

The background image shows two police officers in tactical gear. One officer is in the foreground, seen from the back, wearing a green uniform, a tactical vest with a "POLICE" patch, and a helmet with a communication system. He is standing next to a black armored vehicle with "TAC" and "POL" visible on its side. Another officer is partially visible on the right, also in tactical gear and holding a rifle. The scene is outdoors on a gravel surface with some foliage in the background.

CHILD ABDUCTION RESPONSE TEAM PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

EMERGING AND BEST PRACTICES



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INTRODUCTION

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Child Abduction Response Teams (CARTs) are a multi-agency, often multi-jurisdictional composite of community professionals who are trained and equipped to respond in the search and recovery of an abducted or endangered child. The goal is to ensure a rapid and comprehensive community response to a child abduction. The CART strategy incorporates three elements: trained individuals with established roles and assignments, a ready-made list of equipment that is available to aid in the search, and a network of nontraditional community resources the team can tap into to assist in the investigation. Like AMBER Alert, CART is a useful tool that agencies can employ in an abduction incident or in situations where a child is missing and believed to be in danger.

According to a **1997-2006 child abduction homicide study** conducted by the Washington State Attorney General and the U.S. Department of Justice, 76 percent of children who were abducted and murdered died within the first 3 hours of the abduction. Yet in 60 percent of the cases, delays of more than 2 hours occurred between the time victims were known to be missing and the time police were notified. The results of this study, coupled with the fact many police officers and administrators have never investigated a child abduction, underscores the need for agencies to have a quick and deliberate investigative response ready to execute when these incidents occur.

The National CART initiative, established in 2006 by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DOJ/OJP/OJJDP), has gained the interest of chief executives from law enforcement agencies across the United States and Canada.

The concept of CART began to grow immediately following the program's inception. Almost 300 teams representing 45 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Bahamas, and Canada have received CART training through the DOJ/OJP/OJJDP's AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program (AATTAP). The program has evolved since 2006, and trained jurisdictions have been eager to develop protocols that meet the expectations and standards they were provided through their formal CART training. Agencies continue to look for ways to conduct practical training exercises to strengthen and refine their child abduction and missing/endangered child incident response skills, in an effort to build and maintain optimal team readiness.

in the event an incident of this type occurs within their jurisdiction or area. CART implementation guidelines and certification standards have been established under the direction of the DOJ/OJP/OJJDP to provide agencies with next steps following initial CART training to promote and support the quality and integrity of CART plan, policy and team development and implementation.

The CART Certification Program objectives are as follows.

- To establish and maintain standards representing an enhanced model for law enforcement practices in responding to a child abduction.
- To increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the CART during and following an activation.
- To establish standards addressing teamwork, interagency cooperation and a unified response.
- To assist agencies in implementation and maintenance of their CART program.

To further the objective of supporting teams across the country, the AATTAP offers this CART Program Implementation Guide. The guide is based on the knowledge of trained professionals who have shared their experiences in workshops and during CART trainings provided by the AATTAP. Additionally, a CART survey, conducted in March 2016, was designed to develop a general picture of how teams across the nation operate as well as to identify common operational considerations, trends and innovative approaches. Several teams responding to the survey had been activated at least once in the previous 12 months; others had not yet experienced a case prompting CART activation, but offered input on important team and program considerations. To learn more about AATTAP and the CART initiative, visit www.amberadvocate.org/cartresources.



CHAPTER 1

GETTING STARTED

Research continues to support what good leaders have always known: having a strong vision contributes greatly to the success of a CART plan. That vision must be shared by all plan and program stakeholders. Communication, or lack thereof, can be the solution or the problem in many instances. Some plans fail simply because of lack of effective implementation; simply stated, a “failure to launch.” This chapter addresses what items need to be in place at the onset of CART development to support successful implementation.

EXECUTIVE COMMITMENT

For CART to work in a jurisdiction, there must be “buy in” – functional support based upon solid understanding of the CART concept and goals - from all Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of the key agencies involved. Some teams have found success through bringing a well-defined CART program policy to their agency head, and then gaining buy in to establish a team. Regardless of how the team forms, agency heads will eventually need to ensure all persons assigned to CART development have their full support and are empowered to formalize protocols.

Partner agencies should designate liaisons and agree to do the following things.

- Commit at least one resource to the CART that will be available for activations.
- Participate in initial CART program planning and coordination.
- Commit staff to attend quarterly CART program meetings.
- Participate in CART training and exercises (all agency personnel, from communications through command staff).

GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

Successful teams noted that meeting on set schedules and providing regular status reports to agency CEOs was essential to keeping them on track. Committees concentrated on developing an agreed-upon set of response criteria, deciding on team composition and selection criteria, and writing a team protocol. The protocol addressed team notification, team roles and responsibilities, training requirements, critical assignments and other issues detailed in the CART certification standards.

With protocols in place, committees can either remain as an oversight group or disband and turn over the functions of oversight to the CART Coordinator. Either way, agencies noted the viability and ongoing functionality of the CART is best assured if its plan and operations are actively and consistently incorporated into agency policies, procedures and in-service training; this institutionalizes the program.

Mock activations, frequent contact and resource list updates, quarterly training and regular communication with all team members and agency CEOs are all activities which can help a CART program remain effective. The role of the CART Coordinator is critical in keeping the team active and current.

THE CHAMPION

Often times, a CART program gains success largely as a result of the efforts of one person who becomes the “champion” for the cause. Regardless of high caseloads, competing projects and other work, the champion remains dedicated to keeping the project alive and going.

Identify the champion on your team. It could be the CART Coordinator, or someone who acts as the organizer, later passing the torch. Although a strong champion is an asset to the development of the program, that person should not become the sole organizer to the extent other team members overlook their responsibilities or sense of ownership. The champion must be careful to lead - not do - or the project may risk failure when the champion transfers to another assignment or receives a promotion, as often happens.

Full commitment and institutionalization by all CART participants within their respective agencies is the key to the success of a CART program. Agency policies and procedures, redundancy of staffing/coverage of team roles, ongoing training and communication, and a strong CART Coordinator should eventually replace and succeed the initial role played by the champion once the CART program has been implemented.

COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH CART

A common question when agencies are thinking about implementing CART is how the program will be funded. When this question was posed to established teams, most reported their agencies would assist in a child abduction case regardless of whether or not they had a CART in place; dedication of resources was not an issue. The resources that are activated in a CART, such as K-9 teams, Search and Rescue operations, and case investigators, are existing resources that would be committed whether an incident occurred in their own or a neighboring jurisdiction.

Some CART programs develop and utilize a fundraising component to assist with acquisition of resources; others



rely on private donations. Some programs have leveraged other funds in conjunction with emergency management to obtain additional equipment, which can be used in circumstances other than CART activation. Overtime has traditionally been the responsibility of each individual agency participating in the CART program.

Just as agencies fund a number of special response teams for various law enforcement needs, they also provide resource development for their CART program. Most established teams report that, though funding and costs are always an issue, these challenges have not stopped them from implementing their CART, primarily because of the significant buy in and commitment from community leaders and participating agency CEOs.

NATIONAL TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The success of CART in a jurisdiction depends on members of the steering committee and the larger team having a solid understanding of the concept and operational foundations of the CART program. Training and technical assistance is available to CART members through the AATTAP. For more information on CART training and certification, visit www.amberadvocate.org and click on 'Training and Resources.' You will find both onsite/classroom and online training opportunities for CART programs and new members.



Sample: CART Models

Florida: In 2004, the governor of Florida signed an executive order requiring the Florida Department of Law Enforcement in conjunction with local agencies, to establish CARTs in 7 regions within the state. This top-down approach helped Florida to achieve statewide participation in CART.

Georgia: By executive order of the governor, Georgia has a statewide CART comprised of 9 state agencies and is coordinated by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. Each agency has a designated contact person responsible for activating personnel in a particular area of the state.

Utah: The state of Utah created its CART through the Attorney General's Office in August 2007. It took 9 months to create the team, which started with 13 agencies and 36 members, and is now comprised of 30 agencies and more than 200 members.

While some teams were created at the state level, others were developed to represent a local jurisdiction or region.

- Tacoma Washington CART: Implemented in 2009, the team is under the direction of the Tacoma Police Department, which serves as the lead investigating agency in all cases of CART activation. The City of Tacoma serves a population of more than 200,000.
- Northern California CART: The team has 25 participating agencies within 3 counties that serve a population of more than 285,000 across the northern area of the state.

BEST PRACTICES

Agencies successfully developing teams have found the following practices helpful.

- Develop a well-defined policy before approaching agency CEOs.
- Invite CEOs to a presentation highlighting the concept of CART, and develop understanding among them that CART does not supplant their authority in a case, nor is it costly to implement.
- Ask a survivor or victim parent to participate in the CEO presentation to highlight the perspective of families on the critical need for CART.

The Tacoma Washington CART has developed a video which explains CART for police chiefs, legislators and the general public. The team graciously shares this resources video with other CARTs. [Click here to watch this video.](#)



CHAPTER 2

RESPONSE CRITERIA

Historically, the AATTAP and existing CART programs have identified the development of and adherence to response criteria as the most important issue a team faces, and the foundation on which the CART operates. At a minimum, established teams suggest the criteria for activation of an AMBER Alert be used as the basis for activating the CART. However, several CART programs have reported they do activate for endangered child incidents, and also incorporate allowances for children missing under unexplained circumstances. The National Center for Missing Exploited Children (NCMEC) reported that in 2016, 6% of cases in which CARTs assisted law enforcement involved parental/family abduction incidents.

Once a CART program's participating agencies determine the criteria for activation of the team, a written agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) should be formalized, circulated and incorporated into each agency's policy and procedures related to CART and child abduction incidents.

Every decision to activate a CART must be made based on the program's established response criteria. A CART activation should trigger an immediate, unquestioned response. If the circumstances surrounding a particular case are ambiguous and questions exist as to whether activation criteria have been met, the CART Coordinator should be immediately contacted to discuss and resolve the situation.

With adherence to response criteria, there should not be a question about legitimacy of CART activation or deployment of program resources. However, if teams believe they are responding to cases that do not warrant CART activation, or the activation criteria are determined to be too restrictive and are prohibiting effective use of the CART, the team and its leadership should revisit the criteria through the after-action evaluation process and adjustments should be made accordingly. The goal is information-driven decision making that is right for the jurisdiction, and the decision tree should include provisions for addressing unusual circumstances.

Some CART programs allow for a partial activation of the team. In cases where the agency of jurisdiction needs only a specific group of resources due to the nature of an incident/case, the CART Coordinator can limit team response, activating and deploying specifically-aligned members and resources.

Sample: Full CART Response Criteria - Lake Superior CART and Wisconsin DOJ-DCI CART

From Lake Superior CART: CART members are authorized to investigate the abduction or endangerment of children/ young adults within the Lake Superior CART region, upon the request of the member agency's Chief of Police, Sheriff or designee. The occurrence of any of the following predicate incidents may initiate investigative and forensic involvement, assistance or coordination by CART members.

1. The non-family abduction of a minor child (under the age of 18).
2. The family abduction of a minor child (under the age of 18) with endangerment circumstances
 - a. These circumstances must clearly be articulated to the CART Coordinator or his/her designee in order to activate the team members.
 - b. The child's disappearance or abduction shall meet the endangerment criteria if the child's life or well-being is perceived to be at risk (due to violence or health conditions), or if the identified parental abductor has a potential for violence or could endanger the child.
3. Any other abduction or missing child/young adult investigation that requires immediate response in order to protect the well-being of a child or young adult.

From Wisconsin DOJ-DCI CART: The occurrence of any of the following predicate incidents may initiate investigative involvement, assistance or coordination by the Wisconsin DOJ-DCI CART members.

1. The non-family abduction of a minor child (under the age of 18).
2. A child under the age of eighteen (18) and whose whereabouts are unknown to his or her parent, guardian or responsible party; and with at least one of the following unusual circumstances.
 - a. Out of zone of safety for his or her age, developmental stage and/or physical condition. **Note: The zone of safety will vary for each child depending on the above conditions. For example, in the case of an infant, the zone of safety is limited to the immediate presence of an adult custodian or the safe area in which the infant is placed. For a school-aged child, the zone of safety may be the immediate neighborhood or route between home and school and other activities.**
 - b. The child's disappearance or abduction shall meet the endangerment criteria if the child's life or well-being is perceived to be at risk (due to violence or health conditions), or if the identified parental abductor has a potential for violence or could endanger the child.
 - c. Medical and/or Drug Dependent.



Sample: Full CART Response Criteria - Southeast Texas CART

The **Southeast Texas CART (SETCART) protocol** describes the procedures to be followed for a partial activation.

Initial Response

For each CART request, an initial 2-person assessment team will be dispatched to the requesting agency as soon as possible following the request. The assessment team will review with the agency its needs for support and contact the CART Coordinator to activate CART at one of the levels listed below.

Levels of CART Response

- **Level I:** Minimal additional resources needed (e.g., flyer distribution, search dogs, Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance volunteers, A Child Is Missing neighborhood notification).
- **Level II:** Designated sub-region member notification and request for resource deployment. Those members closest to the incident site will be requested to respond during the initial operation period.
- **Level III/CART 911:** Rapid, full mobilization of all SETCART resources available for deployment by members.

The level of deployment and length of time for CART activation will be affected by the geographic location of the incident, as well as by individual agency and officer ability to respond. Additionally, it is understood that during the initial investigation, mobilization and/or operational period, information may come to light that will change the level of activation utilized.

CART Certification Standards

Response Criteria

ESTABLISHED IN WRITING:

The CART has a written set of criteria establishing the circumstances in which a CART activation can occur.

COMMUNICATED AND AFFIRMED:

Activation criteria have been communicated to all participating agencies, and written documentation affirms all CART agencies are in agreement with them.

INCORPORATED INTO POLICY:

Activation criteria have been incorporated into all CART agencies' policies, directives and/or standard operating procedures, as appropriate.



CHAPTER 3

TEAM COMPOSITION

The objective of CART is to deploy a ready-made team of experts who know what to do as soon as they hit the ground. The success of the team will depend, in large measure, upon its ability to add personnel whose knowledge, skills and abilities will be beneficial in a child abduction case. Suggested areas of expertise include search and seizure, interview and interrogation, expert witness testimony, command post operations, and cold and major case investigations. Experienced CART members suggest utilizing the following groups, who collectively represent a broad range of subject matter expertise.

BOTTOM LINE: Who would you want looking for your child, if he/she were missing?

| Law Enforcement | Corrections Personnel | Probation and Parole Officers | Search and Rescue Teams | Seasoned Detectives |
|---------------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| Prosecutors and Legal personnel | Homeland Security and FBI officials | Public Information Officers | School Resource Officers and other employees | Child Protection and Social Services workers |
| Victim Advocates | State Law Enforcement/Clearinghouse staff | Communications and Analytical personnel | Nonprofit Organizations (e.g., Crime Stoppers USA) | Juvenile Justice staff |
| K-9 and/or Cadaver dogs | Computer Crime/Forensics experts | Crisis Negotiators | Emergency Management personnel | Fire and Rescue workers |
| Postal Inspectors | U.S. Marshals | Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials | U.S. Secret Service officials | Volunteers |

SELECTING A CART COORDINATOR

The selection of the CART Coordinator is absolutely critical to the team’s success. This is likely the person who will work with the requesting agency to activate CART and will assume responsibility for team coordination and training. The CART Coordinator will maintain a current list of active CART members and ensure any vacancies are immediately filled.

Experienced CART members suggest the CART Coordinator be someone who is both creative and passionate about the mission, and who has a strong work ethic that incorporates consensus building across disciplines. Other desirable skills include organization, communication, coordination and management. The ideal candidate is likely a law enforcement officer (preferably a supervisor) with strong investigative experience who has attended some form of CART training. Long-term commitment from the CART Coordinator will add continuity to the team.

CART COMPOSITION - AGENCY, JURISDICTION, AND GEOGRAPHIC FACTORS

Other important factors to consider for team composition include the jurisdictional location and/or affiliation of needed resources and the area within which the CART will be authorized to respond. For example, a CART may be small and have a limited scope, representing a single agency or jurisdiction. Other CART programs may have multi-agency teams, but operate within a single county. Some teams may be comprised of agencies/members from multiple counties within one region of a state, while others may represent multiple jurisdictions with agencies geographically connected to a community but working across state lines.

Evidenced by the wide range of CART composition and jurisdictional makeups, what is clear is that the most effective approach to team composition will be flexibility based upon the operational and geographic needs of the area. This flexibility is particularly important when determining how assignments will be made across the defined roles as teams are constructed.

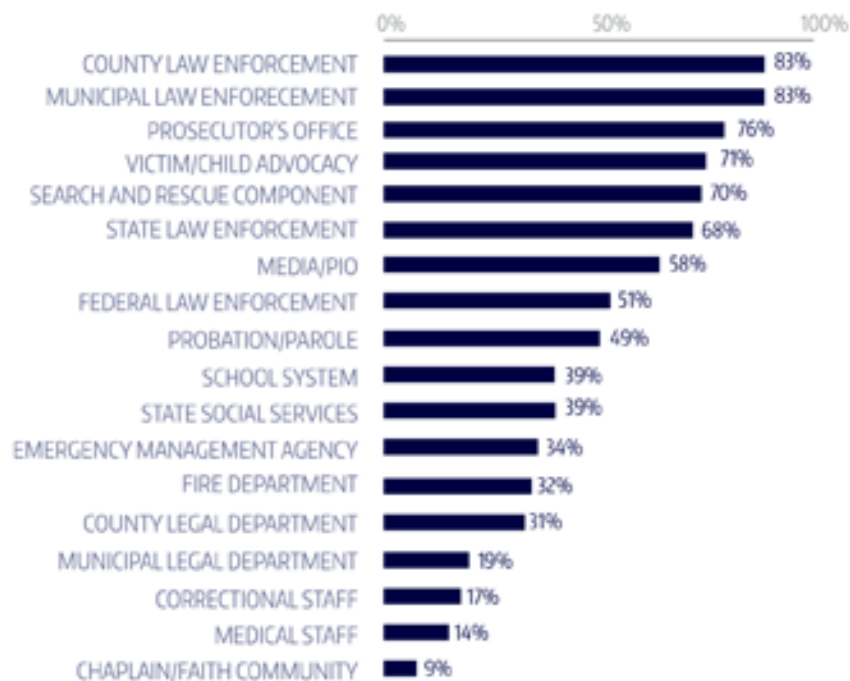


fig. 1 | national CART survey - team composition



Survey Results: Team Composition

Findings of a national survey of established teams conducted by the AATTAP found CART members are a diverse group (see Figure 1 above). Although each team included representatives from law enforcement, the number of officers from local, state and federal agencies varied significantly.

- In addition, a few teams included telecommunicator/ call-takers, community members/organizations, missing children organizations and National Guard personnel in their ranks.
- 3 out of 4 programs surveyed had a well-defined chain of command for the team, and 59% maintained an organizational chart detailing the various team leadership roles.

Other findings included the following:

- Several CARTs use probation and parole officers to assist in conducting sex offender canvasses.
- The emergency management designee in some CARTs operates the command center or hosts a tip line using the Emergency Management Center.
- Some teams use school resource persons to act as a liaison with other school officials and to interview school friends, teachers and others who may be able to aid in an investigation.
- Child protective agencies can assist an investigation by providing information from their databases and personal knowledge about the children and families with whom caseworkers have interacted.
- Most CARTs highly recommend bringing emergency management personnel on board early on in team development because they can leverage a number of resources and they bring a high level of expertise to the table.
- In Tarrant County, TX, CART Chiefs jointly select the CART Commander.
- In York County, PA, the CART has a “Hasty Team”; the purpose of the team, which is made up of 5 team members, is to go the scene of an activation and assess the situation. When activated, the team will decide if a partial or full activation is needed.
- In Utah, the CART divided its membership into two separate teams, allowing them to sustain resources during an activation.

CART Certification Standards

Team Composition

The team has an assigned **CART Coordinator** responsible for the CART process, including oversight of team development, training and coordination in the event of a CART activation.

The CART Coordinator has posted or distributed a **current list of all team members' contact information**.

Wide Representation: The CART includes representatives of various local, state and federal public safety agencies, the State's Attorney, correctional personnel, child welfare workers, school resource officials, Crime Stoppers, search and rescue groups and other organizations to assist in the event of a child abduction.

The **selection criteria for assignment of replacement CART personnel** require team members be chosen based on the level of expertise they can bring to a child abduction case.

The CART has **sufficient capacity to sustain activation** over multiple days.



CHAPTER 4

NOTIFICATION AND DEPLOYMENT PROTOCOL

For a CART to be successful in its mission, the agency of jurisdiction must have a method to activate the call out and know precisely whom to contact. In order for the team to respond in a timely manner, they must have a well-constructed and agreed-upon activation plan. Once the call to activate has been made, the team should be able to respond onsite with resources and equipment within the time frame established. CART programs should construct parameters around call-out and response times with a mind to how long would ever be acceptable to wait in a hostage situation or similar critical incident. How long would be they want to wait for the SWAT unit to show up? For CART to be effective, agency leaders must develop plans addressing the quick response of all units and equipment.

DISPATCH: FIRST LINE OF RESPONSE

The first line of response to a missing child incident begins with the dispatched call for service and the officer on scene. To that end, successful teams should have a written policy detailing the criteria for using tools such as AMBER Alert and CART. The policy should establish the persons/roles with the agency who have the authority to request an alert, authorize call outs and dispatch team members. These authorities will vary among agencies, depending upon size and the 24/7 availability of resources for responding officers. Regardless of who makes the determination, the agency should have a triage checklist of investigative efforts that have occurred on-scene prior to the CART activation to ensure the legitimacy of the call and the proper use of resources. This checklist should be included as part of the agency's overall policy and procedures for responding to a missing child investigation.

BEST PRACTICES

DISPATCH PROCEDURES

Consider this response protocol established by an agency:

Call takers are required to notify the dispatch supervisor immediately upon receiving a call of a missing child. The supervisor then follows a checklist of notifications to ensure resources are requested and deployed to the scene. Concurrent to those notifications, communications center personnel check databases in order to disseminate information to officers prior to their on-scene arrival and initial contact with the complainant. A search for previous calls for service to the home, an examination of sex offender lists in the vicinity where the child was last seen and a review of located reports for anyone associated with the child or the caller are also swiftly conducted. Additionally, Fire and Rescue are notified, and a description of the child is broadcast via radio to other city agencies, such as parks and recreation, waste management, code enforcement and public works.

ACTIVATIONS

Agencies have learned every CART program needs redundancy in who can request an activation; the CART needs to have more than one person who can activate the team and coordinate the response in the event the CART Coordinator is either not available or on leave. Also critically important is an institutionalized process to ensure each member is aware of the activation and knows when and where to respond. CART programs have developed a variety of methods to accomplish this notification process, including a designated dispatch center, pagers and cell phones, telephone trees, and technology that sends a “blast” message to all team members simultaneously. Of course, each of these methods carries its own set of risks; not all phone calls are answered, for example, and messages relayed through a telephone tree may not reach the end of the list.

RESPONSE TIME AND DEPLOYMENT LOGISTICS

CART interagency agreements and memoranda of understanding should discuss both the responsibility of personnel to respond to the callout and the expected response time. Every CART will experience some lag time – from the moment the child was last seen, to the time the missing child report is made to the police, to the time when the agency actually requests CART. Because the first few hours are critical to the successful recovery of the child, team members should make every effort to minimize the amount of time it takes for the CART to respond on scene.

CART protocols should address a wide range of issues.

- Payment of overtime for team members.
- Liability and mutual aid concerns when responding to a callout.
- Person(s) responsible for equipment deployment to the scene and distribution and/or use once on-scene.
- What equipment members of the team are expected to bring with them.

BEST PRACTICES

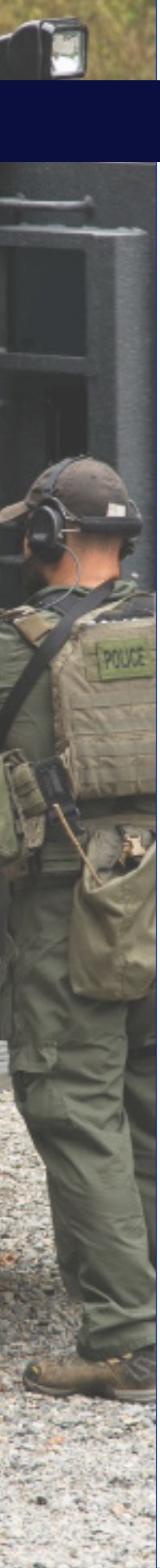
Set up a reverse 911 system that can make high-speed phone calls to team members simultaneously. This could be a service such as A Child Is Missing, Inc., a nonprofit organization that operates in most states and has agreed to participate in CART, which is contracted by the team.

Test the call-out procedure at every meeting. The test could be performed by the dispatch center via a group message, for example.

Authorize partial activations of the team if the CART criteria are not fully met. Specify the guidelines for partial activation in all agency agreements and memorandums of understanding.

IN PRACTICE

Some CART programs use software programs such as Everbridge, Ready Ops, or One Call Now which are examples of automated call-out systems where team leaders can activate from any computer and specify who should be called.



CART in Action: Florida and Utah

FLORIDA: The Winter Garden Police Department, a small agency in central Florida with approximately 55 members, received a call of a child missing from home. Fortunately, the chief of police had recently attended a briefing on CART. He requested assistance from the Orlando CART Coordinator, who notified the team. Within 20 minutes, 12 members were on-scene. An hour later, 45 members had arrived with equipment, including a mobile command unit.

Thanks to CART, within 1.5 hours, the resources available to the Chief within his own department had doubled. Also during that short time, the family was interviewed. Persons of interest (including the offender) were identified and interviewed. K-9 searches were underway. Investigators were conducting ground searches, dumpster searches, neighborhood canvasses and sex offender checks, and following up on leads.

Within 3 hours the child was safely rescued. The suspect was located and a confession obtained. He is currently serving three consecutive life sentences for sexual battery and 15 years for attempted second-degree murder.

UTAH: The Utah CART responded to a 7-year-old female who was last seen on March 31, 2008, at 2:15 p.m. The South Salt Lake City Police Department was notified at 6:18 p.m. At 10:05 p.m. the CART was activated. Several members of the team were out on a special detail. The team began arriving at 10:30 p.m., and the incident command center was set up. After logging several hours of door-to-door searches and K-9 tracking, identifying and locating sex offenders, following up on investigative leads, and interviewing neighbors and classmates, police reported that the child's body was found at 7:00 p.m. the following day. Tragically, she had been murdered prior to her father reporting her as missing.

IDENTIFYING TEAM MEMBERS

A process must be in place to identify all CART members at the scene. Some programs use vests with identifiable name placards, while others recommend team members wear either a CART identification card or an agency identification badge.

The over arching goal is for all responding team members to arrive quickly on scene, understand their roles, and bring with them all agency or personal equipment for use in the search and investigation (including any “to go” packs of useful items) so that no time is lost once they arrive. All of these elements must be clearly defined and articulated in the CART protocols.

BEST PRACTICES

IN PRACTICE

The Northeast Tarrant and Denton County, Texas, CART uses a duplicate CART card that can be posted on a master board and used to sign members in and out and track team assignments. To differentiate volunteers from CART members, the team uses different colors of wristbands, cards and vests.

The Rockingham County, North Carolina, CART uses National Incident Management System (NIMS) software, laptops and a photo identification system provided to law enforcement agencies in the county to identify team members and volunteers. The computers are loaded with all NIMS and Incident Connecting Sharing (ICS) forms and maps, and were purchased through the Emergency Management Department using Homeland Security funds for use in critical incidents.

CART Certification Standards Notification and Deployment

Each participating law enforcement agency has a written policy describing how to activate CART and who within the organization has the authority to request activation.

The CART has written documentation describing how the coordinator is to be notified and how activations are to be approved.

The documentation includes a list of personnel who can perform the CART Coordinator's duties in the event he/she is not available when a missing child incident is reported.

The written procedures for CART callout describe notification of personnel, the responsibility of CART members to respond, time requirements for response and the equipment assigned members should bring, if applicable.

Contact information for all personnel is kept current.

The CART has an established method for identifying CART members during a CART activation.



CHAPTER 5

COMMUNICATIONS

During a CART activation, multiple agencies will be on-scene, and all agency personnel must have a method for communicating with both the command center and other personnel on-scene. Depending upon the jurisdiction, communications among law enforcement agencies alone may be a challenge, and additional obstacles may come into play when non-law enforcement agencies are added into the mix. Jurisdictions are sometimes able to capitalize on communication bridging and other interoperability technology that can be used in cases of mutual aid callouts or similar domestic security needs. Regardless of the method chosen, each team needs to have a plan in place as to how it will effectively communicate during activation. In some agencies, this may simply mean having spare portable radios for outside agencies to use, while in others, a more comprehensive interoperability plan will be needed due to varying frequencies and equipment in use.

CALL CENTER

The number of tips that pour into the command center during a child abduction often overwhelm agencies. The result can be operational paralysis if ample, well-trained personnel are not on-hand to handle the heavy volume of calls through a designated number for the public to use in providing information. It is highly recommended the public tip-line phone number be recorded so that all calls can be reviewed as needed. The phone number should be one that is easy to remember, and all calls should be quickly answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, by personnel trained and fully prepared for the demands of this critically important function in the case investigation. Experienced CART members suggest establishing a predetermined tip hotline that can be activated immediately. A phone bank should be equipped and regularly tested for use in call intake; the swift and effective processing of tips and leads is absolutely dependent upon good call intake. That means all calls need to be answered and information logged fully and accurately. Having a well-constructed phone bank with reliable equipment and trained call-takers is what makes this possible.

BEST PRACTICES

Establish a toll-free hotline that is ready to use in the event of an abduction.

Consider using a Crime Stoppers tip-line during an activation.

Coordinate your telephone hotline with your Emergency Management Center to ensure phone banks are established during an activation.

When creating a hotline phone number, remember not all cellular and smart phones have letters on their number keypads to which callers can refer; be sure to always publish and broadcast both the actual numeric call-in information as well as the easy-to-remember phonetic (for example, '1-800-CALL-TIPS'). Also remember not all CART activations result in immediate resolution of the case; the agency should have a plan in place as it relates to use of the designated phone line in the event the investigation becomes prolonged.

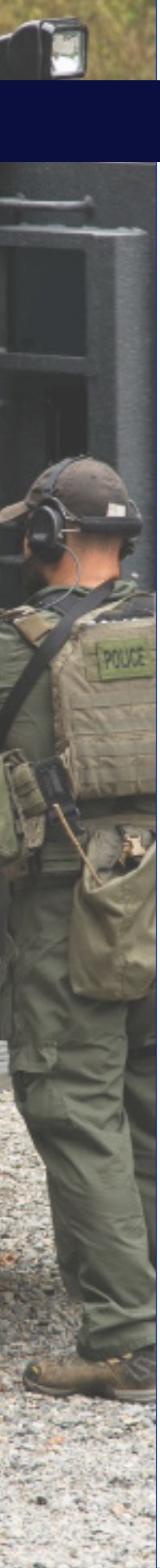
SOCIAL MEDIA

Many agencies have established social media accounts to increase their public outreach, improving awareness of incidents and information, and increasing public participation in reporting leads or tips on cases. Social media and text-style messages are an important communication tool for individuals who are not likely to call law enforcement. Social media accounts, while powerful in what they can generate, require very close, constant and careful monitoring by the agency; not only on a regular basis, but particularly during times of alerts around a specific case or critical incident. Tips and comments received must be handled in a timely manner, or they may present more of a liability to the investigating agency than a benefit. Critically important to remember is the utilization of these same social media sites by family, friends or acquaintances, using their own accounts and/or pages created. Tips may come in through those accounts as well, and the investigating agency should establish, to the best extent possible, a way of checking the feeds/pages of other individuals who are actively posting in relation to the missing child.



CALL TAKERS

Of primary importance is the training and readiness of call-takers to extract and intake information from callers. Advanced training using scripted questions and specific intake triage is a must to ensure personnel can hit the ground running and generate accurate leads for follow up by officers and investigators. Trained 911 telecommunications personnel may be particularly helpful in this role. Additionally, technology should be in place as part of the phone bank or call center to ensure all calls received are easy to retrieve and replay. Any lines set up to intake calls on the case should have caller identification.



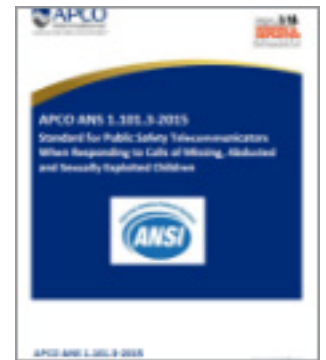
PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATIONS BEST PRACTICES FOR OPERATIONAL READINESS

In the area of public safety/law enforcement telecommunications training, it is critically important to provide telecommunicators, call-takers and dispatchers with the tools and training that promote swift and decisive response to reports of missing, abducted and sexually exploited children. Central to such training is a clearly worded policy, accompanied by carefully delineated procedures and best practice indicators.

A core element of training for telecommunications personnel handling these case types concerns vigilance: The first response in any call of this type, regardless of what the initial indicators may be, should be governed by an assumption that the child is in danger until significant facts to the contrary are confirmed. An immediate and comprehensive response enhances the likelihood of accumulating evidence or information that might otherwise be lost during the critical, early stages of an investigation.

[The Standard for Public Safety Telecommunicators When Responding to Calls of Missing, Abducted and Sexually Exploited Children \(APCO ANS 1.101\)](#)

, referred to hereafter as “the Standard,” is a reference for Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) telecommunications supervisors and front-line personnel in defining policies, operational procedures and training curricula to promote optimally effective response to handling these types of incidents. The document outlines best practice parameters from the point of initial call intake through data entry, update and ongoing investigative functions as they are supported by PSAP communications personnel’s database search, record analysis and data management work. Building upon the key response components outlined in the Standard, telecommunications personnel and administrators are encouraged to add topics unique to their agency or region of the country, and incorporate actions mandated by federal, state or local statutes as they integrate these best practices and operational protocols into their existing communications center policies and procedures.



Additionally, the AATTAP offers no-cost, online training on the Standard and much more through its [Telecommunications Best Practices for Missing and Abducted Children \(TELMAC\)](#) online course. This online training is available 24/7 so that personnel can work on the course at their own pace when time allows.

For more information on these resources, visit www.amberadvocate.org and click on **Training and Resources**. The TELMAC course can be found under **Online ‘On Demand’ Learning**, and the APCO ANS 1.101 can be found under **Community Resources**.

The TELMAC Online course supports the Standard and reinforces telecommunicators' effective use of the call intake protocols and data management strategies. However, online training modules should be used as just one component within a comprehensive strategy for bringing the model policy, best practices and operational checklists into the communications center. Jurisdictionally relevant call scenarios should be developed and used in regular training within the communications center to assess understanding and correct application of the material. AMBER Alert offers other self-directed, online courses on Patrol first response, Investigative response and case management, Law Enforcement response to child sex trafficking, and training for incoming CART members.

LEADS TRACKING

Teams should select their leads tracking system before it is needed, and team members should be cross-trained and practice using that system soon after acquisition. Several members on the team should be proficient in the use of the tracking system. If the system chosen requires computer expertise for set up and interconnectivity, then skilled personnel should be available for call out and backup personnel should be designated.

COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT

The CART protocol should include an inventory of equipment designated for communications in a call out. The equipment inventory should include – but not be limited to – radios, cell phones, walkie-talkies and direct connect capability. All equipment should be tested regularly and maintained properly, and personnel should know how to use it. Equipment should be stored in a central location, and access should be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Thought should be given to whether the access control to the equipment should be secured with a combination lock or card control or by key. No matter what method is used, it is crucial that personnel not lose valuable time during a call out waiting for communications equipment to arrive and work.

BEST PRACTICES

Consider having a manual process to complement automated tracking and to handle leads in the event computers are not available, linked or working.

Be sure the group is experienced in the use of CART lead forms before the callout to support accurate use.

IN PRACTICE

In Lake County, IL, an officer in dispatch at the home agency ensures leads from call takers are delivered to the team leader for assignment and investigation.



EXAMPLE: A Leads Tracking Systems Used by CART Programs

WebEOC Leads Tracking System: WebEOC Leads is an easily navigable tracking system developed by Intermedix that can be downloaded from the Intermedix website at

<https://www.intermedix.com/solutions/webeoc>.

WebEOC is an interface to improve the organization's incident management capabilities. Built to support the mission of crisis management, public safety and emergency response personnel, the solution has evolved to provide simplified information access promoting intelligent incident response and business resiliency. The enhanced user experience provides organizations of all sizes with a platform for daily operational and emergency management support through a uniquely customizable set of utilities for complete situational awareness.



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION VIRTUAL COMMAND CENTER

Over the past 2 years, the FBI has seen tremendous growth in the use of its command and control application, called the Virtual Command Center (VCC), which is available at Law Enforcement Online (LEO). VCC is an information sharing and crisis management tool that allows law enforcement access to a secure Internet VCC from local and remote sites. The application can be used as an electronic command center to submit and view information, intelligence, maps and other essential documents. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation uses the VCC as its leads tracking system during CART activations and investigations of gangs throughout Tennessee. In addition, an unclassified version of the FBI's Operational Response and Investigative Online Network (ORION), can be accessed through the CJIS Law Enforcement Enterprise Portal (LEEP). To learn more about the VCC and other tools offered by the FBI, visit the LEEP Portal at FBI.gov: <https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/leep>.

CART Certification Standards Response Criteria

The CART has a process in place to immediately establish a hotline number (preferably toll free) for tips and leads.

The CART has written guidelines on staffing for the hotline number to ensure that all tips and leads are captured properly.

The CART has an established process/system for leads tracking, including the coordination, assignment, prioritization and resolution of leads.

The CART Coordinator maintains a current list of all communications equipment to be used during a CART activation.

- The list includes the person(s) responsible for maintenance and upkeep: regular testing, keeping a supply of fresh batteries, maintaining a training log of personnel who have been trained and tested for proficiency, updating field test records to ensure equipment is compatible with all impacted jurisdictions and making backup plans in case of equipment failure.

A procedure is in place to access equipment in a timely manner in the event of an activation, and equipment is accessible by more than one person.



CHAPTER 6

COMMAND AND CONTROL

During a CART activation, the requesting agency maintains the lead role. The CART serves as an investigative enhancement tool and an operational force multiplier, comprised of experts, equipment and a planned strategy to respond to critical incidents of missing and abducted children. The nature of a CART activation implies multiple agencies, jurisdictions and disciplines will be responding. Therefore, it is essential for a command and control structure to be in place and understood across all roles and functions of the team. Experienced team members suggested the following procedures for structuring the command and control function:

- Assign the host agency to serve as incident command post.
- Utilize the National Incident Management System (NIMS) model.
- Establish a CART organizational chart.
- Create a mechanism for resolving conflicts.
- Incorporate the command and control model in agency policies and directives.
- Identify the #1 person – the lead coordinator – at the command post.
- Determine how and when case briefings will occur.
- Assign a co-incident commander.
- Identify various team leaders at the site.
- Establish plan for media briefings.
- Pair FBI agents with detectives.
- Identify relief personnel and place them on call.

Sample: CART Assignments - UTAH

The Utah CART worked to identify job assignments prior to its first activation for a missing child incident. After the CART's first activation, the team adjusted its organizational chart and team assignments.

- Incident commander
- CART commander
- CART coordinators and assistant coordinators (logistics, search, investigation and intelligence)
- Computer information technologists and CART server
- LEO (Law Enforcement Online) phone lines
- Dispatchers
- Resources
- Logistics (food, water and shelter)
- Volunteer coordinator
- Maps and geo-mapping tools
- Criminal background checkers for volunteers
- Briefings and debriefings for volunteer venue
- LEO Search coordinator
- Search team leaders
- Specialized Search Coordinator (K-9, water, aircraft and special/rugged terrain searches)
- Team Adam (NCMEC)
- Sex offender coordinator and registry analysts
- Sex offender investigators
- Suspect locator
- Public information officer consultant/ AMBER
- Alert coordinator
- Crime scene coordinator
- Forensic computer examiners
- Investigative leads coordinator
- Investigators
- Witnesses and surveillance tapes
- Victimology timeline
- Priority leads coordinator
- Analyst
- Data entry personnel
- Family liaison/victim advocate
- Prosecutor

CART ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

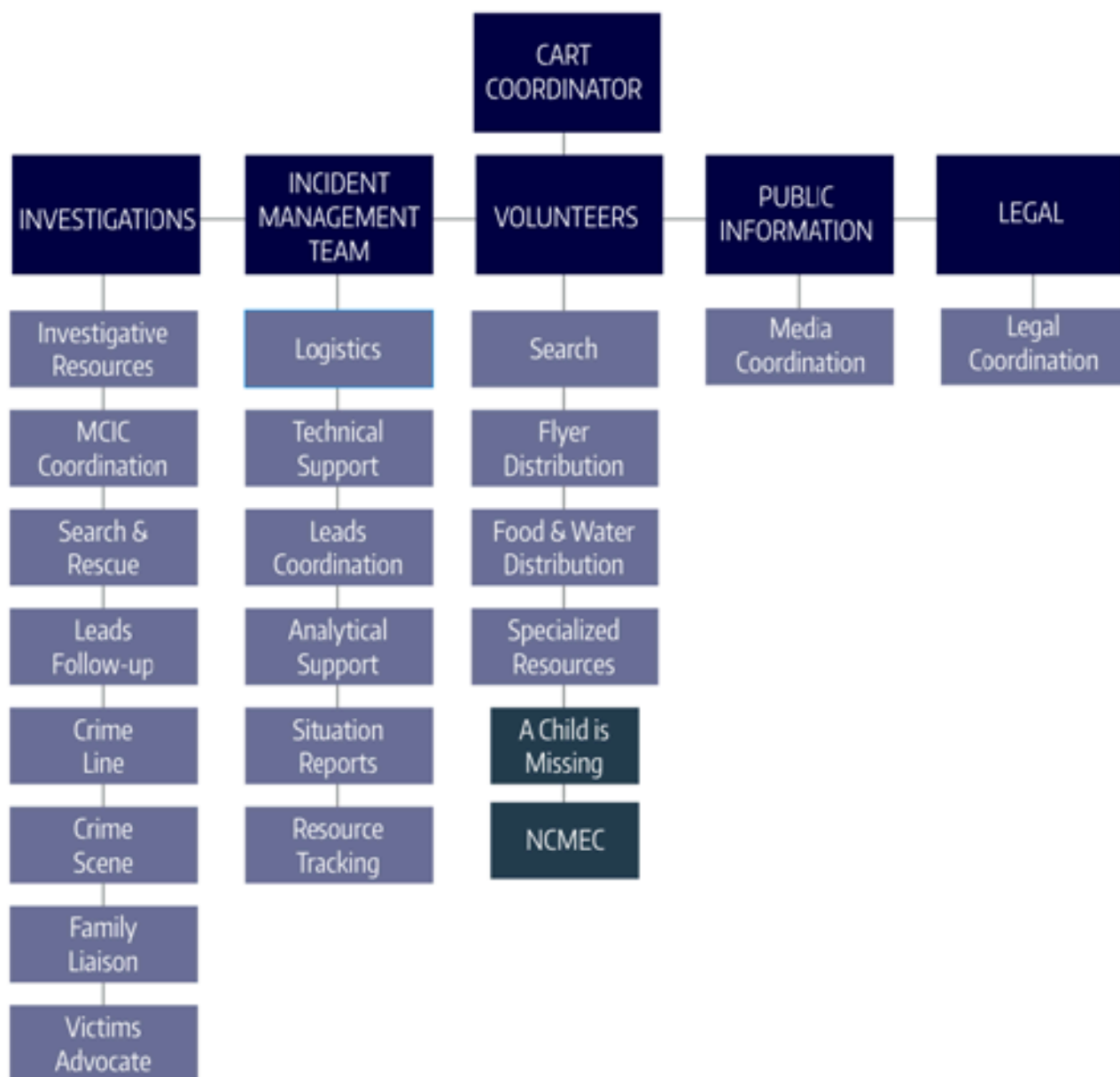


fig. 2 | CART Operational Chart

Each CART should develop an organizational structure to facilitate pre-planning of assignments and to assist in rapid and efficient deployment upon activation. The organizational chart should be part of the CART protocol and made available to all existing and new CART members. See Figure 2 for a sample CART organizational chart.

Sample: CART Assignments - Wisconsin DOJ-DCI CART

The following job descriptions are taken from the Wisconsin DOJ-DCI (WI DOJ-DCI CART) protocol.

Responsibilities of the Wisconsin AMBER Alert On-Call Director or SAC: The assigned Wisconsin AMBER Alert On-Call Director or SAC will be responsible for the following actions.

1. Coordinating AMBER/Endangered Alert in accordance with Wisconsin AMBER Alert procedures.
2. Notifying the agency requesting an AMBER/Endangered Alert that CART resources are available.
3. Notifying the Regional SAC of an AMBER/Endangered activation and briefing on all facts of the AMBER/Endangered activation to the Regional SAC, CART Coordinator(s) and team.
4. Ensuring coordination of all WSIC resources.
5. Providing incident/case summary and briefing information immediately to the Wisconsin DCI and/or Wisconsin DOJ executive personnel.

Responsibilities of the Wisconsin DOJ-DCI Regional SAC: The Regional SAC will be responsible for the following actions.

1. Directing the investigation and working to assist the Incident Commander / requesting law enforcement agency.
2. Working in immediate concert with the CART Lead Investigator for the particular investigation.
3. Reporting directly to the AMBER Alert Activator or designee on all significant developments.
4. Notifying the CART Coordinator(s) of an AMBER/Endangered activation and briefing on the facts.
5. In collaboration with the CART Coordinator(s) as necessary, will be tasked with oversight of the following:
 - a. Investigator assignments
 - b. Logistics assignments
 - c. Communication Center coordination
 - d. Analytical assignments
 - e. Investigative organization
6. Briefing of the local Incident Commander on all significant leads; may collaborate on those briefings with the CART Coordinator(s) as the situation dictates.



Sample: CART Assignments - Wisconsin DOJ-DCI CART (cont'd)

Responsibilities of the Wisconsin DOJ-DCI CART Coordinator(s): The CART Coordinator(s) will be responsible for the following actions.

1. Working jointly with the Regional SAC and assisting the Incident Commander of the requesting law enforcement agency in the investigation.
2. In collaboration with the Regional SAC, will be tasked with the oversight of the following:
 - a. Staffing
 - b. Resource allocation
 - c. Team briefing coordination: Every 4-8 hours (during the first 24 hour period) briefings will take place, or as case circumstances dictate; the following will be discussed:
 - i. Investigative team issues
 - ii. Witness statements
 - iii. Officer statements
 - iv. AMBER Alert status
 - v. Communication Center reports
 - vi. Incident Command issues
 - vii. Evidence collected and its status pending analysis (turnaround time)
 - viii. Issues or items that need revisiting (i.e. aerial photographs, sketching, etc.)
 - ix. Legal issues
 - x. Resources assignments and needs
 - xi. Media issues and utilization
 - d. A 72-hour briefing shall be conducted to discuss the following:
 - i. Case progress
 - ii. Coordination of any unresolved evidence and legal issues

Sample: CART Assignments - Wisconsin DOJ-DCI CART (cont'd)

- iii. Ensure all leads are being pursued
- iv. Discussion related to continuation of team activation
- v. Responsibilities of the Wisconsin DOJ-DCI CART Lead Investigator

Responsibilities of the Wisconsin DOJ-DCI CART Lead Investigator: The Lead Investigator will be responsible for the following actions.

1. Overseeing all of the investigative leads and case investigative activity.
2. Maintaining liaison with the requesting agency's lead investigator.
3. Briefing the Incident Commander, Regional SAC and/or CART Coordinator(s) on all significant developments.
4. Consulting with the Incident Commander, Regional SAC, CART Coordinator(s) and other relevant parties (i.e. district attorney, requesting agency administrator, and public information officer) on all investigative matters and requirements.

CART Certification Standards

Command and Control

The CART maintains an organizational chart detailing authority throughout the entire structure of the team. The chart should include detailed language on who is in charge of the CART as a whole, and how authorizations are affected across all CART functions.

A written directive detailing the incident command system has been agreed upon by all participating agencies. The directive describes the role of the CART Coordinator, the role CART plays in the establishment of a command post, how the incident commander is determined once the CART has arrived on-scene, and how conflicts are to be resolved between CART and other responding components (e.g., federal, state or local authorities).

A written directive describes the various assignments that are necessary during a CART callout, to include but not limited to a lead investigator, emergency operations coordinator, AMBER Alert representative, witness coordinator, leads analyst, media representative, support and logistics representative, search coordinator, family liaison, technical support, legal advisor and crime scene representative.



CHAPTER 7

SEARCH, CANVASS, AND RESCUE OPERATIONS

The importance of search, canvass and rescue operations in a CART activation cannot be over-emphasized. Searching is the effort to find the child or detect physical items such as evidence, physical clues and/or direction of travel. Canvass is the search for information that can drive the investigation. Items found in a search can often dictate areas that need to be canvassed and information learned in a canvass can drive areas that need to be searched. In a child abduction or missing child event, time is of the essence, and agencies should use all available means to search the immediate area and obtain a direction of travel. Experience indicates tracking dogs are essential in these types of investigations because canines are often the ones that find information leading to recovery of the child. Experience also indicates searches and canvasses must be controlled, coordinated and conducted by trained personnel. This chapter highlights the intricacies involved in conducting both and explains the various elements which must be in place to ensure searches and canvasses are conducted quickly and effectively, without risking compromise to the larger investigation.

Accountability of personnel during search and canvass operations is required at all levels. All personnel, regardless of agency affiliation, must report to and receive assignments in accordance with procedures established by the incident commander. Each individual should be assigned to only one supervisor, who must be able to supervise, control and communicate with subordinates, as well as manage all resources under his/her supervision. Supervisors must record and report resource status changes as they occur.

The vast majority of law enforcement agencies have no established plan or procedure for conducting a canvass or search as part of a missing child investigation. Analysis of canvass and search operations reveals a number of serious problems have occurred during major investigations: missed witnesses; missed,

IN PRACTICE

SEARCH & SEARCH AGAIN

Established CARTs highly recommend that searches be re-conducted in areas that have already been searched.

Case in point: A missing 9-month-old infant was treated as a family abduction. The area was searched as part of the preliminary search, and a tracking dog was requested with no results. Four hours later, cadaver dogs were requested from search and rescue professionals. The dogs hit on a trash bin within 15 minutes of arrival, and the child was found deceased in the bin about 25 yards from the location last seen.

The lessons learned are to search with professional teams, and to mark and identify cleared areas with red tape on the door of a building search, for example.

damaged or destroyed physical evidence; poor documentation; contact of suspects without officer knowledge; and difficulty in obtaining feedback from canvassers. Additional pitfalls include delays in initiating formal search activities, ambiguity of authority, inadequate utilization of specialized resources, poor interagency communications, unplanned media relations and inability to deal with unplanned volunteer response.

The Washington State Child Abduction Homicide Study found victims' last known locations were usually very close to the sites of initial contact with the killers. When police did not know the initial contact site, case solvability rate was just 24%, compared to 80% when the initial contact site was known. Unknown witnesses were identified as part of the neighborhood canvasses in 35% of cases studied. These and other findings of the Washington State Study underscore the importance of the neighborhood canvass – and why only trained professionals with scripted questions should conduct the search.

CART deployment should include a trained team that rapidly arrives on-scene and effectively conducts the search for the child and for any evidence that might lead to recovery. Neighborhood canvasses, sex offender verification and interviews, and roadblock canvasses are assignments that should be pre-arranged and conducted quickly under the coordination of the responding agency.

Forty-seven percent of the CART members who responded to a national CART survey reported they had participated in search and canvass operations as a supplement to the agency exercising case management authority, a finding that underscores how critical this component is to the CART concept. Team members also reported identifying and locating search teams, and managing and utilizing volunteers, were among their biggest challenges.

RESPONSE TIME AND DEPLOYMENT LOGISTICS

- Organization from the beginning is key.
- Document all search operations.
- Utilize the latest technologies such as global positioning systems (GPS).
- Be able to locate search teams at all times.
- Keep people on task with assignments.
- Debrief searchers at the end of shift.
- Let the investigation define the search, and ensure communication between command post and search component is seamless.



- Train with search organizations and K-9 units prior to a callout.
- Designate a lead search coordinator who is a law enforcement representative.
- Insist neighborhood searches be conducted by uniformed law enforcement personnel using a uniform protocol, with guidance and scripts given to those conducting the canvass.
- Distribute an established checklist and standardized forms for use by all search personnel.
- Employ vetted, private search and rescue teams, which will allow the CART to leverage specialized resources and equipment.

VIDEO CANVASS OPTIONS

In addition to neighborhood, business, roadside and sex offender canvasses, the search for relevant video has proven to be an effective and important tool in the investigation. Advances in technology and reduction in prices have led to exponential growth of potential video sources including most businesses, many private residences, traffic cameras; and perhaps of even greater impact is the ubiquitous capture of smart phone video by public bystanders, often capturing unaware important activity in or around important locations in the case. While this upsurge increases the likelihood an event or information relevant to the investigation may be captured on video, it also requires an appropriate dedication of resources, to locate, legally obtain, retrieve, catalog and analyze the numerous digital files.

USE OF VOLUNTEERS

Seventy-three percent of established CARTs include volunteers as part of their team activities during an activation. Among CARTs utilizing volunteers, 87% screen them prior to allowing participation, 52% train volunteers prior to allowing participation and 46% provide specific equipment prior to participation. If a CART uses volunteers, experienced team members strongly recommend criminal background checks be performed, that volunteers be required to wear something that makes them easily identifiable, and that there is a curfew established for their work/involvement on-scene. For example, volunteers should be issued a color-coded name tag, arm or wristband or other form of identification that is changed daily to identify each individual as screened and part of the official CART effort. The majority of CARTs have a volunteer coordinator, who assigns volunteers to less significant jobs where duties and responsibilities are limited. Such tasks include handing out flyers at predetermined areas, coordinating food and water breaks for rescue personnel and posting flyers in the larger community. Having predetermined tasks volunteers can

readily perform, and keeping a current file of volunteer registration forms (see Appendix A for a sample form) will ease the process for everyone.

One thing is certain - in a high-profile case, volunteers will show up. If turned away, they will likely form their own operation, which may lead to a communication breakdown and potential degradation or complete loss of evidence. Agencies need to be prepared to channel this valuable resource appropriately and effectively.



BEST PRACTICES

VOLUNTEERS

Ask community police officers from local retirement communities to organize and lead volunteers. These agencies often hold citizen academies and train retirees to be neighborhood watch captains and assist in other crime prevention functions. These officers are often familiar with organizing volunteers and have a pool of semi-trained citizens who have usually been cleared by background check. This approach would also work with larger law enforcement agencies that host a citizen academy which educate and train community members.

Encourage police academy graduates and military reserve deputies to participate in search and rescue operations.

IN PRACTICE

Some CARTs only screen for wanted persons and registered sex offenders, while others require a full criminal history check. If your agency requires a full criminal history check, decide what screening criteria you will use to accept volunteers, what to do about arrests that are missing disposition, and similar issues.



Sample: Disqualification Guidelines from the UTAH CART

When civilian volunteer criminal background checks, no volunteer may have any of the following:

- A felony conviction
- A conviction of any crime against a child
- A conviction of a misdemeanor for drugs or controlled substances for at least 5 years
- A conviction of a misdemeanor for unlawful sexual conduct or physical threat or violence
- A conviction of a minor crime – other than a traffic violation – during the last year
- An outstanding warrant
- Name on a protective order as a respondent



CART in Action: Florida

A 6-year-old child was last seen by his grandmother at approximately 1745 hours, and after the family searched for him for 2 hours, the Collier County, Florida, Sheriff's Office was contacted. The area is a farm workers' village, consisting of approximately 400 homes. State Road 29, a busy 2-lane road, runs along the west side of the village, and the other 3 sides are farmland and wetlands.

The search and command post was up for 1 week, and searches were conducted on the ground, in the air and on the water. A number of search teams operated at different times during the week so members could rest and so money could be conserved because of county budget restraints.

Search teams were made up of personnel from different agencies, which gave team members multiple means of communication. Teams were assigned to work on different days of the week, so team members knew when they would be working and the command post knew who would be available the following day.

Breakfast was served every morning at 0630 hours followed by a briefing at 0700 with details of the day's search area. Search teams were told what time to report back to the command post for lunch and dinner. A large geographical information system (GIS) map of the day's search area was posted at the command center with an overlay of the grids each team was responsible for searching. Every team member was provided an 8"x10" map of the area to be searched. Anytime a search team located something suspicious that required documentation and collection, the command post was contacted with the GPS location and a crime scene member responded. This was logged on both the command post log and the search log. Briefings were held 3 times daily.

MORNING BRIEFING: Recap of events from the previous day with knowledgeable team members followed by a description of the area for that day's search. Discussion of any information learned since the event started that would aid in the search.

LUNCH BRIEFING: Debrief of the morning search and description of the afternoon search area.

DINNER BRIEFING: Debrief of the afternoon search and information for those returning the following day.

SEX OFFENDERS: On the night of the incident, sex offenders in the Immokalee, FL area were searched. During the search, sex offenders in Collier, Hendry and Lee counties were searched and CART forms

RESOURCES: During the week-long search, many resources were utilized: helicopters from 2 agencies, swamp buggies, all-terrain vehicles, 4-wheel-drive vehicles, boats, horses and scent and cadaver dogs. Approximately 150-200 people participated each day of the week, for a total of just under 1,300 personnel for the week.

To date the case remains unresolved.



CART Certification Standards

Search, Canvass, and Rescue Operations

The CART has a document detailing the types of searches members have been trained in and the forms to be used when these searches are conducted (e.g., neighborhood canvasses, sex offender interviews, roadblock canvasses and grid searches). Documents should list trained personnel by name and should include any specialized skills or certification such as K-9 certification.

The CART has a designated search coordinator who is responsible for ensuring searches are conducted properly during activation, that search areas and search participants are logged, that searchers are briefed and kept up to date, that search perimeters are well-defined and that procedures are in place for handling evidence.

If the CART utilizes volunteers the CART has a mechanism in place for a tracking dog to be dispatched to the scene within a reasonable amount of time.

If the CART utilizes volunteers, all appropriate personnel information, including training, equipment and the volunteer's assigned role, should be clearly explained and agreed upon. Special emphasis should be placed on personal integrity, and all volunteers must pass a mandatory background check.

NOTES



CHAPTER 8

TRAINING

According to a national survey of established CARTS, 67% of the programs report having a pre-determined training schedule, ranging from once a month to once every quarter, or as needed. Although training as a team was considered important to those surveyed, 42% conceded that unified training was a challenge to implement.

Every team needs continual training to be effective. Training should cover individual assignments, as well as the operations of the team as a whole, to ensure an effective multi-agency, multidisciplinary response.

CART training provides an opportunity for the team to test activation and callout procedures, revise rosters and contact information, update team members' training and specialized skill records, inspect the equipment inventory, adjust assignments due to turnover and review protocols with new and existing members. The CART Coordinator should either be responsible for conducting the training, or for designating another individual responsible for training the team.

Team members should avail themselves of the training resources provided by the AATTAP, as well as by NCMEC. The CART Coordinator can help team members locate the training most appropriate for their respective positions on the team.

IN PRACTICE

TRAINING

MINNESOTA: In order to enhance the cohesiveness of members during an activation, the CART will meet at least once a quarter and hold at least 1 tabletop or field exercise annually. The tabletop or field exercise counts as a quarterly meeting. The CART Coordinator and/or Assistant Coordinators are responsible for planning the quarterly meetings, ensuring CART members receive appropriate training, and maintaining operational readiness. It is the responsibility of each agency to maintain current records on their CART member s' training and specialized certifications.

OTHER TEAMS: Some teams invite a guest speaker for their training sessions. Other teams pick one part of the protocol to focus and train on for each session. Teams sometimes host a county-wide training annually in addition to monthly meetings, utilizing tabletop exercises. Some CART Coordinators find and apply for grants to fund training.

BEST PRACTICES

Include crime scene management as well as search and rescue operations in the team training lineup. Conduct both tabletop exercises and a mock activation, which will allow team members to test and evaluate their timeliness, abilities and capacity in an activation.

CART Certification Standards

Training

There is a designated training coordinator for the CART and this role is included in the CART organizational chart and has a position description.

Training occurs semi-annually, at a minimum, and team members practice and/or train together, with at least 60% of CART members attending each training session or designated specialty training.

All training of CART members must be documented and maintained to provide proof of compliance with a written training policy or directive which includes a training schedule, rosters and lesson plans.

The CART will conduct a mock activation exercise annually if the team has not had a real activation during the same time frame. After action reporting should be done in accordance with a written policy or directive and include a copy of the field exercise details, roster of participants.

Assigned team members who require specialized skills, such as investigators, crime scene, search/rescue and K-9 personnel, etc., will receive training by their agencies for these skills in accordance with a written policy or directive; and training will be documented through schedules, participation roster, lesson plan and completion certificate documentation.

A current skills inventory document will be maintained by the CART which includes details of all training each team member receives and the knowledge, skills and abilities that the member possesses as a result of the training, in accordance with policy or directive, a personal history form on each member, training schedules and participation rosters.



CHAPTER 9

LEGAL ISSUES

The goal in a missing child or abduction case is to rescue the child, develop a solid prosecutorial case against the offender, and do both without violating the constitutional rights of members of the community. Issues such as search and seizure and the role of the prosecutor in the CART command post should be incorporated into the CART protocol. The CART should identify in advance an agency that is prepared to fulfill this role.

Additionally, when establishing a CART, agencies should be aware of important legal issues. If legal action needs to be taken immediately when an activation occurs, it is essential that MOUs and other agency agreements be in place before they are needed and that all jurisdictional issues and liability concerns be addressed before they become a problem. All agency agreements should be kept in an identified location, and should be reviewed and updated routinely by CART members and legal partners.

It is always easier to establish parameters for and possible constraints on the team at the onset rather than during an activation. Legal advisors may be helpful in identifying any liability and jurisdictional issues that could impact the CART during an activation. Not only should legal advisors identify these issues, they should also identify solutions to possible obstacles.

IN PRACTICE

TRAINING

Devote one quarterly training session to address legal issues related to CART operations. Training should include topics such as search and seizure, roadblocks, the advantages of using probation and parole members in conducting searches, the use of search dogs, operational liability and mutual aid jurisdictional concerns.

Update the content of legal sessions frequently. Request legal bulletins and briefs with case law and updates on court opinions on search and seizure. This will keep the legal advisor engaged with the CART, while keeping all other team members updated on important legal issues.

Prepare the legal advisor and at least 1 backup to staff the command center in the event of activation.

Ask the prosecutor to be available during an activation to assist with all legal issues, including obtaining court orders, search warrants, tracking devices and subpoenas.

Every CART should include a prosecutor and/or legal advisor. The prosecutor's role in the command post can be extremely valuable to the investigation as well as to the outcome of the case if an arrest is ultimately made. The prosecutor or legal advisor should be included in all CART training, and backup personnel should be identified for activations.

CART Certification Standards

Legal Issues

The CART has written documentation giving team members the authority to operate outside of their area of jurisdiction.

The CART has written documentation, either in the form of a mutual aid agreement, state statute and/or MOU that addresses liability issues, including protection of CART members who may be injured while on an activation and protection of members and their agencies from civil liability.

A written directive addresses the role of the prosecutor in the CART command post.

The CART has a relationship with a legal advisor or advisors, and in case of civil litigation jurisdictions within, the CART would have appropriate access to legal representation.



CHAPTER 10

EQUIPMENT INVENTORY

The equipment and resource inventory for CART is more than a simple list. The inventory should include additional information, such as detailed instructions on how each resource can be accessed regardless of time or day. Every resource contact should provide both backup telephone numbers and directions for an after-hours callout. Anticipated response times for every resource should be noted – not only for normal operating hours, but for after-hours, weekends and holidays as well. If costs are involved, that information should also be written into the documentation.

Experienced CART members suggest the team begin compiling its resource inventory by asking each participating agency to list all of the equipment and other resources they can make available to the CART. Additionally, the team should compile a list of agencies and organizations that may not be a part of the core team, but that can be called upon whenever their particular expertise is needed. For example, some private search and rescue teams may not be part of the initial CART callout, but once the situation has been assessed, they may be called upon to bring specialized equipment to the incident investigation.

Another suggestion is to review previous child abduction cases, either from the local jurisdiction or from high-profile AMBER Alerts and CART cases in other jurisdictions. Teams should assess what was needed and what was used in those cases to determine whether those types of resources would be beneficial for use in CART activations within your community/area.

IN PRACTICE

INNOVATIVE USE OF CART RESOURCES

NORTH CAROLINA: The Rockingham County CART teamed up with its emergency management director to purchase laptops complete with all National Incident Management Systems (NIMS) and Internet Connecting Sharing (ICS) forms, maps and other information, and an individual photo identification system for managing large groups of police, fire and rescue workers and volunteers. All of this was paid for with funds from the Department of Homeland Security.

TENNESSEE: The Target Corporation offered assistance with video enhancement when the team released a surveillance video during a call out. Computer experts on the team as well as Target were able to sufficiently enhance the video to allow the team to retrieve a partial tag. to assist with all legal issues, including obtaining court orders, search warrants, tracking devices and subpoenas.

Many people will never forget the infamous surveillance footage of 13-year-old Carlie Brucia, who was abducted at a car wash while walking home, prompting the responding agency to locate video enhancement capability to enlarge the name tag on the uniform of her abductor. Several cases also highlight the need to have technical resources available for quick access to information from computers belonging to the victim and other individuals or establishments involved in the case. The ability to gather cell phone information, such as previous calls, texts and cellular tower/relay data, has been critical in several missing child investigations, including the successful recovery of Elizabeth Shoaf. Would your team know where to gather resources like these if a child were missing or abducted in your jurisdiction?

Geographic location and terrain may impact the types of resources required in an activation. Check with your state department of transportation to see equipment which can help with geolocation and mapping that can be made available during a CART activation. However, be aware use of such equipment may be limited due to the number of personnel who are trained to operate it. Therefore, CARTs should explore networking with neighboring teams to maximize not only the resources available, but the personnel who are trained and ready to use those resources.

Some resources and equipment will be a standard part of a CART activation and therefore should be available for immediate dispatch. Be sure to identify those items and the person(s) responsible for deploying them to the scene. Some teams have specified vehicles for CART use while others have “to go” boxes and equipment in a designated place that more than one team member can access. All of these factors should be considered when putting together the CART inventory.

CART Certification Standards

Equipment Inventory

The CART maintains a current list of equipment and other resources, guidelines for use, and the names and telephone numbers of expert personnel who can be called upon during a CART activation. The list is updated semi-annually and is accessible to all members of the team.

The directive for the CART inventory provides specific details for gaining and securing operational access all equipment and/or resources.

The equipment and resource inventory demonstrates that the team has the capacity to respond to a child abduction with the resources appropriate for the job.



CHAPTER 11

CART PROTOCOLS

Established protocols, along with operating procedures and manuals, will help to ensure consistency in a CART's functionality. These documents must be shared among and accepted by all participating agencies. Any changes to policies and procedures must be documented in a consistent and singular location.

The best advice from established CARTs is to start with another team's protocols and borrow what has already been written. Break it down into bite-size pieces, and tap into team members' expertise. Do not make the process overly complicated, and remember the document does not have to be perfect, because it is never final. The protocols should be fluid and updated/modified based on the lessons learned following activations. The Utah CART modified its procedures and protocols after its first 2 activations. The team used its after-action meetings to analyze problems experienced on-scene and modify the protocols accordingly.

The following description of the CART Coordinator's responsibilities during an activation provides an example of the types of detailed information that should be included in the protocol. This job description would fall under the heading "Team Assignments".

IN PRACTICE

LESSONS ON DEVELOPING PROTOCOLS

Enlist members of the team to do the writing.

Use language that is clear and easy to understand and that everyone can grasp and agree upon.

Define team member roles and standard operating procedures.

Draw up organization charts that clearly show reporting relationships.

List training and meeting requirements as well as annual review dates.

Ensure that all team members understand the protocols and receive a copy of the most current documents.

Examples of three CART protocols are included as appendices in this publication.

Sample: Responsibilities of the CART Coordinator

1. Initiate the activation notice for CART members.
2. Coordinate an AMBER Alert (if applicable) in accordance with department and agency procedures.
3. Activate an established telephone number to receive information and leads from the public.
4. Respond to the scene of the incident and meet with the incident commander to:
 - a. Establish law enforcement (involved agency) contact.
 - b. Assign CART members to designated positions.
 - c. Obtain a comprehensive incident briefing.
 - d. Make assignments as necessary.
 - e. Coordinate all activities on scene with the requesting agency.
 - f. Confirm the communications center has made all required notifications.
 - g. Ensure CART resources (including the emergency operations center, private organizations, media and others) are utilized immediately.
5. Provide a summary for immediate briefing of local agency and CART members.

CART Certification Standards

CART Protocols

A written CART response manual details, at a minimum, the job of the CART Coordinator and all other critical team assignments discussed in previous chapters; notification of team members; use of equipment; organization of an incident command structure on-scene; designation of an incident commander; legal documents; forms; leads tracking capability; establishment of a tip line; enlistment of volunteers; and a list of predetermined activities that will immediately take place as soon as CART arrives on-scene, in order to limit downtime.

Written documentation requires a debrief be conducted and an after-action report written following each real and/or mock activation. The documentation addresses how problems identified as a result of the activation are to be resolved.



Sample: CART Protocol Components

- Response criteria
- Activation process
- Notification procedures
- Roles and responsibilities of the CART Coordinator
- Primary responsibilities of team leaders
- Team member roles in the activation process
- Procedures during callout/activation
 - Briefings (team, media, chain of command, state attorney; and with all shift changes)
 - Confidentiality and integrity of the investigation
 - Communications
- Leads tracking process
- Reunification procedures
- Contents of investigative case file
- Procedure for after-action reviews
- Appendices
 - Organization charts
 - Contact lists
 - Equipment inventory
 - Forms

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CHAPTER 12

VICTIM ASSISTANCE AND REUNIFICATION

Once the child has been recovered, it is critical a variety of services be made available as soon as possible, not only to address any physical or medical needs, but also any psychological problems that can result from the abduction or incident. Following those immediate needs, a forensic interview must be conducted to obtain any information that could assist in apprehending suspect(s) and to determine if other crimes were committed against the child. Additionally, the forensic interview may provide information that will facilitate the prosecution of defendants and perhaps identify other victims and/or suspects. This may result in spin-off investigations that should be carefully documented and swiftly assigned. Finally, before reunification with the family occurs, the child's home must be evaluated to ensure it is a safe and appropriate environment where the recovered child can recuperate in the wake of the ordeal.

Most CARTs have victim advocates on the team who assist the family both during the missing episode and afterward with referrals to community and social services. Experienced CART members recommend the reunification process between child and parent not be rushed. The comfort and welfare of the child is paramount. Psychologists emphasize that the manner in which the reunification is handled can have a significant long-term impact on the mental health of both child and the family.

Several national nonprofit organizations provide multiple forms of assistance, including post-recovery support to families that have endured a missing child incident. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) is one of the largest and most respected organizations in this area. One of NCMEC's most valuable programs assists law enforcement in the reunification process by arranging both transportation and lodging for families who cannot afford these costs when reuniting with their recovered child.

While law enforcement and victim advocates are trained to assist those who have been impacted by an abduction, as well as to provide families with a variety of resources, impacted families have expressed that some of the best support received has come from talking with other parents, siblings or children who have shared the same experience.

CART RESOURCES: TEAM HOPE

CART Resources: Team HOPE is an organization comprised of parents and family members who have experienced the abduction of a child. Their mission is to assist families of missing children by offering resources counseling, emotional support and ultimately empowerment from a trained volunteer who has had or still has a missing child. Six teams of volunteers, some Spanish speaking, work in each time zone. The following quote from Thomas Jefferson, which appears on Team HOPE's website, describes what the organization does best: "Who then can so softly bind up the wound of another as he who has felt the same wound himself?"

Team HOPE is sponsored by NCMEC.

Visit <http://www.missingkids.com/teamhope>

for more information, or call 1-866-305-HOPE (4673).



PUBLICATIONS FOR FAMILIES

The following publications are available for families and survivors, and can be found on the **Community Resources** page under **Training and Resources** at www.amberadvocate.org.

[When Your Child is Missing: A Family Survival Guide](#)

[What about me? Coping with an abduction of brother or sister](#)

[You Are Not Alone: The Journey from Abduction to Empowerment](#)



CART Certification Standards

Victim Assistance and Reunification

The CART has procedures in place to ensure medical and psychological assistance is readily available during CART activations, mobilization, callouts and deployments. The purpose of this standard is to ensure medical and psychological services and assistance are available and not the exclusive requirement of the lead or responding agencies. This standard mandates a protocol to provide the services, but does not require a specific law enforcement or responding agency or organization to provide such services or assistance.

The CART has a key position assigned to the team (e.g., victim advocate) to address family assistance during the investigation and during reunification and advocacy in the event the abduction resulted in the child's murder. This standard requires a description for the position, inclusive of the role of a victim advocate.

The CART has a plan in place that identifies services and resources available at the community, state and national levels to assist in support during the investigation, reunification and post reunification referrals. These resources are documented in the Resource Inventory.

The CART procedure includes a requirement for a detailed forensic interview of the child by a qualified forensic interviewer. If possible, forensic interviewers will be identified prior to activation of the CART and all listed forensic interviewers will provide a statement of qualifications accepted in the jurisdiction of prosecution.

The CART procedure includes a requirement for a risk assessment and background check on the family/shelter prior to returning the child to the family/shelter.

Establish a community outreach plan relating to the prevention of child abduction and the AMBER Alert plan utilized in that jurisdiction.

Hold educational sessions to juveniles and/or their parents regarding internet safety and other child safety prevention programs.

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CHAPTER 13

AFTER-ACTION BRIEFINGS

CARTs that have had an activation highly recommend that every team invest time in an after-action review and briefing. Several teams have modified their CART protocols and operating procedures as a result of information gleaned from their post-activation briefings.

After-action briefings should be conducted shortly after the conclusion of the call out. Team members should feel comfortable speaking freely about the parts of the call out and investigation that went right as well as the parts that need to be improved. The briefing should review all aspects of the call out, from team notification to recovery and reunification. The CART Coordinator should use the information to update and improve the CART plan.

CART in Action: Utah After-Action Briefings

Two days after a very tired and devastated team located the body of a 7-year-old girl and arrested her abductor, CART members held a debriefing on the activation. During the debriefing, each team member had an opportunity to say what went right, what went wrong and what needed to change. Everyone involved took the meeting seriously, committed to the process and was determined to make the team better.

As a result of this incident, a number of changes were agreed upon for the Utah CART.

- More members (160-200) would be recruited to be part of the team, plus dispatchers.
- An operational chart would be developed.
- A specific role would be assigned to each team member.
- Each component of CART would be assigned a designated area.
- Responsibility would be delegated among team members to relieve the commander.
- Briefings would be held every hour during a call out.
- All volunteers would undergo a background check.

CART in Action: Utah After-Action Briefings (cont'd)

- Volunteers would not be allowed to search door to door.
- Specific hours (8 a.m. to 8 p.m.) would be established for volunteers.
- An introductory video would be produced for volunteers.
- USEARCH (Utah Search, a volunteer search and rescue organization) would be brought into the process to help with volunteers.
- More equipment would be obtained.
- Access codes on software would be changed.
- A public education campaign on what to do if a child is missing would be created for the community.

The Utah CART's second callout received a rapid response, and the missing child was quickly and successfully recovered. During the after-action briefing, the team highlighted the successes from this case.

- CART was a resource to the police department.
- The team stayed within its organizational structure.
- The team responded quickly to the activation.
- The teamwork and cohesiveness were strong among members.
- Briefings were held every hour.

Additionally, the following unresolved issues were identified during the briefing.

- Team vacancies need to be filled.
- A better method must be found for activating CART members.
- CART members need to document their comings and goings.
- More officers are needed at the volunteer venue.
- Background checks on volunteers should be conducted in a secure location.



CART in Action: Utah After-Action Briefings (cont'd)

- The proper equipment was not delivered to the volunteer venue.
- Water and food deliveries need better coordination with the volunteer venue.
- More thought needs to be given to the location of the volunteer, media and intelligence venues.
- Two victim advocates should be deployed when the victim's parents are divorced.
- Mapping was still an issue.

As a result of this activation and after-action evaluation of the CART's process, a number of changes were introduced.

- CART titles were changed.
- More members were recruited to the team.
- New members received training.
- Equipment was labeled to denote where it should be sent.
- Maps were made available immediately to start searches.
- Venue agencies received help establishing their locations.
- A public education campaign was implemented to educate the community and law enforcement on the operational structure of the team.

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CHAPTER 14

CART CERTIFICATION PROCESS

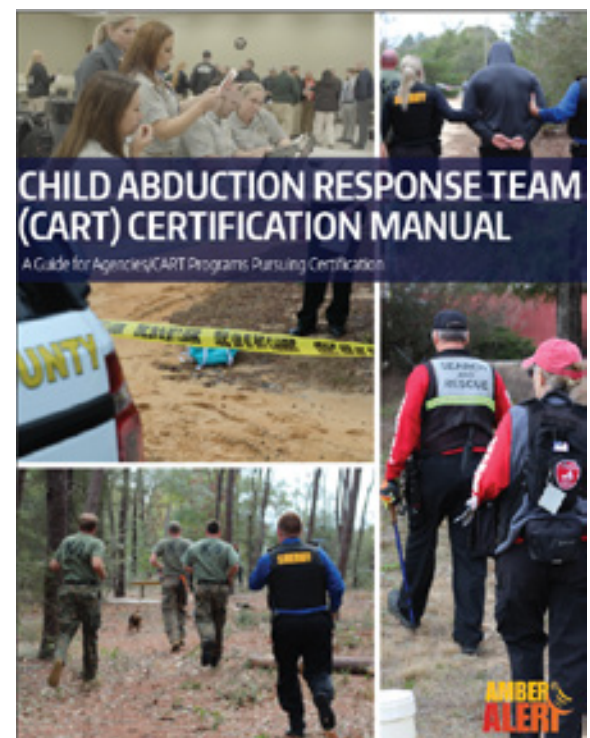
The CART certification process is an excellent opportunity for all participants of the program and team, to assess their individual and collective policies, procedures, protocols, implementation issues, training plans and overall team capacity.

Certified CARTs must demonstrate their compliance with the minimum standards, guidelines and practices provided in the CART training program developed by the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program (AATTAP) and approved by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). The standards represent an enhanced model for law enforcement best practices for effective response to a child abduction. By following the standards, CART programs will increase both the effectiveness and the efficiency of the team during an activation. The standards address teamwork, interagency cooperation and a unified response, which will assist agencies in implementation and maintenance of their CART program.

To be considered for CART certification, CART members must have attended a CART training sponsored by the Department of Justice, and an approved agency head must write a formal request for certification on official letterhead.

An AATTAP certification team will assess the policies and procedures of the CART based on compliance with the CART minimum standards. The CART documents, which must be submitted by the agency in advance of the onsite visit, should include, but are not limited to, organizational charts, procedures, protocols, checklists, equipment and resource inventory, forms and MOUs and any related agreements.

The certification process consists of a 2-day onsite assessment including interviews, a review of the CART's support



www.amberadvocate.org/cartresources

documentation and a mock child abduction exercise provided by AATTAP. An executive summary of the assessment will be sent to the requesting agency. The report will note any deficiencies that need to be addressed by the CART Coordinator. The Coordinator, in cooperation with the team, will have an opportunity to correct any deficiencies noted. Once the Coordinator successfully submits documentation which confirms/validates these issues have been addressed, the team will receive notice of its CART certification approval.

Upon approval of the CART certification, the certification team members representing AATTAP and OJJDP will present the CART Certification certificate to the team/program in a formal setting.





CHAPTER 15

MOCK ACTIVATION

Many CARTs that have not experienced an activation - and even those that have - emphasize the importance of finding ways to test their response times, protocols and resources. Tabletop exercises offer opportunities to refine procedures and assess capabilities, but there is no better way to put a CART to the test than to host a mock activation. CARTs that have incorporated a mock activation into their training report the exercise not only helps to refine their procedures, but also to raise public awareness of the CART in their jurisdiction and identify additional resources to strengthen the team.

Case Study: Northeast Tarrant & Denton County, Texas, CART

The Northeast Tarrant and Denton County CART represents the Dallas and Fort Worth area of North Texas. Founded in February 2007, the team is made up of 12 local municipalities and serves a population of approximately 427,000.

In selecting the site for the mock activation, organizers selected an area off of a main, heavily-traveled road near 3 schools. They wanted the exercise to be realistic. CART members knew the date of the mock activation, but not the exact time. The scenario placed the “victim” walking between baseball fields, being grabbed by the abductor and thrown into a yellow Jeep. Patrol officers and crime scene personnel were expected to respond to the incident as if it were real. Witnesses called in with leads, and call-takers had to prioritize the calls.

The team had previously experienced 2 partial activations (the result of child custody issues) prior to the mock activation, and members were accustomed to working in an emergency operations center. When the abduction was first reported, the nonprofit group, A Child Is Missing, Inc., contacted team members. A mobile command post was set up on-scene. The team expected it would take approximately 30 minutes to set up the command post, but in reality it took much longer. During the mock activation, identification cards were issued. Magnets were placed on the back of the cards, and the cards were used to indicate where members were at any given time. The recovery site was in a sparsely populated, overgrown area. Team members were tasked with figuring out where the abductor was located, how the search would be conducted and what resources, such as canines or

Case Study: Northeast Tarrant & Denton County, Texas, CART (cont'd)

horses, would be used. The community was notified in advance about the upcoming mock activation. Schools in the area were notified, and letters were sent home with students. The schools decided not to practice their lock-down procedures during the event. SearchOne, a private, nonprofit organization that has been around for years, put together search teams. One thing that was not properly thought out was the assignment of officers to each of the search teams. Because of the number of teams, the pool of available officers was quickly depleted. The media were involved in the exercise as were officer safety specialists. A safety briefing was conducted for all officers involved, and an officer was assigned to the “victim” at all times.

Both positive and negative lessons were learned from the exercise. On the positive side, the use of identification cards to indicate where members were assigned and located was helpful as was the cooperation of the media. Volunteers came from the Citizen Police Academy, so background checks had already been conducted and everyone had been issued an identification card. Additionally, the team used an internet application that allowed users to set up a secure information sharing network folder. Users were given passwords, which gives them access to all documents associated with a case as well as secure communications with one another. On the downside, the response time took much longer than expected, the command center took much longer to set up than anticipated, and not enough people were involved; as a result, the team suffered personnel depletion.



Case Study: Ontario County, New York, CART

Holding a mock activation is not without its challenges. First, there is never a good time for a mock field exercise. It is best to just schedule an event and then go back and analyze how it went. Second, teams must consider the logistics of holding a mock event - such as where the equipment will come from - and obtain a commitment from all agencies on the team. No matter the concerns, the benefits far outweigh the challenges. They include testing the plan in real time, gaining widespread media coverage for the team, fostering positive relationships among agencies, making the community aware of the proactive approach being taken to handle lost or missing child cases, strengthening confidence in the plan and enabling a response with needed resources in a timely manner.

Mock activations should be looked at as real-time tests. Through the process, teams should find out how long it really takes to get all members together and set up the command post. It is highly recommended that training records are created for the CART and that all tests be logged so the team can see exactly what was done to prepare for an event. Also suggested is that background checks be run on all volunteers or that trustworthy individuals such as volunteer firefighters be recruited to help. Another advantage of enlisting firefighters is that most have been trained in search and rescue, which can be critical during an abduction.

Some of the positive things observed during Ontario County's mock activation were that team members made an extra effort to be prepared for the abduction event, the call-out system worked well resulting in a quick response time, and a high degree of confidence in the team was instilled among members. The key lesson learned during the event was that the leads tracking database needed to be revamped and placed online so it could be accessed by team members in the field.

Setting up a mock activation exercise is a significant undertaking and requires a great deal of planning, but the team will emerge better prepared to successfully recover a child than it was before, making the hardships all worthwhile.

Several agencies have conducted mock activations, either on their own or in conjunction with a CART certification. For more information on CART certification or mock activations, contact AATTAP at askamber@fvtc.edu, or call 800-712-6237. Also visit AMBER Alert at <https://www.amberadvocate.org> and click on Training to learn more about available training and resources for CART and many other child protection offerings which can help agencies develop a comprehensive child recovery strategy.

RESOURCES

Visit www.amberadvocate.org/cartresources to find these and other CART resources.

SAMPLE CART PROTOCOLS

Brazos Valley
CART Protocol

Wisconsin DOJ-DCI
CART Protocol

Lake Superior CART
Protocol

SAMPLE CART FORMS

Business
Canvass

Neighborhood
Canvass

Roadblock
Canvass

Sex Offender
Canvass

Volunteer
Registration Form



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