child offending can facilitate the development of effective prevention and intervention programs.

Drawing on research conducted by OJJDP’s Study Group on Very Young Offenders, the bulletins in the new Child Delinquency Series present the latest information about child delinquency. The bulletins provide analyses of statistics, insights into the early origins of very young offending, and descriptions of early intervention programs and

approaches that focus on risk and protective factors to prevent the development of delinquent behavior.

The following bulletins in this series are nearing completion:

- *Child Delinquency: Early Intervention and Prevention*
- *Prevalence and Development of Child Delinquency*
- *Risk and Protective Factors of Child Delinquency*
- *Treatment, Services, and Intervention Programs for Child Delinquents* ■

Funding Update

Be sure to check the OJJDP Web site regularly for the latest news on OJJDP funding opportunities, including grant application information, materials, and deadlines. (Go to ojjdp.ncjrs.org and click on the "Grants & Funding" icon.) To receive e-mail notification of new funding opportunities, subscribe to JUVJUST. (Go to ojjdp.ncjrs.org and click on the "Subscribe to JUVJUST" icon.)

Solicitation

OJJDP is soliciting FY 2003 grant applications for the **Drug-Free Communities Support Program**. A collaborative effort of OJJDP and the Executive Office of the President, Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), this program serves as a catalyst for

community involvement in confronting the problem of substance abuse among youth. The program seeks to strengthen community antidrug coalitions and to enhance cooperation and coordination at the federal, state, and local levels. For additional information about the program, visit OJJDP's Drug-Free Communities Support Program Web site at ojjdp.ncjrs.org/dfcs/index.html.

OJP Institutes Online Grants Management System

In an effort to expedite the processing of grant applications and facilitate the dissemination of funds, the Office of Justice Programs is implementing an online Grants Management System (GMS). The goal

of GMS is to streamline the receipt, review, and processing of requests for funding.

Applying through GMS is easy. At the GMS Web site, grants.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.html, onscreen instructions lead applicants through the process, showing them how to complete online forms and submit additional information (such as budgets and project narratives) as attachments. Applicants can review materials before submitting them, and the system notifies applicants if they have not completed a required element. Technical assistance is available in the online *Applicant Procedures* handbook or through the toll-free GMS hotline (888-549-9901).

For more information, visit the GMS Web site noted above. ■

Miss America Campaigns Against Bullying

Miss America 2003, Erika Harold, recently visited the Department of Justice to discuss her efforts to combat the problems of bullying and youth violence. Ms. Harold, who was a victim of vicious harassment while in high school, has chosen an anti-bullying/anti-violence platform for her reign as Miss America. She is collaborating with government and private sector organizations to promote the theme of "Preventing Youth Violence and Bullying: Respect Yourself, Protect Yourself."

Enduring some form of bullying has long been regarded as an

almost inevitable part of growing up. However, reports that bullying may have been a contributing factor in school shootings and juvenile suicides have brought the problem under greater scrutiny. A study by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) estimated that 1.6 million children in grades 6 through 10 are bullied at least once a week and 1.7 million bully others as frequently. The NICHD study also found that bullying has long-term and short-term psychological effects on both victims and perpetrators.

As part of the "Blueprints for Violence Prevention" initiative at the Center for the Study and Prevention

of Violence, OJJDP sponsors replication of the Bullying Prevention Program—a school-based model for reducing and preventing bullying problems. To learn more about this program, visit www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/model/programs/BPP.html.

Additional information about bullying is available in the following OJJDP publications: *Addressing the Problem of Juvenile Bullying* (ojjdp.ncjrs.org/pubs/fact.html#fs200127) and *Combating Fear and Restoring Safety in Schools* (ojjdp.ncjrs.org/pubs/violvict.html#167888). ■



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

News @ a Glance is OJJDP's bimonthly newsletter, bringing you up-to-date notices of agency activities, recent publications, funding opportunities, and upcoming events—with an emphasis on providing quick access to online sources for publications and other resources. Let us know what types of features would be most useful to you (e-mail askjj@ncjrs.org).

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