

THE AMBER ADVOCATE

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FAMILY ROUNDTABLES GIVING SURVIVORS A VOICE



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Your story ideas and pictures are welcome.

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FAMILY ROUNDTABLES

GIVING SURVIVORS A VOICE



2019 FAMILY ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS

(Back Row) Anna Green, Lesley Small, Yvonne Ambrose, Sarah Beck, Abby Potash, Edeanna Babiro
(Front Row) Byron Fassett, Gus Paidousis, Roger Day, Stephanie Dobson, Jodi Peterson, Diana Lambert, Hope Berg, James Jessee, Tammy Mata, Ladora Johnson, Pam Schmidt, Bonnie Ferenbach, Ron Laney, Theresa Lewis

Written by AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program Administrator Jim Walters

For more than 15 years, the US Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP) AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program (AATTAP) has conducted family roundtable meetings with the specific purpose of providing a venue for communication and collaboration between victims, surviving family members and law enforcement. These gatherings facilitate interaction and dialogue where participants can discuss lessons learned and provide information on criminal justice system services, first responder actions and interactions, as well as feedback from life experiences associated with their families' missing, abducted, endangered or murdered child investigation.

These roundtables are a collaborative effort between AATTAP and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), with both organizations providing input on families who participate, subject matter experts (SMEs) who facilitate discussions, and trauma specialists to assist participants through

what can be a very emotionally challenging experience. Each year's event is designed to bring together families who are new to the roundtable, partnering them with family members from past roundtables who serve to guide and support them through the process.

Past roundtables have included sessions specific to the experiences and needs of siblings of missing, abducted and murdered children, long-term missing cases, parental abductions and international parental kidnappings. Events have included family members from almost every state in the nation, with participants bringing diversity of geography, ethnicity and perspectives on these difficult, life-altering cases; as no group is immune from the tragedy of losing a child.

Every roundtable event follows a defined process, built from more than 15 years of evidence-based practices in working with survivors. The AATTAP has formalized its approach and best practices through "A Guide

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FAMILY ROUNDTABLES

GIVING SURVIVORS A VOICE

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"I have participated in several family roundtables over the years in our 27-year search for our son Jacob. It is amazing to experience the strength and encouragement shared between families. Many of them have suffered unimaginable pain and loneliness depending on individual responses from law enforcement or their own communities. It is heartening to be part of a support system that can offer light during the darkest times for these families. Hope lives in those who are searching for answers. Shared hope is even more powerful!"

Patty Wetterling

Mother of Jacob, abducted and murdered October 22, 1989, at age 11

to Survivor Roundtables: Improving the Criminal Justice System through Survivor Input," authored by former AATTAP Administrator Phil Keith and former OJJDP Program Manager and current AATTAP Associate Ron Laney.

This process ensures survivors are given a voice during the roundtable event, and results in information and recommendations from which training and technical assistance content can be developed. This method also promotes more effective responses to law enforcement and other child and family protection professionals tasked with the safe recovery and support of the abducted child.

Family roundtable events have provided incredible insights and knowledge, which benefit participants and criminal justice practitioners alike. Through invaluable input from family members on experiences in

the aftermath of their child going missing, law enforcement, after-care providers and judicial personnel can vastly expand their important analyses of how these cases are handled. Moreover, the first-hand experiences so bravely provided by the families often span initial law enforcement response through the investigation and judicial proceedings, yielding important information on the effects each phase or aspect of the case has on the family.

Roundtable events have been instrumental in bringing the family's perspective to the work of AATTAP and AMBER Alert programs across the nation. Roundtable findings have spurred important initiatives, such as efforts to eliminate waiting periods or other delays in entering the missing child into the FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and related missing persons records systems. Recommendations from participating families have provided the impetus for expansion of curriculum and

the development of new training courses in the areas of advanced cold case and long-term missing investigations; digital evidence in child abduction cases; and canvass, search and recovery strategies.

In enduring the horror and trauma associated with the victimization of their family members, family roundtable participants are profoundly qualified to offer invaluable information through personal observations and experiences. They reveal what law enforcement, advocates and prosecutors do well—and what they could do better—during the initial response, investigation, prosecutorial and post-trial phases of the case. Their voices are critical to improving how we serve families in the time of their greatest need.

AATTAP works closely with survivors through the roundtable initiative and its continuous improvement processes to fully support them in both providing and receiving information. AATTAP and NCMEC maintain a strong focus on assisting families as they work through their own recoveries, providing them with

resources and access to subject matter experts to address their questions and concerns.

Family members often need information on law enforcement policies, the latest child recovery strategies and resources, as well as help with improved practices for keeping their child's case active with local law enforcement and media. These sessions provide the opportunity to meet one-on-one with AATTAP and NCMEC staff, gain knowledge and establish ongoing support that can assist them well beyond the roundtable event.

The relationships forged and work undertaken through the roundtable events continues even after participants return home. Each session concludes with a list of action items and suggestions for AATTAP and NCMEC to enhance and/or develop case studies, training, technical assistance and resource publications. An after-action report is provided to the roundtable participants in the weeks following the event.

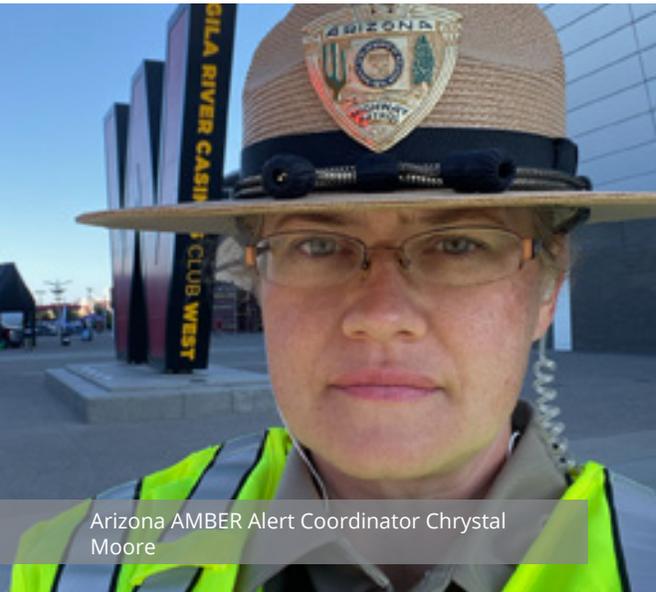


“The roundtable is so very important to the families. We can come together, contribute and share our ideas and thoughts [on] how we can make a positive change in this critical epidemic. It has helped me as I give my thoughts to law enforcement and others, and allows me to spread awareness from a father’s perspective. Thank you for holding these important roundtables for us all.”

***Russell Barnes
Father of Phylicia, murdered December 28, 2010, at age 16***

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AMBER ALERT ON THE FRONT LINES:



Arizona AMBER Alert Coordinator Chrystal Moore

AMBER ALERTS IN IDAHO AND ARIZONA END WITH DRAMATIC RESCUE OF VICTIM HIDDEN IN BUSHES

A 17-year-old girl was taking a break from her job at a Wendy's restaurant in Jerome, Idaho, when she disappeared without any of her belongings. Earlier that day, the restaurant's manager had ordered the employee's ex-boyfriend to leave for making threats against the girl and her co-workers.

Eighteen-year-old Miguel Rodriguez-Perez had a protective order against him for multiple incidents of domestic violence and seriously injuring the girl. An FBI agent contacted the Idaho State Police about issuing an AMBER Alert at 3:13 p.m. on May 20, 2019.

Idaho AMBER Alert Coordinators Leila McNeill and Tanea Parmenter had to consider whether the situation met the criteria for an alert.

"With the suspect's actions on the night of her disappearance and the possibility that he may hurt her again, we decided it was prudent to issue an AMBER Alert," said Parmenter. "We were really concerned for her safety and felt he could potentially fatally harm her."

The alert was issued at 4:37 p.m. for the suspect, including a description of his black Audi A4, and the victim was reported to be wearing her Wendy's uniform.

All Idaho AMBER Alerts are sent statewide to broadcasters, highway road signs, 511 (traffic/roadway information) and lottery machines. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children issued a Wireless Emergency Alert to notify all mobile devices in the state.

Detectives traced the suspect's cellphone to Las Vegas, Nevada. Idaho State Police contacted Nevada authorities and a BOLO (Be On the Look Out) was issued to state law enforcement.

At the same time, the FBI received a tip about a Facebook post indicating Rodriguez-Perez was on his way to Surprise, Arizona. Officers knew the suspect had ties in Arizona and Mexico and were concerned he would take the victim across the border.

Arizona AMBER Alert Coordinator Chrystal Moore with the Arizona Department of Public Safety received the request to issue an AMBER Alert in her state at 6:13 p.m. Moore issued the alert because she believed Idaho had credible evidence the suspect and victim were in Arizona.

"We were concerned for her safety, due to the history of violence," said Moore. "We were also worried he may have already hurt her and she might not be with him by the time we would find him."

The Arizona AMBER Alert was distributed to all law enforcement agencies, broadcasters, highway signs, the Child Abduction Response Team, U.S. Marshall's Office, Border Patrol, Customs and Immigration--and Mexico's Alerta AMBER coordinator in case the suspect and victim crossed the border.

A member of the public notified police about seeing the suspect's car in Surprise, Arizona. Local

officers initiated a pursuit that ended when the suspect ditched his car and fled with the victim.

Police body-camera video shows the officers approaching the car with guns drawn. They soon found the suspect hiding with the victim in the bushes near a bank.

"The person who flagged down the police was a hero," said Moore. "This person directly assisted in the recovery of a victim of abduction."

Moore has been involved with all 28 AMBER Alerts issued in Arizona. She said federal, state, tribal and local agencies worked flawlessly together to resolve this case. She believes Idaho deserves extra credit for looking out for the best interest of the victim.

"I was thankful she was found safe," added Parmenter. "I was proud of the investigators, dispatchers, and everyone involved; [of] how hard they worked to locate the victim and suspect."

Parmenter said it was helpful to have a protocol and criteria in place before the alert. Idaho issues a test alert each month to make sure everyone knows what steps to take.

This multistate alert included challenges and lessons. For example, this was the first time the FBI had asked Idaho to issue an AMBER Alert on its behalf.



Idaho AMBER Alert Coordinator Tanea Parmenter

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FACES OF THE AMBER ALERT NETWORK



Bonnie Feller Hagan has been the South Dakota AMBER Alert Coordinator since 2016, and involved with the state's child abduction alert program since it began in March 2003. She began her law enforcement career in 1985 as a patrol officer in Rapid City, South Dakota. A few years later,

Feller Hagan became a school liaison officer, teaching programs and working with students. In 1990, she moved to Pierre, South Dakota, to join the Attorney General's Office as a Criminal Intelligence Analyst with the Missing Person's Clearinghouse. Feller Hagan helped South Dakota form a multi-jurisdictional Child Abduction Response Team (CART) in 2006 and an Endangered Missing Advisory program in 2008.

WHAT IS UNIQUE TO YOUR AMBER ALERT/MISSING PERSONS PROGRAM, AND WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES IT SUCCESSFUL?

Most of the functions of the South Dakota AMBER Alert and Endangered Missing Advisory programs are performed by agencies within our state government as opposed to a third-party vendor.

Our AMBER Alert system was originally set up at the direction of the Governor's Office and we continue to function through these state agency partnerships today. Our system allows us to adapt to changing technology and other needs while keeping the costs of the program low by utilizing existing state equipment and infrastructures, and the talents of state employees. Additionally, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, wireless associations, and broadcast/media partners send alerts to the public without charge.

We are a small, rural state and are fortunate not to issue many alerts. We do perform quarterly tests of our system and meet frequently to ensure our AMBER Alert system is functioning properly and available when we need it. When AMBER Alerts are issued, we hold a debrief to see if any areas can be improved.

HOW HAS THE TECHNOLOGY CHANGED FOR YOUR STATE'S AMBER ALERT SYSTEM?

We do most things in-house. A couple of years ago we considered utilizing a third-party vendor, but decided against it. While we will continue to consider external help/resources, we have a good system and currently do not have to do fundraising or seek additional appropriations.

I am concerned about reaching people the way they are using technology now. We need to address the prevalence and use of streaming data/content; my kids and their peers now get most things this way. And yet, we have many rural areas and nine Indian reservations in our state where people often rely heavily on satellite radio. We will activate alerts for the reservations, but we have many people living there who may not have cable or internet services to receive those alerts. The Endangered Missing Advisories do not reach their phones. As we expand technology on one hand, we must continue to think about how we bridge the gap for people who don't have phones, internet services, or access to radio or TV.

HOW DO YOU TEST YOUR AMBER ALERT SYSTEM?

We do a quarterly test of all systems and equipment with all of our partners, including emails to every state employee.

SOUTH DAKOTA AMBER ALERT COORDINATOR EXCELS AT DOING MORE WITH LESS TO SAVE CHILDREN

We may only issue an AMBER Alert every 2 or 3 years. We follow each quarterly test with a meeting, testing on a Wednesday and meeting the following Tuesday.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO FIND MISSING AND ABDUCTED CHILDREN?

Once you meet with a family of a missing child, I think you naturally develop a passion for wanting to be part of the case's resolution and the safe recovery of the child. The families have a lasting impact on me when they share their stories at conferences, meetings, or even through a phone call. If I can help recover a child or assist a family to find resolution to what happened to their missing loved one, it really is one of the most rewarding aspects of my law enforcement career; and for me as a person and mother.

I have a 27-year-old son who is an attorney and a 30-year-old son who is part of a team that travels around the state providing dental care to children who can't afford it. Growing up they had a very protective mother, as I heard so many other parents share their stories.

PLEASE SHARE ABOUT YOUR MOST MEMORABLE SUCCESS STORY IN WORKING A MISSING CHILD CASE. HOW DID THE AMBER ALERT SUPPORT THE OUTCOME? WHAT WERE THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSONS LEARNED?

The most memorable AMBER Alert success story we worked was a 2011 request from Iowa for a 2-year-old boy who was abducted by his father in the middle of the night after he allegedly killed the child's mother. Local, state and federal law enforcement began monitoring roadways in the area where the suspect was believed to be.

Officers saw the father's vehicle and began pursuing him when he refused to stop. The suspect ran a sheriff's car off the road, causing it to roll, injuring the sheriff. The abducting father stopped long enough to remove his son from his vehicle and place him on the side of the road, and then drove off.

The child was safely recovered and other officers continued to chase the suspect. He continued down the road until he intentionally drove head-on into another sheriff's vehicle. The crash injured that sheriff, and caused the abducting father's car to roll and become disabled. The father tried to escape on foot, but was captured, arrested and extradited back to his home state to face charges for his crimes.

The two injured sheriffs were honored, along with a federal officer who set aside his normal duties to actively search for, locate and follow the abducting father.

While this incident was tragic, this case was most memorable because of how AMBER Alert plans in two states coordinated; and federal, state and local law enforcement agencies pulled together across state lines to save a child. Everyone involved was willing to work together and do whatever it took to get this child to safety and protect him from the life-threatening situations into which he had been placed.

HOW HAVE YOUR CAREER AND LIFE EXPERIENCES, INCLUDING YOUR WORK AS AN AMBER ALERT COORDINATOR, STRENGTHENED YOUR COMMITMENT TO HELPING ENDANGERED, MISSING AND ABDUCTED CHILDREN?

I have been in law enforcement for almost 35 years and it is a challenging career

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FACES OF THE AMBER ALERT NETWORK

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choice to sustain. However, the work I do with missing persons and the AMBER Alert program has been a positive and enriching experience filled with many dedicated people who really make a difference in families' lives. I am proud to be an AMBER Alert coordinator and I appreciate the progress the programs have made in the last 20 years to strengthen public awareness and engagement on missing children's issues.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE HAPPEN WITH YOUR AMBER ALERT PROGRAM AND RELATED PROGRAMS IN THE FUTURE?

I would like to have access to expanded technology and available funding to reach more people when we send alerts. We reach people through traditional methods such as broadcast media, email, billboards, websites, weather radios and Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA). I would like to see alerts go to smart watches, satellite radio and streaming services. I would also expand WEA for secondary alerting systems such as our Endangered Missing Advisory.

HOW HAS TRAINING HELPED YOU IN AMBER ALERT CASES?

The training provided at the national AMBER Alert symposiums, missing children's conferences and onsite technical assistance events has allowed us to bring AMBER Alert and missing and exploited persons training courses and programs to our state. This training has been invaluable to increasing knowledge and developing prevention and response techniques specific to missing children. I rely on and use resources such as the AMBER Alert Partners Portal, sample field training exercises and best practices documents.

Some of the most important aspects of training are the networking and collaborative learning I get when I meet on a regular basis with my counterparts from other states. These opportunities give us a chance to have discussions, exchange ideas and identify resources.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER AMBER ALERT PARTNERS?

Learn from each other. Go to as many trainings as you can attend. Get out of your comfort zone when you go to a training event or symposium. Sit in a different part of the room each day. Introduce yourself to many different people from other states, as well as Indian Country and international partners. Find out how they run their plans, learn about their challenges and successes. Get their contact information and give them yours. Form regional partnerships with your surrounding states and meet regularly. This is important because when you need assistance or encounter a roadblock, a bridge to a wealth of resources and knowledge will have been built.

CAN YOU SHARE A TIME WHEN IT REALLY HELPED TO KNOW OTHER COORDINATORS FROM OTHER STATES?

One collaborative group I work with is the I-Search group, a consortium of Midwestern state AMBER Alert and Missing Person Clearinghouse programs. Additionally, while at the AMBER Alert in Indian Country Symposium, I met and got to know my counterparts in Wyoming and Montana. This type of networking makes everything go smoother when the phone rings for assistance, because it's someone you have had the opportunity to meet and talk with. It is easier to take things at face value because you have a relationship with that person. ☺

FAMILY ROUNDTABLES

GIVING SURVIVORS A VOICE

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Examining the survivor perspective, and more importantly using that insight to better serve survivors and improve investigative and prosecutorial practices, does not happen quickly or without significant effort and investment from all parties. Law enforcement leaders, prosecutors, judges, and child protection officials must be willing to listen and learn from surviving family members and victims. Their experiences are both unique and

invaluable to the process of protecting our children. OJJDP's Family Roundtable program is designed to give survivors a voice, and to help us bring missing children safely home.

If you know a family who would benefit from participating in the Family Roundtable, please email askamber@fvtc.edu and a specialist will contact you. 🌸



"Although I have been to only one family gathering, I was truly impressed. Impressed with the honesty, listening hearts, supportive environment and truly caring people. It was difficult at the start, not knowing anyone, but that start time was very brief as the folks came together for one another in such a tender way. I'd welcome any opportunity to attend again."

Pattie Bastian
Mother of Jennifer Bastian, abducted and murdered
August 4, 1986, at age 13

AMBER ALERT ON THE FRONT LINES:

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“It was an eye opener to remember that more agencies need to be involved with training and practice,” said Parmenter. “This includes all federal, tribal, state and local agencies. It also means considering all law enforcement officers and investigators from the Forest Service, Probation, and Fish and Game.”

Training is also critical to the success of Arizona’s AMBER Alert program. The state has a monthly test for the federal Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) as well as a weekly test for the state alert system.

“Each alert is different and has its own inherent difficulties,” said Moore. “The only challenge was that the media was monitoring law enforcement channels and

obtaining information shared at the scene about the cell phone being pinged by the FBI. This could have been detrimental to the case if law enforcement was not right on top of the vehicle at the time the media released this information.”

The case underscores the importance of careful strategies for interstate and cross-border collaboration, and when and how law enforcement shares information about cases through public alerts. Idaho and Arizona were well-trained and ready; despite the suspect taking the victim more than 700 miles away from her home, it was not far enough to evade these states’ finely tuned AMBER Alert programs and dedicated personnel. ☺

AMBER ALERT INTERNATIONAL



LITHUANIA LAUNCHES AMBER ALERT SYSTEM

The Lithuanian National Police officially joined AMBER Alert Europe and will now issue alerts in child abduction cases. On October 10, 2019, Lithuania joined 21 countries with 33 organizations using the tools and methods of the AMBER Alert program. “(This) enables us to spread information about these cases all over Europe, while learning about the latest technologies in the search for missing persons. All of the above, will highly contribute to finding missing children,” said Irena Ambrasaitė, Chief Specialist at the Lithuanian Criminal Police Bureau. ☺

AMBER ALERT INTERNATIONAL

EUROPEAN UNION RECOGNIZES MISSING PERSONS NETWORK

All members of the European Union (EU) are officially recognizing the Police Expert Network on Missing Persons as the first and only law enforcement network for AMBER Alerts. At a meeting on October 18, 2019, a body of the Council of the EU identified the group as the single point of contact for missing person specialists for 21 EU countries. "Through the network, police officers across Europe know exactly who they should (contact) in another country at 3 a.m.," said Frank Hoen, AMBER Alert Europe Chairman. 🍷

SOUTH AFRICA AND FACEBOOK UNITE FOR AMBER ALERTS

The South African Police Service and Facebook are now collaborating to resolve child kidnappings and find missing children. Starting December 6, 2019, South Africa began using the social media channel to distribute AMBER Alerts. The alerts will be posted for 24 hours and will be disseminated to all Facebook users within a 160-kilometer radius of where the child was last seen. 🍷

CANADA RELUCTANT TO START NATIONAL SILVER ALERT PROGRAM

Some Canadian jurisdictions are not interested in creating a national Silver Alert program for persons with Alzheimer's disease or dementia. The Alzheimer's Society of Canada (ASC) also opposes the idea. "We aren't endorsing them because there isn't robust evidence that they actually work," said Mary Schulz, ASC Director of Education. Silver Alert advocates say the system could be a lifesaver for missing seniors.

Bill VanGorder, spokesperson for the Canadian Association of Retired People (CARP) Nova Scotia said the alerts reinforce stereotypes. "We certainly don't like the idea of suggesting that if you're silver-haired, as I am, then somehow I'm going to automatically be prone to wander." In 2017, Alberta and Manitoba amended their Missing Persons Act to allow for Silver Alerts. However, Alberta has yet to issue a Silver Alert. 🍷

AMBER ALERT BRIEFS

FLORIDA UPDATES AMBER ALERT CRITERIA TO INCLUDE ALL CHILDREN IN IMMINENT DANGER

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) has updated the criteria for an AMBER Alert following the state AMBER Alert Review Committee's adoption of an Enhanced Missing Child Alert in late 2019. "This means that AMBER Alerts may now be issued if authorities believe a child is facing imminent danger, regardless of whether he or she was abducted," said FDLE Communications Director Gretl Plessinger. ↪

MISSOURI AMBER ALERT PROGRAM UPGRADED FOR QUICKER NOTIFICATIONS

The Missouri Highway Patrol streamlined its process to issue AMBER Alerts for faster public notification. Authorities upgraded the system to allow the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Integrated Public Alert and Warning System to deliver alerts directly to cellular carriers. Previously, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children distributed the messages to cellphones. Other features include: reducing the possibility of outdated information to continually be shared on social media, automatically updating Facebook and Twitter accounts, and the option to subscribe to alerts on its website at www.mo.gov/alerts/. ↪

KANSAS UNVEILS NEW MISSING PERSONS WEBSITE

The Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI) launched a new website in October 2019, www.kbi.ks.gov/MissingPersons, to spread information about missing person cases originating in the state. Users can search by name, county, gender, age, or by the date the missing person was last seen; and can submit tips or information to the KBI directly through the website. The site also includes links to AMBER and Silver Alert program information. ↪

VIRGINIA POLICE DEPARTMENT BUYS DRONES TO HELP IN AMBER ALERTS

The Richmond, Virginia, Police Department purchased a fleet of drones to help in investigations, including cases involving AMBER Alerts. Twenty officers have been trained to fly the department's four drones. The Federal Aviation Administration governs drones and state code requires a search warrant unless there is an immediate danger, such as in the case of an AMBER Alert. "They're small. They're portable. They're easily deployed, and they are relatively inexpensive," said Richmond Police Captain Michael Snawder. "This is a game changer for us." ↪

FAMILY OF MISSING CHILD PUSHES FOR A SERENITY ALERT

A South Dakota family is promoting a Serenity Alert for missing and endangered children whose cases do not meet AMBER Alert criteria. The alert would be named for Serenity Dennard, who at the time of this writing, remains missing after running away in February 2019 from a children's home in Rockerville, South Dakota. The family wants the legislature to create a system so the public would receive a text message about a missing child. ↪

MONTANA OFFERS TRAINING ON FINDING MISSING PERSONS

The Montana Attorney General's Office and the state's U.S. Attorney offered a second round of training in October 2019 to help resolve missing person cases. The training in Billings, Montana, had separate tracks for the public and law enforcement. Experts discussed the AMBER Alert program and the nexus between missing persons and human trafficking. ↪

OKLAHOMA HONORS DEPUTIES FOR LOCATING ABDUCTED INFANT

Three Carter County Sheriff's Office deputies were presented a commendation award at the August 2019 Oklahoma Sheriffs' Association Midwest Conference. The deputies located and safely recovered an abducted 4-month-old infant taken by a man who threatened to run the child's mother over with his vehicle. Deputies Joel Ramirez, Jared Trotts and David Duggan were honored for recovering the victim 27 hours after he was taken June 12, 2019. ↪

TEXAS AMBER ALERT PROGRAM STARTS NEW COMMITTEE TO ADDRESS MISSING CHILDREN

The Brazos Valley AMBER Alert Network in College Station, Texas, formed a new committee to identify resources needed for missing children in the community. An average of 330 children in the Brazos Valley are reported missing each year. "The numbers are telling us we have a problem," said College Station Police Assistant Chief Chuck Fleeger. "Now is the time to address it." ↪

AMBER ALERT IN INDIAN COUNTRY

AMBER ALERT WEBSITE GETS UPDATE WITH MORE RESOURCES FOR INDIAN COUNTRY

The US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, recently upgraded its AMBER Alert website at <https://amberalert.ojp.gov>, which now includes access to information on AMBER Alert in Indian Country and the 2018 Ashlyne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act and resulting initiatives. 🍷

WYOMING LEGISLATORS WORK TO INCREASE SAFETY FOR NATIVE AMERICANS

Lawmakers in Wyoming are drafting legislation to address issues involving missing and murdered victims from Indian communities. On October 31, 2019, the Judiciary Committee voted for a bill that would: 1) gather and publish data on missing people with biographical data; 2) require law enforcement agency cooperation; 3) offer training on missing and murdered Indigenous people; and 4) assist the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho tribes if they choose to implement and manage their own AMBER Alert system. Lawmakers are also considering a proposal allowing tribal police to arrest or cite non-Native American offenders. 🍷

NAVAJO NATION HOLDS FORUM FOR MISSING AND MURDERED VICTIMS

The Missing & Murdered Diné Relatives Working Group hosted a forum November 21–22, 2019, in Gallup, New Mexico. The forum included discussions on the AMBER Alert, justice for Navajo families, and risk factors for the elderly and disabled. 🍷