



# Department of Justice



## Office of Justice Programs

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### **JUSTICE DEPARTMENT HONORS ILLINOIS SERGEANT WITH MISSING CHILDREN'S LAW ENFORCEMENT AWARD**

WASHINGTON – The Department of Justice today awarded Sergeant Stefan Bjes with the Missing Children's Law Enforcement Award as part of the 38th annual commemoration of National Missing Children's Day. Throughout his 21-year career with the Addison Police Department in Illinois, Sergeant Bjes has developed several programs that have enhanced the safety of children with special needs. The Missing Children's Law Enforcement Award recognizes the extraordinary efforts of law enforcement officers who have made a significant investigative or program contribution to the safety of children.

From November 2019 to November 2020, Sergeant Bjes introduced the use of picture cards to help first responders communicate with nonverbal children. He partnered with MedicAlert to register children with disabilities who may wander away from their homes and updated the city's Premise Alert program to include places missing children may go and strategies to help calm those in distress.

"Children with special needs are the most vulnerable of a vulnerable group, so it is heartening to see a respected law enforcement professional like Sergeant Bjes working so hard, and with such deep compassion, on their behalf," said Amy Solomon, Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the Justice Department's Office of Justice Programs. "The Department of Justice applauds his concern for the welfare of these young people and we commend him for the extraordinary example he sets for his colleagues and peers."

Sergeant Bjes has equipped the Addison Police Department vehicles with sensory kits for officers' use when interacting with children with special needs, provided 911 dispatchers with resources for taking calls involving people with special needs and initiated a program encouraging families and caregivers to display window decals on their homes as an alert to first responders. Sergeant Bjes has also trained officers at 15 police departments across the Midwest and frequently presents at police conferences nationwide.

"Sergeant Bjes is a model of creativity and compassion for law enforcement professionals across Illinois and throughout the Midwest," said Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Acting Administrator Chyrl Jones. "The Department of Justice applauds him not only for his stellar innovations with the Addison Police Department, but also for his willingness to share his expertise with other departments to ensure the safety of children with special needs."

The Department also recognized one sergeant and four detectives from Fresno, California, a United States Postal Service employee from Columbia, Maryland, and two coordinators from the Department of the Attorney General's Missing Child Center-Hawaii for their efforts to bring missing children home. The Department declared Heidi Jimena Perez Veleta from Sunnyside Elementary School in Dodge City, Kansas, winner of the 2021 National Missing Children's Day

poster contest.

Every year on May 25, the Office of Justice Programs and its Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention lead the nation in observing National Missing Children's Day, first proclaimed by President Ronald Reagan in 1983. This day shines a spotlight on child safety and honors the professionals dedicated to protecting children around the country.

In lieu of an in-person ceremony, OJJDP is launching a [website](#) today featuring information about the awardees and statements from Attorney General Merrick B. Garland, Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta, OJP Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Solomon, OJJDP Acting Administrator Jones and President and CEO of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children John F. Clark.

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The Office of Justice Programs provides federal leadership, grants, training, technical assistance and other resources to improve the nation's capacity to prevent and reduce crime, advance racial equity in the administration of justice, assist victims and enhance the rule of law. More information about OJP and its components can be found at [www.ojp.gov](http://www.ojp.gov).

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