

## AMBER Alert Training | (Recorded Webinar) AMBER Alert in Indian Country

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Welcome again, everyone, to our webinar today. The topic for today's webinar is AMBER Alert in Indian Country with presenter Jim Walters. My name is Melissa Blasing, and I'll be serving as your moderator for today's presentation. This webinar is supported by the AMBER Alert training and Technical Assistance Program, a program within the National Criminal Justice Training Center of Fox Valley Technical College.

Points of view or opinions expressed in this webinar are those of other authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of OJJDP, the US Department of Justice, and Fox Valley Technical College. In conjunction with our mission, our webinar series works to bring together state, local, and tribal subject matter experts to present and discuss critical issues related to missing, abducted, and Exploited Children.

With that, let's launch our first poll question. Which of the following best describes your role? State AMBER Alert coordinator/partner, tribal law enforcement officer, tribal community member/stakeholder, non-tribal law enforcement/criminal justice partner, or other.

As you can see by our results, the majority of you work in a category of other, with 14% in non-tribal law enforcement/criminal justice partners, 5% tribal community member/stakeholder, 7% tribal law enforcement officer, and 4% state AMBER Alert coordinator and partner.

Our presenter today is Jim Walters. Mr. Walters is the program administrator for the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program, where he is responsible for developing and delivering training and technical assistance to law enforcement, prosecutors, social services, child protection officials, and first responders in investigating techniques, program development, and policy-related issues related to missing and exploited children.

Mr. Walters also helped develop the AMBER Alert program's Liaison Program, and served as the first liaison for AMBER in Indian Country. He also served as a patrol officer, investigator, and public safety consultant to tribal communities throughout his career, and has conducted and supervised more than 150 major case investigations. Without further ado, please welcome our presenter, Jim Walters.

Thank you, Melissa. And thanks to all of you for joining us today to discuss this very important topic of AMBER Alert in Indian Country. Some of the things that we want to discuss today are important to how we bring AMBER Alert into Indian Country and extend those protections to children in our communities.

For today's topic, some of the topics we're going to touch on is an examination of some past child abduction and exploitation events on tribal lands, and the challenges that tribes are facing today and have faced in the past when

it comes to protecting our children. We'll briefly review the Ashlynnne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act of 2018, what the act does, and how we got there.

We're going to talk about strategies for implementing the AMBER Alert plan within your specific community or communities in your state or region. And then we'll finish up talking about some of the current resources that are available to communities and states through the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program.

So the mission of the AMBER Alert Indian Country Initiative is to ensure that tribes can develop plans within the community, but also so they can access state and regional plans, just like other communities. We want to help tribes develop, implement their AMBER Alert programs across Indian Country and across the country. And that starts by fostering these relationships between tribes in the states and the regional AMBER Alert partners.

And as we'll discuss as we go forward, it's that partnership that brings the most resources to protecting our children. And then to follow up with that, our key mission is providing those trainings, resources to tribal communities so that in the aftermath of an abduction, we can quickly rally the resources, conduct the investigation, and safely recover our missing, abducted, and exploited children.

I'm often asked how many children are missing in Indian Country, and for many years, that was a number that was hard to quantify. More recently, the FBI has conducted an estimate of more than 7,000 missing Native American children across the United States. And we have to understand that with native children, they go missing for the exact same reasons that children do in cities, and counties, and rural areas, and across this nation.

They may be runaways. They may be throwaway children. They could have been taken by a non-custodial parent. And we also have to deal with the fact of children being trafficked and put in through exploitation, or children that are abducted by a predator. All of these things are part of the issues that we're dealing with in Indian Country now, but for many years, other communities across the states have been implementing these tools that we're now trying to bring to our tribal communities.

One of our challenges is data. There's a lack of comprehensive data across the United States when it comes to missing children, missing women and girls, which we've seen a lot of attention to in the press lately. There are efforts underway to improve that. The Violence Against Women and Tribal Law and Order Acts have really raised awareness and have provisions in them to try to address some of these issues.

We still see gaps in law enforcement. Those are just being addressed. But those issues-- and until we can properly quantify the problem, they will challenge us as we move forward with implementation. And developing that data set and grasping the real numbers are going to be key to a successful implementation of this program.

There are other challenges, and anybody who's lived on tribal lands understands that some of these are historical

challenges. If we look at issues such as cultural intervention, jurisdictional complexities, and not just as they apply to the tribe, but as they apply to state and local officials who are trying to work with tribal communities, the lack of understanding of Indian child welfare law, especially outside tribal lands.

So when we have that abducted child that is possibly recovered elsewhere in the country, and outside tribal lands, do they understand the provisions of law and where that child belongs? Also, this issue of long-term implications of victimization. We learn early on that, much like a small town anywhere in the United States, that in our small, insular communities, my grandmother used to say, everybody knows your business.

And that's the truth, that victimization affects not just that one person, not just their family, but the extended community. And oftentimes, it can be a challenge because people are afraid of the things that get out and of disclosing their victimization. We also suffer from a lack of resources and specialization. Investigating child abductions is a very specialized skill set, and that's not always present in our tribal agencies and tribal communities.

And then on top of that, a lack of infrastructure that much of the rest of the country doesn't understand. Lack of cell towers, the inability to communicate via radio towers, and so forth are all challenges that are very unique to Indian Country.

When I'm asked about the real impact of missing, and abducted, and exploited Children in members of our communities, I always like to answer with the understanding that we have to know that women and children are the future of our communities. They are today and tomorrow's life givers, the culture-bearers, caretakers of our communities. And when we lose one of these important members of our community, the impact is on everyone.

You only have to live on a reservation or speak to members of communities to know that the rates of missing persons, missing women, missing children are high. In fact, I often tell my co-workers that almost everyone we talk to can recount a story of a female relative, or a child, or someone from that community who went missing, who was murdered, or who the crimes involving them are unsolved to this day.

And those are community impacts that affect everyone in that community. With that, Melissa, could we talk about another poll?

Yes, and to follow up in regards to the impact on the community, our next poll question is, do you know of a native child who is currently missing or abducted from your community? As you can see from our results, it looks like about 20% of you do currently know of a native child who is missing or abducted from your community.

Thank you, Melissa. That's a remarkable number. I would challenge you to go into the greater community of

Minneapolis, or Dallas, or Pittsburgh and stop a hundred people, and see if 20% of them know of somebody that they personally know of that is missing in their neighborhood, in their community. And I think that's an important lesson for us to learn.

When we talk about past child abductions and exploitation events in our lands, it's not a new phenomenon. We're fortunate that the greater society, that the rest of America is slowly becoming aware of these issues, but we have to understand that these abductions and appropriations of people and exploitation have gone on for hundreds of years.

As troubling as the history is, one of the things that comes out of it is our ability to learn from past cases and past abductions. And we need to look at those types of events.

We took the time to sit down and look at 50 cases involving missing, abducted, endangered children, and looked at the lessons that came back from those cases, and what could we learn from them? One of the things that came out of that, that there were five key areas that are critical to the safe recovery of that missing child or missing person. And that if we are deficient in any of these areas at the onset of the investigation, it really creates problems in that safe recovery.

In fact, the recovery rates dropped by almost 80% of getting them back safely without harm. And some of those issues are the preplanning and training, meaning that tribal communities have to plan on the worst case scenario of a child being abducted, and law enforcement and others in the community have to train to prepare for that.

Our call-takers-- those people that receive that first call from a parent-- have to be ready and understand what they need to do in the event that they get that terrible call. Our first responders have to know what to do in that initial response. And then those in charge of the investigation have got to understand the dynamics of child abductions, of exploitation, and all of these crimes so that they understand how to focus that investigation to the most effective process for recovering that child.

One of the things that I thought was interesting that came up is what we call the neighborhood investigation search and canvas. And in your mind, you might think of a neighborhood in a city, but sometimes in our communities and neighborhoods, we're a mile or two apart from our neighbors. But how do you gather the information that the members of that community have and use that to direct the search and the recovery of that child?

These are all critical components of rescuing that child, and we have to be aware of them. Many of the children in our communities are at risk because they do not have access to their state AMBER Alert communications plan. One of the things that is really challenging is the lack of a comprehensive child abduction recovery strategy,

meaning that we have a plan in place for what we're going to do if a child should go missing.

It's one of those things that oftentimes we don't want to talk about the terrible things that could happen, for fear of bringing them to the community. But if we don't have a plan for what to do, very often we place our children at risk. Understand, AMBER Alert's only one tool. It's only one part of the process of recovering that child.

We need plans, we need resources, we need training, and we need to know what to do if a child in our community goes missing.

I'm sometimes asked why it is that we need AMBER Alert in our specific community. You know, the first thing is that there are resources, equipment, and personnel that are critically needed when a child goes missing. And the AMBER Alert is a catalyst that sets in action a series of notifications that start bringing those resources to us.

The FBI is immediately notified and they can bring resources that are from across the country. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children has analytical and case management capabilities that most tribes simply don't have, and they will bring experts to the community to assist us in the investigation. And all of this is free to the tribe.

And then our state missing persons clearinghouses and AMBER Alert programs are brought into the process. Understand that while our particular tribal community may experience one missing child in 5 or 10 years, our partners at the state, our partners at the National Center, and our partners at the FBI-- this is what they do. And they bring those resources to the table.

They're going to support what we do on the investigation in the efforts to locate that child. They're not going to take anything away from the community. They're bringing support to us. And I always ask, if it was your child missing, wouldn't you want every single resource available to be used in the effort to recover your child. I do know that I would.

So what happens? How does the AMBER Alert work? And it's important to understand that process. So when a child goes missing-- and there's some facts that we know about when children go missing. Things like when a parent goes out and searches for their own child, I think you know we've all been down that road where we can't find our child. And typically, parents will spend up to two hours searching for their own child.

Unfortunately, history and studies of these cases has shown us that in cases where a homicide is the ultimate outcome of the abduction, up to 76% of those children are dead within the first three hours. So we have to understand that time is our enemy. So when that call comes in and the child is reported missing, the first thing that law enforcement has to do is confirm that there's actually been an abduction.

Then they request that AMBER Alert activation through the state AMBER Alert plan, and that AMBER Alert is pushed out and issued using systems such as the IPAWS, the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System, or the wireless emergency alert plans. And the public receives that alert. And now what happens? Instead of having 20 or 30 police officers searching for that child, we have those 20 or 30 police officers, but we also have every single person in our community as part of that effort.

AMBER Alert came to us because of the PROTECT Act, and the PROTECT Act is a law that was enacted in April of 2003. And what it did was strengthen law enforcement's capabilities when it came to preventing, investigating, and prosecuting crimes against children. The law also identifies and tasks the National AMBER Alert Coordinator.

They were tasked with creating a national AMBER Alert network, with supporting the development of state AMBER Alert plans, helping to eliminate geographic gaps in those AMBER Alert networks, and providing regional network coordination so that all these plans talk to each other. And then the law said that we need to establish guidance on the criteria for issuing AMBER Alerts.

The PROTECT Act was a watershed moment for how we protect and how we recover children. The AMBER Alert plans created through the PROTECT Act formed a nationwide plan that allowed law enforcement agencies across the country to alert the public when a child was abducted. Unfortunately, those AMBER Alert plans at that time did not extend to tribal communities. And that's how we arrived at where we are today.

Every change comes about because of a catalyst, and the catalyst for AMBER Alert in Indian Country occurred on May 2. On May 2, 11-year-old Ashlynnne Mike and her nine-year-old brother, Ian, were abducted on the Navajo reservation near Shiprock, New Mexico. Initially, after Ashlynnne's abduction and her brother's escape from their abductor, there was confusion about who issues the AMBER Alert and the process.

And what this meant was that for several hours, there was a misunderstanding of who should be issuing the AMBER Alert, and there was a delay in that AMBER Alert being issued. What Ashlynnne's case did, though, and the tragedy that came out of it, it brought to bear the awareness of this missing dynamic in Indian Country.

Ashlynnne's abductor-- and I don't use his name. I don't want to give him his name being used. It should be something that we never speak of again. Once he was arrested, we knew, and he said, that he had taken this child for the purpose of sexually assaulting her. He talked about how he took her life. And one of the things that came out of that was a reminder that this was a member of the community.

And it should tell us that these predators can be anywhere, including our own communities, and that everything that we can do to create programs where we can save those children are absolutely critical to protecting children in our own communities, to being prepared for when that predator strikes in our community.

So the AMBER Alert was brought to Indian Country through the Ashlynnne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act of 2018. And this was two years after Ashlynnne was abducted. And if you have spent any time in our capital, you understand that bringing a law from an idea to having the president sign it in two years is phenomenal.

Much of that work was done by Ashlynnne's mother, Pamela Foster, in a truly courageous bipartisan effort by members of Congress who didn't let politics get in the way of doing the right thing for children. And I like to think that there could be no more fitting legacy for Ashlynnne than this law that will protect native children, and hopefully will prevent other families from having to endure the pain that her family went through.

So this act, Ashlynnne's Act, amends the PROTECT Act to allow for grants to states and federally-recognized tribes. It allows tribes to develop or enhance programs and activities in support of their AMBER Alert communication plans. It integrates those tribal AMBER Alert systems into state systems and integrates state or regional AMBER Alert plans with the tribe.

And it allows for tribes to waive some of the matching fund requirements by law. And I would challenge you that when you have the opportunity, follow the link in your handouts and read this law in its entirety.

So our program, the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program, is responsible for assisting in the implementation of the Ashlynnne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act. And there's a lot of work that went into that, and continues to this day.

One of the things that we don't have time for here, but we'll cover later in another webinar-- you may have seen a release by the Department of Justice where a national assessment of where we are with the AMBER Alert in tribal communities was conducted. And my co-presenter, Melissa, was in charge of that effort, so that we talked to every state with tribes in it and tribal members to talk about what we need to bring AMBER Alert to those communities.

And understanding that, as we spoke about earlier, when we know that time is such an enemy, what can we do to improve the capability of recovering that child? Well, the first thing is to bring the public into those recovery efforts so that we strengthen the number of people that are out there looking for that child. More eyes, more ears searching for the child, and more sources of the information that can be there to save that child.

Let's talk about what we have to do, though, to bring AMBER Alert to our specific communities. The first thing is commitment. I feel strongly that it takes leadership. It takes strong leadership to bring our communities to the table. And I know that when we speak with community members, they look to tribal leaders and tribal government to do the things that are necessary to bring this program to their communities.

Their roles are important because it takes leadership to set policies. What are the policies of our particular community as they affect not just law enforcement, but schools, public health, social services, and others when it comes to children that go missing, that are abducted, or are exploited?

Establishing the criteria. The US Department of Justice issues recommended criteria for when an AMBER Alert is to be issued, but our community has to agree to that criteria so that we're all working on the same page.

We also have to provide oversight so that in the event of an abduction, if there are things that we can do better somebody, has to be responsible for making sure that we are doing better and are proving our processes, so that the next time that we go out looking for a child, that we can find that child or we can improve the process.

And then getting the information out. I think sometimes, there's a misconception around the country about how easy it is to communicate within a community because people view our communities as just small little gatherings of people. But we all understand that you can have a place like Navajo, or Wind River, or others where our communities are spread across areas the size of New England.

And so having the tribe and our leadership being responsible for making sure that that information is getting out, and making sure that people are aware of what it takes in our community, is absolutely critical. If we don't have their support, this will never happen in each of our communities.

So the first thing we want to do is make sure that our leadership understand and support the goals of the plan. If our idea is that we want to improve the ability of the community to respond and address the threats to safety to our children, we have to talk about that. We have to make child protection and the safety of children in the community a shared concern.

We need effective council resolutions, ordinances, tribal codes, and laws that will bring AMBER Alert to our community and make sure that it extends past the next tribal election. What we have seen in the past, and what is so discouraging, is that we may have a strong effort today, but there are changes in leadership. There are changes at law enforcement or other places in the community.

And then if we don't have that policy and that ordinance in code, it goes away or falls by the wayside. And additionally, our tribal leaders should be out there seeking funding and partnerships to improve our capabilities, improve the way that we go about searching for our missing children. Your community can take action. There are things that your community can do to make this happen and make it a reality.

There are a lot of challenges to bringing AMBER Alert to a community. There may be issues with jurisdictional coverage. There may be historical issues between state, local, and federal partners. All of these things can be overcome because the cost is a child's life. So we have to understand, what is it that we have to do to take action



so that we can develop comprehensive child abduction recovery programs?

And I use that phrase because it's very easy for us to say, we're just going to develop an AMBER Alert program. But folks, there's a lot more to it, and we want to make sure that that AMBER Alert program has a strong foundation under it so that when we do have to respond, that yeah, the AMBER Alert is issued, but our people know what to do and everybody in that community has brought it to bear to recover that child.

We have to coordinate with our state AMBER Alert program. I'm sometimes asked, why is it that we cannot just have a standalone program that only alerts within the boundaries of our tribal lands? My answer to that is we can have that. We can have an alert for within our lands, but we have to coordinate with our state partners, as well. And there's two very simple reasons for this.

The first one is what I talked about before, is that child abductions, thankfully, are not a high frequency occurrence. So that means that very often, our communities and our law enforcement, you may see one abduction-- a true, predator/stranger abduction-- once or twice in your career. But our partners at the state, they see this much more often, unfortunately.

And so they get that experience, and they have those resources, and they understand what it is that they're doing. And they bring that knowledge to assist us. The other fact is, and we've proven this, unfortunately is that very often in the immediate aftermath of the abduction of a child, what is that abductor going to do?

Well, they're going to move that child. For whatever reason, whether it's to take them someplace to hide them, or to take them someplace to carry out whatever terrible things it is that they have in their mind to carry out, they're going to move that child. And in many cases, that's going to be off of tribal lands. And so if our alert stops at the tribal boundary, what happens when that person takes our child into the state or the neighboring state?

That's why these partnerships with our state partners become so important. While we're doing that, we're always cognizant of protecting tribal sovereignty. And that's why these relationships between the tribes and the states are so important, because when you put all three of those together, then we can provide the best possible response to that missing child. And as I said, there are challenges, but there's nothing that we cannot overcome.

So where do we start? It's simple to say that we need to do this, but how do we get started and how do we do this? The very first thing we have to do is take an honest look at our community, at our situation, and assess our capacity to respond to an endangered, missing, abducted, exploited child that is missing from our community.

And we've got to ask ourselves some tough questions. What's our competency? Meaning, how well are we trained, prepared, and experienced to work that kind of serious incident, and what's our capacity? We may have

the most incredible investigators and leaders in the world, but if we don't have enough people for the long-term investigation, then how much true capacity do we have?

And then what are the improvements that we need to make as a community to improve our capacity to respond? That's when we started addressing gaps in our policy, our procedures, the practices, how we really do these things, and then the training, so that we can bring training to bear, improve some of those areas that we need to work on.

We have to encourage our tribal Leadership and law enforcement participation in state implementation meetings. These are meetings that we are scheduling across the country where we're asking for tribal leaders and their law enforcement leaders to sit down at a meeting with our state partners, with our federal partners, with our partners from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and sit down and discuss how we most effectively integrate these plans between the states and the tribes, and make sure that we have coverage for our children.

Part of this comes from the knowledge that every member is responsible for that community. And if there's one thing that we can take pride in, it is that that's historically a part of life in native lands, that every child is a precious resource to our community. And we have to be able to assure the victim's family and the community that we're going to use every resource available to us, wherever that comes from, to find that child.

These meetings are the catalyst for this. They provide an opportunity to bring all of these people together to talk about how we best do the three things we just talked about, and bring all those resources to the table. It's collaboration. It's a sense of community where we're working together for that child and for that family.

I want to show you a video. In September 2018, we gathered in the state of Arizona at Fort McDowell. And there was a reason that we started in Arizona with our first meeting between tribes and states, and that was because that when this law was originally introduced, one of the first people that introduced this law was Senator John McCain.

Congressman Andy Biggs from Arizona was a sponsor in the House of Representatives. Other lawmakers from New Mexico, Arizona were onboard. And the state of Arizona really took to heart the idea of bringing together tribes in the state to talk about how we can implement across the state. Let's take a moment to look at a video that comes out of that first implementation meeting.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

[MUSIC PLAYING]

- A lot of the discussion that's going to happen this week at the conference, the event is going to get all the tribal leaders together, as well as the state leadership in addressing some of the concerns, not just for only in Indian Country, but all across the state, all across the southwest. I think we really need to focus on protecting our children, not just an abduction, but just the exploitation of the young people as well as adults.

And I think this is going to go a long way. I know this is the first time we're coming together, and I want to just say to Senator McCain's family and all the folks who have worked hard on this throughout the country, and it's a great move towards protecting our children in Indian Country.

- The importance is to work with the agencies around us. And every reservation has mutual agreements with every police department and law enforcement agencies and first responders, which are crucial because you can have a lot of man hours if there ever is an AMBER Alert in our community. The Gila River Indian community is within two counties, Maricopa and Pinal.

So that means we really have to have agency support from Maricopa County Sheriff's Department, Pinal County Sheriff's Department, and everybody on board to ensure that we all understand what it really means to activate an AMBER Alert.

- I think in the state of Arizona, we do have AMBER Alert, but it's not specific to Indian communities because we have to trade that information with the state of Arizona. And how we do that-- we had to come up with agreements. We had to come up with memorandums of understanding to work with state officials in order to implement this type of system.

And I think that that relies on our leaders. We're responsible for the overall welfare and safety of our community, and that's what we do. That's our job. What we do is when we meet, we communicate. And let's try to find a solution to this, and let's see what we can get resources to do it.

- When I first learned about the conference, I really got excited because I knew that our youth council had experienced the reaction from Ashlynn's community, and I said, oh, good. This is a chance to see what has happened what is developed in how, say, a certain system is responding to it. Within Indian Country, the jurisdictional issues are really challenging.

Even when we think about broadband, and how broadband works, or technology, and making sure we understand all of the technology-- that's going to help us-- really, really help us. And then as we move forward, it's important for us to keep talking to one another, for parents to talk to the judicial system, for tribal leaders to talk to parents, to have those conversations.

I think at this conference, the one thing that is really important is for everybody to recognize if they've become

desensitized, if they have overlooked a certain population that we think could be not vulnerable, if we say oh, yeah, these guys got it together. We don't have to worry about them, but these guys, we do-- I think anybody's capable of that.

I look at murdered and missing Indian women. I look at men who identify with LGBTQ. I look at children, boys and girls who can get abducted. We're all vulnerable to that, and it takes people who are trained and educated to pass that message along. I think that's the most critical thing we could do here in a conference is just to not become desensitized to what has to be done.

[END PLAYBACK]

All right. That's a powerful video, and it shows what we can do when we bring our communities together. Melissa, do we have another poll?

Yes. So as Jim mentioned throughout his presentation, the number of trainings and technical assistance that we can provide through our AMBER Alert program, I wanted to ask our next poll question, which is has your community ever received training on missing and exploited children's issues? Yes, no, unsure, or we would be interested in training.

Looks like 41% have received training, 20% have not, 37% are unsure, an additional 34% are interested in receiving additional training. Thank you.

Excellent. Thank you, Melissa. And that's important, and we're going to finish up talking about some of the training, technical assistance resources to communities. We're especially fortunate that the US Department of Justice has provided funding for training, technical assistance to assist tribes in implementing AMBER Alert in their communities.

And the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program, with our partners at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, are absolutely committed to conducting culturally-appropriate training and technical assistance in tribal communities that best fits the unique needs of each specific tribe. And the best part is, there's no cost for this training and technical assistance.

Training for the worst and that child abduction. Speaking as somebody who has investigated those types of crimes, I can tell you, it's absolutely the worst, and it requires specialized training. We call child abductions high risk, low frequency events, meaning that there are lives on the line. They don't happen that often.

And all of this magnifies the need for regular training, exercises, and preparedness. And it's a challenge for tribes that have limited resources or access to training.

We bring that. We bring training through the Department of Justice that is both conducted online and is provided in the classroom. And just some of the trainings that we provide are eLearning courses, distance learning, "How to Build AMBER Alert in Indian Country," or a "Law Enforcement and Community Response to Child Sex Trafficking and Exploitation in Indian Country." Both are relevant topics to our communities today.

We do child abduction training for tribal communities that includes training for our call-takers-- those first people that talk to the family when a child goes missing-- a class on how to work with tribal law enforcement in the aftermath of a missing or abducted child, and this is especially relevant to our state and local partners, child abduction response team training.

I'm a huge proponent of this training because what it is is an opportunity to bring in multiple disciplines within the community-- law enforcement, schools, social services, fire, EMS, and community members to train together ahead of time, develop a set of protocols so that when that child goes missing, we can pull out the entire community and everybody has a role and knows what to do.

Leadership training for our tribal and community leaders, training for our community so that our community is involved in this process, and there's a lot more training that is available out there. One of the other things that I think is important is that Department of Justice and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has created a web resource specifically for the tribes.

And you're looking at a screenshot of our [amberinindiancountry.org](http://amberinindiancountry.org) website. This site-- think of it as your gateway to AMBER Alert in Indian Country. It's a site that features information on the initiative, as well as the latest news on the implementation of the Ashlynnne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian County Act. And it talks about what's happening in Indian Country, what other tribes are doing, what other states are doing so that they can bring AMBER Alert to their communities.

It's a quick way to access information on training, whether it be classroom, online training. You can download and do it in your community, or downloadable resources like community awareness events. One stop you can go to, and pick up important information or access some of the important tools that are brought to you by the Department of Justice.

And these tools, everything that I've talked about, and everything that you've seen are at no cost to the community. And that's incredibly important, that we schedule these things. We bring them to you. Our partners at the National Center, we partner with the FBI, with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and all of these things are brought to free of charge.

So this is incredibly important as we bring this forward and do this implementation within our communities. One of the things that I wanted to do at this point was turn this back over to Melissa so that we can talk a little bit about questions that you might have applied to today's presentation.

Yes. Thank you, Jim. As we are now entering our question and answer session, so we did have a few questions in regards to the AMBER Alert criteria. And the question is, what if my case or a missing child in my community does not meet that criteria? Are there other alerts available?

That's an incredibly important question, and I thank you for bringing that up. As we said, AMBER Alert is one tool. There are a number of other tools that are available. In fact, there's an entire process available. And sometimes we call these endangered person alerts, and some tribes have specific titles for them. But there are what we call secondary means of getting that information out.

The Alert that comes over your telephone in the emergency message is just one way. So we developed systems that allow us to alert the community using social networking, community websites, radio, TV, all of these other tools that can be brought to bear when a case does not specifically meet the criteria of the AMBER Alert. There's always a backup system in place for those types of cases.

Thank you, Jim. And we also had a question in regards to how somebody can find more information about their state's AMBER Alert coordinator or clearinghouse manager, and I would encourage you to visit our partner website, which is [www.amberadvocate.org](http://www.amberadvocate.org). On that website, we list each state's contact information. So if you're interested in reaching out to somebody from your state, I encourage those on this webinar to visit our website for that information.

We also had some questions in regards to sex offender registries in tribal communities. Jim, could you touch on, or perhaps provide some more information in regards to, the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act, also known as SORNA, in Indian Country, and maybe some of the work that's being done through the SMART Office in implementing this throughout Indian Country?

Absolutely. And the credit has to go to the SMART Office in the SORNA program because they have been in this process of creating this overarching service to communities and working with states and federal officials for some time now, and have laid a lot of the groundwork for what we're doing. What's important about SORNA and the work of the SMART Office is that considerations, such as tribal sovereignty, and how we control information, has been addressed.

And there's a lot of lessons that can be learned from your tribe's SORNA program. Obviously, sex offender management-- for the law enforcement members that are on this webinar, we recognize that immediately in the

aftermath of an abduction, one of the key things that we want to do is understand who are potential threats within the community. And so we look at that information.

But on a broader scope, SORNA provides a basis for how tribes can work with these programs that are being implemented within the community. And I would strongly suggest that any program to bring AMBER Alert into the community also include your SORNA coordinator.

Thank you, Jim. We had a question once again kind of going back to data. And so the question is, is there a website that lists all missing kids by tribe and state? One resource that I'll just mention, and then Jim, if you wanted to mention some others, is the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System. It's a resource available to families.

It serves as a national clearinghouse and resource center for missing, unidentified, and unclaimed persons cases throughout the United States. That's one resource that I know a few of you have asked for more information on. Their website is [www.namus.gov](http://www.namus.gov). It will give you some more information and serve as a resource as we look at these cases throughout the country.

But Jim, did you want to mention any other resources available in regards to some more data as it relates to missing children?

Yeah. Absolutely, Melissa. And I think that NAMUS is actually the go-to site that you want to look at in regards to cases. But I would also encourage everyone on this webinar that when you get off, go to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's web page, [missingkids.com](http://missingkids.com). Look for active AMBER Alerts and pull up your state, and look at the flyers of children that are currently missing and being searched for in your state.

Sometimes, that's a true revelation, and there's faces to go with the children that are missing. And one of the things that I often get feedback from was, well, I went and I looked, and I did not see a child who I know is missing. And those missing children may not have been reported. But the National Center's website is a great way to look at resources, but also it brings it home when you see those children from your state and you recognize those communities. It really gives you an idea of the scope of what's happening out there with missing kids.

Thanks, Jim. We also received a number of questions about our offerings and very specific topics. I know that Jim mentioned various trainings that we offer, but we do provide customized training as it relates to the needs of your community. So for those of you who had asked in the questions panel about if we offer specific trainings to a certain issue in your community, I would encourage you to follow up with us.

And we also could follow up with you in regards to the training that you need. And like I said, everything that we provide is customized. So Jim, did you have anything else to add in regards to the specific needs that each

community may face or encounter?

Yeah, no. I think you covered it, Melissa, that there's nothing in the realm of endangered, missing, abducted, exploited children in your communities between our program, the National Center, and our partners with the FBI and BIA that we cannot develop a training to meet your needs. And so we never want that to be an obstacle.

And just to brag for a moment on the people that we have out there, we have teams in the field right now in Montana, New Mexico, and elsewhere, and these are subject matter experts that are practitioners. They work and live and have investigated these types of crimes in Indian Country. And so if you have something that you need to help your community get to bring an AMBER Alert in, send us those requests.

Go to that website and send that request so somebody will contact you. And between us and our partners, we will make sure that you get the training that you need.

Thank you. And a follow-up on that, I know there was a few questions specifically asking about cases where a child is abducted and taken to another tribe or reservation, and how those cases should be handled. I would ask that you reach out to us directly and we can handle those all on a case-by-case basis.

All right. So that is all of the questions that we have for our webinar today. I wanted to thank you, Jim, for providing your insight and responding to our audience's questions. Did you have any final thoughts for our audience before we conclude the webinar?

Melissa, just one final thought, and this is to everybody that's out there, is the first thing we have to do is be thankful for the leadership in Congress and in the Department of Justice that brought us this funding and support. But we also have to understand that it's imperative for each and every one of us to act.

I often ask people when we meet in person that after listening to this webinar, and seeing these resources, and knowing what's available for your community, if you go back and you don't do that, what are you doing when that child does go missing in your community? How would you face that parent of a missing child if you didn't take the opportunity to bring every tool and resource to the community?

And that's what the AMBER Alert program is. It's another tool to find that child. And I'd ask that everybody think of that, think of the families, think of the children. And I thank you for your time today, and for your attention to this really important topic. Thank you.

Thank you, Jim. Upcoming program and webinar announcements from our AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program will be made in the coming weeks, and can also be found on [www.ncjtc.org](http://www.ncjtc.org). Thank you again for joining us and have a great day.