

# THE AMBER ADVOCATE

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Your story ideas and pictures are welcome.

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# 2016 TRIBAL SYMPOSIUM

## “OH CHILD WHERE ARE YOU?” TRIBAL CHILD PROTECTION SYMPOSIUM LOOKS TO ANCIENT TRADITIONS TO HELP FIND MISSING NATIVE AMERICAN CHILDREN IN THE FUTURE

The Tribal Child Protection Leadership Forum and Symposium began with a traditional Native American blessing that included the words, “Oh child where are you?” The events took place in Scottsdale, Arizona, July 19-21, 2016, and included representatives from more than 25 tribes who shared lessons learned and experiences with AMBER Alert Coordinators, Missing Persons Clearinghouse Managers and Child Abduction Response Team (CART) members.

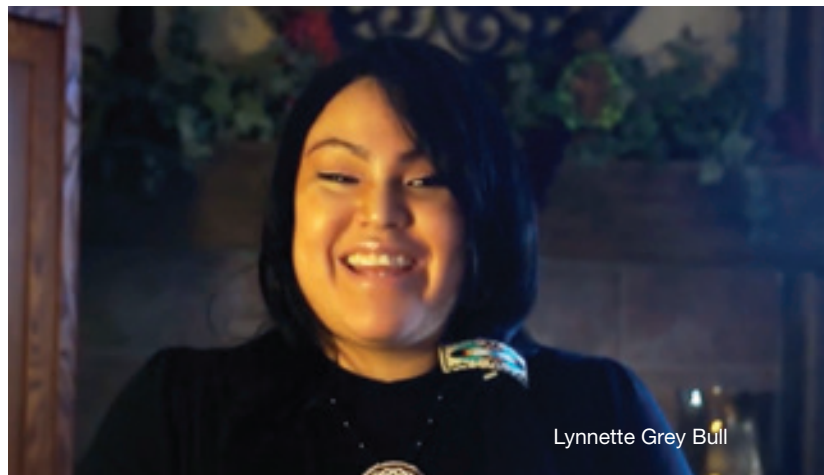
“We are all here with the goal of protecting children,” said Robert Listenbee, Administrator for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. “The children in Indian Country are overlooked and underserved.”

Listenbee said technology has increased the victimization and trafficking of Native American children and noted American Indian and Alaska Native children are exposed to violence more than any other minority in America.

### Recognizing the Risks

Director of “Not Our Native Daughters” Lynnette Grey Bull said the biggest problem is that people do not believe sexual trafficking and exploitation is happening in Indian Country. “I have not been to a tribe where it was not happening,” said Grey Bull. “You won’t see a pimp with a big purple hat come on to the reservation. Anywhere you see poverty, you will see trafficking.”

“Not Our Native Daughters” is a non-profit



Lynnette Grey Bull

organization focusing on ending human trafficking in tribal communities. Grey Bull shared startling statistics for Native Americans.

- A 50% higher rate for sexual assault for Native American women
- The highest suicide, rape and murder rates for all ethnicities
- 14% have no education and 20 percent do not have indoor plumbing
- The lowest life expectancy - between 47 and 55 years old
- The highest rate of death from tragedy, accidents, alcohol and drug use

The U.S. Department of Justice found 70 percent of the violence was caused by non-Native perpetrators.

Arizona State University professor Dominique Roe-Sepowitz has also been studying the unique and critical challenges for Native American sex trafficking victims. The university’s study interviewed victims ages 13 to 42.

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# 2016 TRIBAL SYMPOSIUM

Continued from page 3

- 60% of victims' parents never married, 59% of family members have drug and/or alcohol problems, 54% of victims ran away and 75% had family members in jail
- 63% of victims had been molested, 46% had been raped and 28% experienced emotional abuse
- 58% of victims were addicted to alcohol or drugs, with 90% taking drugs and 50% believing they drink excessively



Dominique Roe-Sepowitz

"Trafficking victims do not leave, because they have nowhere to go, they have no income and they need shelter," said Roe-Sepowitz. She emphasized that we need to develop a

collaborative way to help Native American victims of sex trafficking.

"You can't go anywhere without people talking about human trafficking," said longtime human trafficking victim advocate Cindy McCain. "It used to be no one talked about it or that it even exists."

McCain called trafficking an "epidemic as deadly as Zika or Ebola." She said many children from the reservations are ending up in other countries. McCain added that the problem is exasperated by a culture that demeans women and children.

"Real men do not buy little girls," McCain remarked. "Pimps are not cool. They are not

'good-old' boys. They are pedophiles and sex offenders and need to be treated as such."

AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance (AATTAP) Program Administrator Jim Walters said he first learned about the problem while working as a police officer. "I remembered meeting a woman who said, 'Give me the drugs I want and you can have sex with my daughter.' The girl was 14." Walters explained law enforcement at that time was just beginning to recognize and understand the problem of human trafficking and must be trained and prepared to better and more fully understand the scope and complexity of the problem in tribal communities and across the U.S.

## Tribal Challenges

Tribal communities have additional barriers in prosecuting child sex abuse cases. Geri Wisner is the Tribal Prosecutor for the Pawnee Nation Court and Wyandotte Tribe of Oklahoma, and the Executive Director for the Native American Children's Alliance (NACA).

"I look at our tribal codes and there is no language to deal with child sex abuse and no tribe has a law against human trafficking," said Wisner. "If we are truly sovereign, it is our responsibility to make the laws that can be enforced so we can have justice."

Wisner recommended taking the Native American oral tradition and writing it into law. "We cannot wait for the federal government to fix all this," she said. "If we write it down, we can write it in our own way with our own traditions and sense of justice."

Valerie Bribiescas is a member of the Navajo Nation and a detective with the Maricopa County Attorney's Office in Arizona. She



said non-Indian investigators often do not understand the culture, and as a result can offend victims who are already reluctant to talk.

“A lot of our victims go home and do not want to come back and testify,” said Bribiescas. “They do not want their families to know they are part of trafficking and want to leave it be. It is going to be difficult to get victims to come to court.”

Bribiescas challenged Native Americans to teach others about the culture so more victims can be helped.

“Our girls are being utilized over and over and that is why we have to work with outside entities,” she added. “We have to learn from each other.”

### **Additional Resources**

The U.S. has 61 Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Forces, yet no tribal teams. However, the White Mountain Apache tribe has created the first tribal ICAC affiliate.

Phoenix Police Sergeant Jerry Barker oversees the Arizona ICAC and has met with 19 tribes to educate members about what resources are available. He is bringing equipment, training, funding and additional manpower to help the tribes become part of the solution.

“The cases are the same on the reservation as you would see in an expensive neighborhood,” said Barker. “When we find child pornography suspects, they are in

every community. The only difference is the location.”

Former Montana Law Enforcement Officer and AATTAP Consultant Derek VanLuchene urged tribal representatives to come together and make a plan, form a Child Abduction Response Team (CART), become affiliated with ICAC and assign a main contact for AMBER Alerts.

“Have conversations with the community about the overall protection of children,” he said. “Identify what you have and what you need. Knowledge is power.”

Trafficking survivor Jeri Jimenez summarized the mission ahead with a quote from former Cherokee Tribal Chief Wilma Mankiller, “We must trust our own thinking. Trust where we’re going. And get the job done.”



Gerri Wisner and Cindy McCain

# 2016 TRIBAL SYMPOSIUM

## A VICTIM'S STORY: WE HAVE TO REMEMBER WHO WE ARE TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

Jeri Jimenez has had a lifetime of trauma. She was molested at age 4, grew up in a family with physical and sexual violence and became a victim of sex trafficking after leaving her violent husband.



Jimenez is a member of the Klamath Tribe. During the Tribal Symposium, she shared her story with tribal law enforcement and child protection leaders from across the country. Jimenez explained how her experience is part of the long history of Native Americans facing trauma, genocide and stolen lands.

“We are finding it is in our DNA,” she said. “I figured that this was what life was like.”

Jimenez left her abusive husband but had to battle him in court for custody of their daughter. “Every time we met he would beat the crap out of me,” she said.

She went back home, but did not find any job opportunities on the reservation so she moved in with a friend in Portland, Oregon. Her friend convinced her to join “the life” of prostitution so she could pay her bills.

“Prostitution happens when you do not have a choice. When you have no choices you are not making a choice. It is a lack of choice,” said Jimenez. “When we blame young women or boys and call them prostitutes that is victim blaming. If you could do anything else, you would.”

One man stabbed her in the arm and neck and then drove off with her clothes. Jimenez

watched as young Native American girls were picked up by the police or human services, but found it hard to return to their families.

“The families do not know what to do with her,” she said. “She usually ends up in a shelter and calls her pimp and takes another person with her from the shelter. It was people saying ‘I see you and I care.’ That was the thing that turned things around for me the most.”

When Jimenez finally escaped her sexual exploitation and got help she went back to the reservation and met with her female relatives. She found most of them had gone through the same things she had suffered and were also in recovery.

“Our traditions taught us to only take what you need and to give back,” she said. “We have to come back to the way we were before.”

Jimenez challenged parents to keep loving their children no matter what has happened. She asked law enforcement officers to let trafficking victims know they ‘see them’ because their pimps make them feel invisible.

She also urged counselors to never give up on trafficking victims. “You need to be kind,” she said. “You may have to pick them up 20-plus times, but you try to break that shell.”

Jimenez now has 4 children and 10 grandchildren. She works with other victims of sex trafficking to help others heal, and for her own continued healing. “Without faith there is no hope,” she said. “Without hope there is no change.” ☺

# AMBER ALERT IN INDIAN COUNTRY

## NEW MEXICO WILL ISSUE AMBER ALERTS FOR THE NAVAJO NATION

The Navajo Nation will now issue AMBER Alerts through the New Mexico Child Abduction Alert System. The state would also notify Arizona and Utah if the Navajo Nation issues an AMBER Alert. New Mexico will issue the alerts as the Navajo Nation Alert System Task Force works to fully develop an AMBER Alert program, a 911 system and an improved identification mechanism for homes in rural areas.

The task force was created after residents raised concerns about the AMBER Alert system following the May 2, 2016, abduction of 11-year-old Ashlynnne Mike and her 9-year-old brother Ian. Although Ian escaped and was found and taken to safety, Ashlynnne was brutally murdered, her body discovered the day following the abduction. 🍂

## NAVAJO TRIBAL MEMBERS USE WALK TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT ABDUCTION VICTIMS

Tribal members joined together for a 5-mile walk to Window Rock, the seat of the Navajo Nation, to raise awareness about the AMBER Alert and abducted children. They carried banners, signs and ribbons to keep the memory of 11-year-old Ashlynnne Mike alive following her May 2016 abduction and murder.

"If something was ever to happen to another child, God forbid, we would have no way to get the word out," said walk organizer Charlietta Gray to KOB-TV.

Gray also started an unofficial AMBER Alert Facebook page for the Navajo Nation which already has 17,000 members. 🍂



# 2016 TRIBAL SYMPOSIUM

## “SHE WAS A SWEET GIRL AND DID NOT DESERVE TO DIE”

### TEEN’S MURDER HIGHLIGHTS DANGERS FACING NATIVE AMERICAN TRAFFICKING VICTIMS



Casey Jo Pipestem was raised in Oklahoma City as a member of the Seminole Tribe. Casey’s grandmother raised her until she passed away when Casey was just 7 years old. She then lived with other relatives, but found it difficult to fit in while living in rural communities.

Casey dropped out of high school, moved back to Oklahoma City and became involved with drugs. Ultimately, she fell victim to exploitation and trafficking at truck stops in Texas and Oklahoma as a way to survive.

Casey’s body was found on January 31, 2004. She had been beaten, raped, strangled and thrown off of a bridge. She was only 19 years old.



Grapevine, Texas, Police Lieutenant Larry Hallmark shared with Symposium participants how he helped find Casey’s killer. Hallmark spent a decade interviewing pimps, sex trafficking victims and family members in order to determine what happened to her.

Hallmark also interviewed many truckers who remembered having seen Casey, and almost

all of them said the same thing, “She was a sweet girl and did not deserve to die.”



The investigation received a big break when “America’s Most Wanted” profiled Casey’s murder, resulting in 84 tips - including one about John Robert Williams, the so called “Big Rig Killer.”

Williams was already serving a life sentence in prison for murder when he agreed to be interviewed by Hallmark. The veteran detective said the vast majority of killers will talk if you do not show any judgment over what they say.

“If you could show Williams a picture he would identify the victim,” said Hallmark.



However, Williams did not recognize any of the pictures of Casey.

Hallmark finally asked a family member if there were any pictures of Casey that showed her dressed in clothing she would wear when she was at the truck stops.

“He [Williams] snapped his fingers and said, ‘That is Little Bit. I killed her.’ He named every detail of that case and admitted to strangling her from behind,” said Hallmark. The detective also learned the victim had a ‘Little Bit’ tattoo on her shoulder.

“He is a psychopath,” said Hallmark. “He went and showered and ate while her body was in the truck.”

In 2013, Williams was charged with the murder of Casey Pipestem. He has been implicated in killing 14 additional women and has admitted to murdering 30 others. The man who pimped and exploited Casey was also caught and charged, and is serving time in federal prison. One of other girls exploited by him was just 13 years old.

The U.S. has 2 million truck drivers, and 3 out of 4 are long-haul drivers. It is estimated that 120-140 murders of sexual exploitation and trafficking victims occur each year at truck stops.

“Truck driving is a good job for this type of psychopath-sociopath personalities,” said Hallmark. “You have highly mobile offenders who have to get from point A to point B. They get cash for incidentals and lots of routes and time flexibility.”

Hallmark does credit the trucking industry for helping solve crimes committed by truckers, but emphasized that “Truck stops are a den of rattlesnakes” and trafficking victims are very vulnerable with truckers and in these environments. 🐍



Grapevine, Texas, Police Lieutenant  
Larry Hallmark



Suspect John Robert Williams

# AMBER ALERT

## PROFILE: JANET TURNBULL



### U.S. PROSECUTOR WORKS IN MEXICO TO HELP ALL COUNTRIES EFFECTIVELY USE THE AMBER ALERT

Janet Turnbull is doing her best to make sure borders never get in the way of finding an abducted child. Since 2013 she has been working in Mexico City, Mexico, as a legal advisor for the U.S. Department of Justice, Criminal Division, Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development and Training (OPDAT). Her focus is on human trafficking, which puts her at the center of making sure AMBER Alerts work in all countries.

“When a child goes missing across the border we do not want to think that is the end of the effort,” said Turnbull. “The challenge is there is not a lot of communication between the AMBER Alert coordinators in the U.S. and in Mexico.”

In May, Turnbull worked with the U.S. AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program and its Southern Border Initiative to organize the Trilateral Forum in Mexico City. The 2-day forum included AMBER Alert Coordinators from the U.S., Mexico and Canada. Turnbull is also supported by the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of International Narcot-

ics and Law Enforcement Affairs, with funding from the Merida Initiative.

“What we are going for is to get AMBER Alert coordinators in Mexico, U.S.A. and Canada to see themselves as a single group of North American AMBER Alert coordinators. No borders,” said Turnbull.

At the time of the forum, investigations remained open for 75 children taken from the U.S. to Mexico, and 183 children taken from Mexico to the U.S.

The AMBER Alert began locally in the U.S. in 1996 and later developed into a nationwide initiative. Mexico’s Alerta AMBER began in 2012 when it was launched by that country’s president and attorney general. So far the Alerta AMBER has led to the safe recovery of more than 350 children in Mexico.

“One is not better but they are slightly different,” said Turnbull. “We want the training to be consistent in the U.S. and Mexico and knowing the differences between each sys-

tem. Training keeps everyone on the same sheet of music. It also helps people make a connection.”

Turnbull said Mexico coordinators still rely heavily on the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) to confirm the right jurisdiction(s) in which to issue an AMBER Alert in the U.S. NCMEC can be reached by calling 800-THE-LOST (800-843-5678).

She said it is easier for U.S. law enforcement to use Mexico’s child abduction alert because it can be done with one contact with the National Mexico Alerta AMBER Coordinator Blanca Margarita Niebla Cárdenas at 011-521-555-346-2510 or via email at [blanca.niebla@pgr.gob.mx](mailto:blanca.niebla@pgr.gob.mx). “It is one call shopping for them,” she noted.

Turnbull’s career began as a Special Agent for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. Her investigation into drug smuggling in Columbia even uncovered an unfinished submarine in Bogota. She then got her law degree at the University Of Virginia School Of Law and began prosecuting drug traffickers and corruption cases involving public officials and police officers.



Today, Turnbull is immersed in finding trafficking victims and abducted children. This year she has been involved with solving cross-border abductions including a Florida girl found in Cancun, a baby taken from San Diego, California, to Sinaloa, Mexico, and a Brownsville, Texas, girl who was recovered after Mexico issued an Alerta AMBER at the request of U.S. authorities. All 3 cases illustrate that much can be accomplished when countries work together.

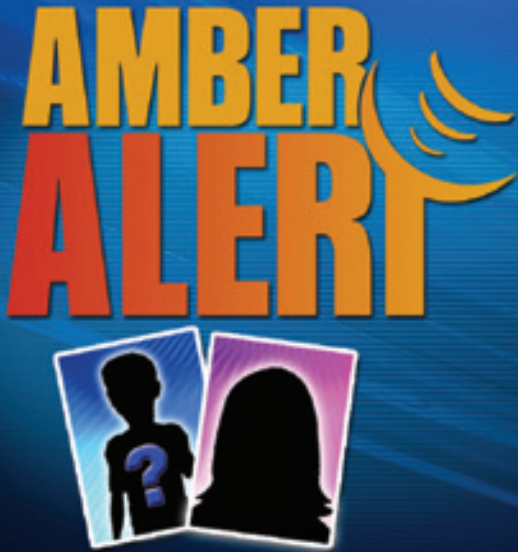
“Do not give up just because the child has gone across the border,” said Turnbull. “There are things that can be done to bring a child home.”





# AMBER ALERT ON THE FRONT LINES:

## SOUTH DAKOTA AMBER ALERT RESCUES CHILDREN TAKEN IN WASHINGTON



On August 8, 2016, detectives in King County, Washington, learned of the alleged abduction of 2 boys by a suspect on his way to Chicago. Paul Brown allegedly took his 3-year-old son Chance and 1-year-old son Hunter and told their mother he would not return.

The children had been taken 3 days earlier, with Chance having a condition requiring tube-feeding and medication. Chase's father did not have the supplies nor the training to feed him. Detectives requested an AMBER Alert be issued in South Dakota after they discovered Brown had recently made a credit card purchase in that state.

South Dakota AMBER Alert Coordinator Bryan Dockter was out of state at the time, but Bryan Gortmaker and Bonnie Feller Hagen with the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) were on site to take the 8:22 p.m. call.

The Washington detective called 25 minutes later and provided information from a Seattle hospital that the situation for the older boy had become dangerous and life-threatening.

"We decided to activate to try and recover these endangered children," said Feller Hagen. "Securing the safety of the children was our number one priority."

Photos and additional information were gathered and the AMBER Alert was issued at 10:14 p.m.

The alert was posted on the state website, emails were sent to state employees, and citizens signed up to receive alerts began receiving messaging notifications. The Emergency Alert System notified the media, National Weather Service, 511, highway signs and lottery terminals.



The state's FUSION center sent a text and email to all law enforcement in the state and an audible message was broadcast over law enforcement radios. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children activated a Wireless Emergency Alert to reach all cell phones across the state.

"I was feeling a sense of urgency," said Feller Hagen. "We wanted to get the information out rapidly and accurately and get the information out while people were still up and watching the evening news."

The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally was also underway that night requiring a large presence of law enforcement. The popular event also resulted in large numbers of people on the road who might spot the suspect's vehicle.

Within minutes a trucker and an Indiana sheriff's deputy spotted the suspect's white Pontiac with Washington license plates and called 911. Marion County Sheriff's Deputy Natasha Mendelsohn was driving home through South Dakota and said she has a habit of scanning vehicles and plates. "I cried," said Mendelsohn to a WTTV reporter. "It was more tears of happiness that we knew that these children were now safe."

When she got home she shared a call to

action on Facebook: "More people can help other people just by being aware of your surroundings and paying attention to what's going on around you. And had we not taken the quick second to look at that vehicle, we may not have been able to help the way we did."

The children were taken to a nearby hospital for medical care and Brown was arrested and charged with abuse or cruelty to a child.

"I am amazed at how quickly everything came together with the help of public and the cooperative efforts of law enforcement," said Feller Hagen.

This was the sixth AMBER Alert issued in South Dakota since the state started the child abduction alert program in 2003. The state is now implementing the AMBER Alert LEAP portal to streamline the activation procedures and improve the time required disseminate an alert. A significant lesson learned from this AMBER Alert is how important it is to know your AMBER Alert partners in other states.

"Keep your state AMBER Alert program active and meet and test your system regularly," said Feller Hagen. "Working together for the safety of children is the primary goal." 🍌



# AMBER ALERT INTERNATIONAL

## EUROPEAN COUNTRIES PLEDGE TO DO MORE TO HELP MISSING CHILDREN



Wolfgang Sobotka (Federal Minister of the Interior, Austria), Milan Chovanec (Minister of the Interior, Czech Republic) and Robert Kalinák (Minister of Interior, Slovak Republic)

Nine European countries have signed an agreement to work closely together to help find missing children taken across national borders. The joint declaration was signed in November 2016 by Ministers of Interior Affairs from Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

“When a child goes missing, quick and effective cross-border information exchange between national law enforcement authorities and other expert bodies is therefore crucial,” said Milan Chovanec, Minister of the Interior of the Czech Republic.

“Since every endangered missing child deserves an equal chance of being found as quickly as possible,

this must not be inhibited by them crossing borders.”

AMBER Alert Europe was involved with the agreement, which includes law enforcement agencies from each country sharing more information, while also seeking public assistance across countries to help find missing children. 🍷

## SWITZERLAND SHARES AMBER ALERT TIPS WITH AMBER ALERT EUROPE



At an August 12, 2016, meeting the Switzerland Federal Police shared best practices to protect missing children with AMBER Alert Europe. These best practices included a 5-point plan.

1. A bigger, stronger AMBER Alert network
2. More flexibility in issuing child alerts
3. Better cross-border information sharing
4. Better cross-border police cooperation
5. Improving the identification and protection of children at borders

The plan is supported by a majority of the 465 members of the European Parliament. 🍷



## GERMAN PARLIAMENT MEMBERS WANT AMBER ALERTS IN ALL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

A group of 35 German members of the European parliament are calling upon all European countries to have an AMBER Alert program. Currently, 17 of the 28 countries of the European Union have child abduction alert plans.

“To save missing children it is crucial to act immediately, every minute counts,” said German Parliament Member Bernd Kölmel. “German citizens need to be informed as soon as possible via all available media. It is absolutely necessary that Germany builds a modern, digital AMBER Alert system.”

So far just 8 European countries have issued at least one an AMBER Alert. 🇺🇸

## FUNDRAISING EFFORT STARTED FOR CANADIAN MOTHER OF MURDERED CHILD

Several fundraising efforts are underway for the mother of a 7-year-old girl who was found murdered after an AMBER Alert went out in Saskatchewan, Canada. Nia Eastman's body was found on November 10, 2016, hours after her father was found dead of self-inflicted injuries. A crowd-funding page has been started and a local co-op is collection donations and cards for Nia's mother. A memorial has also been set up at the house where the victim's body was found in Choice-land. 🇺🇸

## OKLAHOMA NOW HAS A BLUE ALERT FOR ASSAULTS OR MURDERS OF OFFICERS

Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin signed the Blue Alert into law in September 2016 to warn the public that someone is wanted for assaulting or killing an officer. The alerts will go with information about the suspect and vehicle to law enforcement, media and on electronic road signs. The Blue Alert was enacted at the same time a manhunt was underway for a suspect accused of murdering 2 people and shooting 2 officers. The Blue Alert Foundation reports that 28 states now have Blue Alerts.

# AMBER ALERT BRIEFS

## MORE AGENCIES USING NEW APP FOR MISSING CHILDREN

Law enforcement officials in Christian County, Missouri, and Fort Wayne and Allen Counties in Indiana are encouraging residents to use a new app to help find missing children. The Swift 911 app can be used to help notify the public while officers are working to determine if the case meets the criteria for effective issuance of an AMBER Alert.

Allen County Sheriff David Gladieux said he was not pleased about the time it took to approve and activate a recent AMBER Alert and thought the new system would help prevent any delays.

The app has been used in Christian County to find missing children as well as to notify the public about weather events, gas leaks, bomb threats and other emergencies. The app sends messages by text, email, social media and phone to users in a specific geographical area. 📶



## NEW JERSEY CONSIDERS “ZACK ALERT” FOR HIT AND RUN INCIDENTS

New Jersey lawmakers are considering creating a “Zack Alert” to notify the public when someone flees from a serious accident. The alert is named after 21-year-old Zack Simmons, who was killed by the driver of a black SUV.

“Lives could be saved because a driver would think twice about leaving a scene due to the knowledge of what a Zack Alert would do,” said family friend Jennifer Jordan.

The statewide alert would notify law enforcement, media and the public when a driver has left the scene of an accident where someone was killed or seriously injured. 📶



## VERMONT TESTS AMBER ALERT SYSTEM

The Vermont Department of Public Safety tested its AMBER Alert system on October 19, 2016, to ensure all notification methods were working. The test sends out messages to the lottery system, electronic highway signs, news agencies and citizens signed up to receive phone alerts. 📶



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# THE AMBER ADVOCATE