

A Guide for Agencies and CART Programs Pursuing Certification

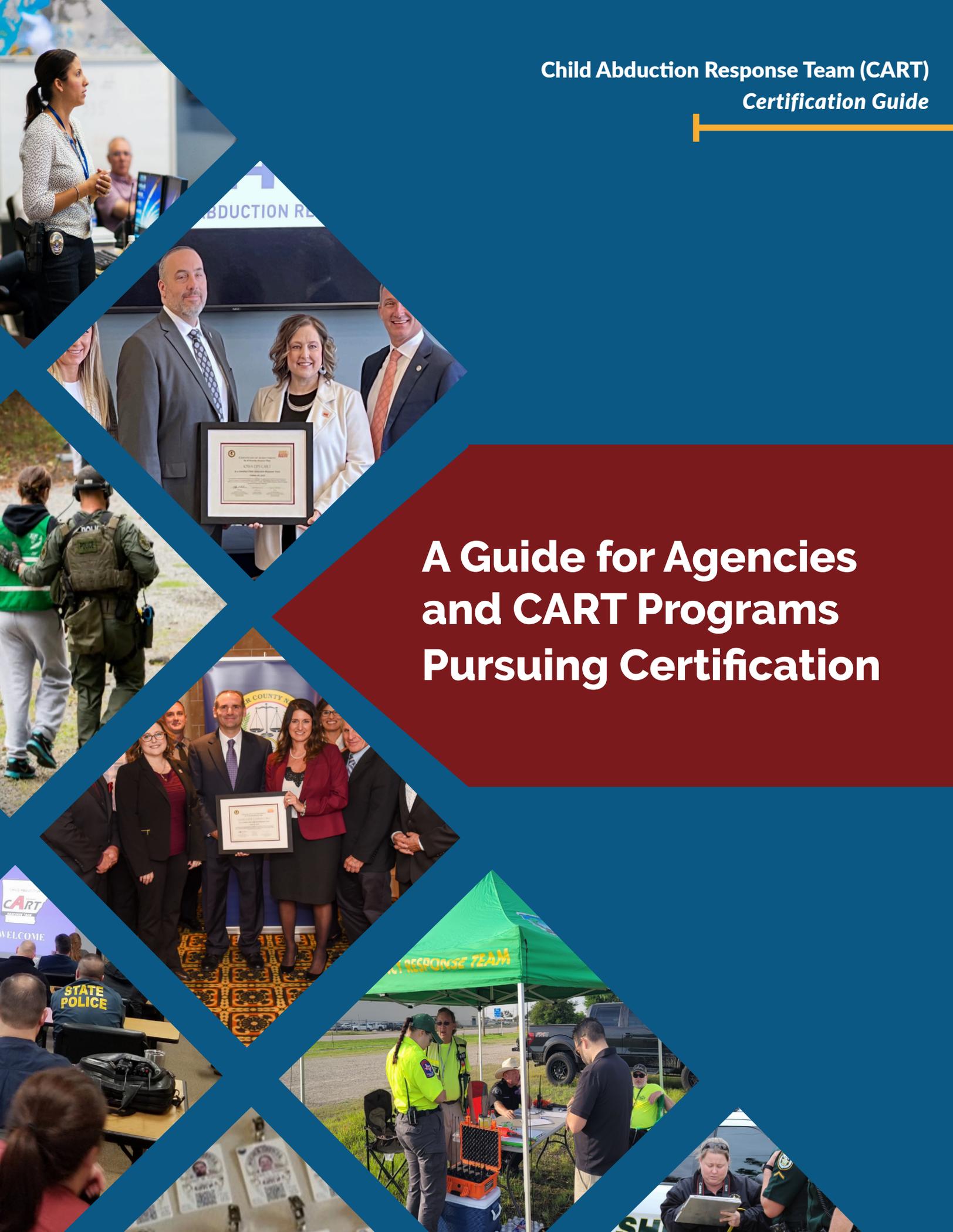


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Introduction

CART Certification Overview

The CART certification program grew out of the dedication of CART teams throughout the United States who expressed an interest in pursuing quality assurance processes in endangered missing and abducted child incidents.

About CART Certification

The Child Abduction Response Team (CART) certification program has been developed to assist local and state jurisdictions in the creation and implementation of CART programs. Subject-matter experts, practitioners, legal advisors, policymakers, and other child-protection specialists have contributed to the CART program's operational components and evidence-based best practices related to the recovery of endangered missing and abducted children. These professionals have worked with the U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ) and the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program (AATTAP) to develop a process and criteria whereby jurisdictions can voluntarily seek CART certification by demonstrating development of and adherence to nationally recognized standards of excellence for CART policy, procedures, and protocols. Through annual recertification, CARTs can also demonstrate their continuous improvement processes to ensure strong and aligned ongoing CART readiness and operations.

Through the certification process, the requesting CART's documentation and demonstration of the 12 CART components are observed and evaluated against their respective criteria and standards for compliance by trained AATTAP personnel. This is accomplished through both review of documentation and observation of a field-based mock child abduction conducted in the requesting CART's jurisdiction or area. The 12 CART components are presented in this guide with their accompanying criteria and standards for certification assessment to assist CART program leaders in understanding and effectively preparing for the certification process.

About the CART Program Initiative

A Child Abduction Response Team (CART) is a multiagency, often multi-jurisdictional program trained and equipped to respond in the search for and recovery of an endangered missing or abducted child. Like AMBER Alert programs, CART programs serve as a critically valuable tool agencies can employ during these incidents to promote a rapid and comprehensive community response.

The CART strategy incorporates these three elements.

1. Trained members with established roles and assignments
2. A ready-made list of equipment that is available to aid in the search
3. A network of nontraditional community resources the team can access to assist in the investigation



The national CART initiative was established in 2006 by the U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ), Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), and is administered through AATTAP. CART continues to gain the interest of chief executives from law enforcement agencies (LEAs) across the United States and internationally. The CART initiative continues to expand and evolve, with jurisdictions completing AATTAP's CART curriculum eager to integrate and implement the program standards and operational protocols obtained through classroom, tabletop, and self-paced training. In addition to the foundational three-day CART training program, AATTAP assists agencies and teams through on-site and virtual technical assistance, targeted mentor training (TMT), tabletop exercises, review and advisement on team structure and protocols, and application for and achievement of USDOJ CART certification.

CART Certification Program Objectives

CART certification program objectives are as follows.

- Develop and implement evidence-based standards of excellence which require CART programs to build, execute, and continuously improve capacities, competencies, skills, and abilities to safely recover endangered missing and abducted children.
- Enhance the critical and specific capacities and competencies of personnel from agencies comprising CART and other community contingents to safely recover endangered missing and abducted children by maintaining adherence to recognized best practices.
- Require CART programs to continuously update and improve policies, written directives, utilization and identification of resources, and other

One of the objectives of the CART certification program is to develop and implement evidence-based standards of excellence which require CART programs to build, execute, and continuously improve competencies and skills to safely recover endangered missing and abducted children.



Members of the Gloucester County, New Jersey, CART receive their team certification from AATTAP Administrator Janell Rasmussen in October 2022. [Read more about the team's efforts and achievement here.](#)

necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities as part of a comprehensive child recovery strategy.

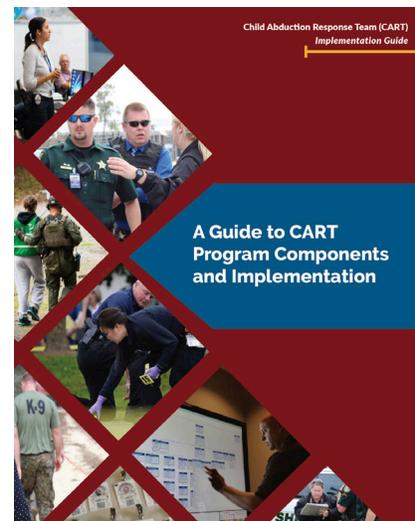
- Provide policymakers, elected officials, public safety organizations, child-protection professionals, and the general public assurance of due diligence, adoption of the highest standards of child recovery initiatives, and overall confidence of operational readiness to protect, respond to, and recover endangered missing and abducted children.

The CART Certification Process

CART programs interested in becoming certified submit an **online application through the [AMBERAdvocate.org website](https://www.amberadvocate.org)**, providing documentation for and attesting to the requirements to be considered ready for certification. Upon completion of all application requirements, an assessment is confirmed between the AATTAP CART certification manager (CCM) and the requesting team's coordinator. In preparation for a two-day, on-site certification event, the AATTAP CCM will hold regularly scheduled meetings with the requesting team's coordinator to address any questions, concerns, and final elements of planning.

The on-site event is comprehensively observed and evaluated by a team of trained AATTAP assessors. Over the course of the field exercise, all standards for each of the 12 CART components is assessed across a combination of team actions and related procedural documentation as well as interviews of key CART personnel. Successful completion of the field exercise and subsequent field report documentation must establish that the CART program has demonstrated the highest standards of excellence both in policy and practice. Following the completion of the on-site assessment, a field report is developed by the AATTAP assessor team and submitted to the AATTAP administrator for review and approval toward confirmed certification status.

The 12 CART components outlined in this guide are fully detailed in the companion publication *A Guide to CART Program Components and Implementation*.



The AATTAP CART Certification Team

AATTAP leaders provide robust stewardship of the overall CART certification process. Trained assessors utilized for on-site certification events further comprise the AATTAP assessment team.

CART Certification Manager

The AATTAP CART project coordinator (CPC), or designee, will serve as the CART certification manager (CCM) for the AATTAP assessment team. The CCM will provide overall coordination and oversight for the certification process and will serve as the principal point of contact with the AATTAP administrator or deputy administrator for discussion and decision points throughout each CART certification process.

CART Certification Manager Principal Duties and Responsibilities

- Oversee the CART certification process.
- Coordinate with the AATTAP deputy administrator and administrator in determining the eligibility of all CART certification applicants.
- Work closely with the AATTAP deputy administrator and assessment team to review applications and assess readiness of applying teams to meet the established CART certification objectives.
- Assist with scheduling and confirmation of on-site assessment event dates and locations.
- Manage and coordinate the on-site certification assessment with the requesting agency's CART coordinator, to include scheduling of necessary personnel for interviews, providing workspace and on-site transportation, and all other elements of the on-site assessment as requested and deemed appropriate.
- For CARTs not recommended for certification following an on-site assessment event, coordinate with assessors to remedy noncompliance issues and/or deficiencies identified and documented by on-site assessors, to include official correspondence to the requesting CART agency's designated points of contact.
- Prepare and submit for review and approval a comprehensive evaluation final report following the on-site assessment, to be completed within 15 days of the event or as directed by the CPC.
 - If noncompliance with CART standards is identified and corrective measures are prescribed for the requesting CART to achieve certification (as noted above), those will be addressed in the draft report. Once the measures are remediated, the assessor will include those details in the final report submitted to the AATTAP deputy administrator and administrator.



- Recommend certification approvals and further contribute to certification application decisions as required.
- Assist as needed in the training and management of CART certification lead and/or co-assessors.
 - Review all documents and reports completed by CART assessors for completeness, accuracy, and consistency with certification requirements and expected outcomes.
 - Review lead and co-assessor peer performance feedback and evaluation input as received from the applying CART's coordinator via the prescribed post-event quality-assurance online survey.

CART Assessors

Trained assessors are utilized for on-site CART certification assessment events. They are proven public safety professionals who possess extensive knowledge and a broad range of important skills and expertise related to missing child response and recovery. Assessors are assigned to specific components of the CART certification process to ensure careful, targeted observation and evaluation of a team's ability to demonstrate compliance with each CART component and respective certification standard over the course of the on-site assessment event.

CART Assessor Principal Duties and Responsibilities

- Upon invitation from AATTAP, complete and submit the online assessor application through the AMBERAdvocate.org website.
- Review and develop a functional working knowledge of all CART standards and demonstrate understanding of applicability.
- Successfully complete all required assessor training. Attend child protection training courses as advised by the CPC for skill enhancement.
- Prior to performing any duties associated with an assigned certification, disclose in writing to the CPC any potential conflict of interest (should any conflicts develop after initial application) in performing CART assessor work.
- Prepare and submit for review an assessor comprehensive evaluation report following each assigned on-site assessment event; to be completed as soon as feasible following the field exercise, and/or as directed by the CPC.
 - If noncompliance with CART standard(s) is identified, assessors will address the noncompliant standard(s) with details in their draft report submitted to the CPC.
- Assessors shall not communicate to any requesting CART program personnel regarding the status of their performance or certification; such decision and communication will only be made by the AATTAP administrator or designee.
- Undergo required performance reviews with the CPC.

Trained assessors utilized for on-site CART certification assessment events are proven public safety professionals with extensive knowledge and expertise related to missing child response and recovery.

12 Components

CART Certification

Criteria and Standards

During the certification process, trained AATTAP personnel will observe and evaluate the requesting CART's documentation and demonstration of the 12 CART components.

For each component's criteria that follows, standards for AATTAP's evaluation of a team's compliance are outlined. Standards involve both documentary proofs, as well as activities observed during the mock child-abduction field exercise.

Standards can be addressed through a variety of proofs to include general orders, standard operating procedures, written directives, interviews, or observations. However, where standards require specific documentation or proof, the language included in the standards will stand as the absolute requirement.

The proofs requested for each standard serve as guidelines; all the proofs listed for a standard may not be needed. As a general approach, however, as many proofs as possible should be provided for each standard.

Many agencies have different terminology when addressing policy, written directives, and standard operating procedures. When in doubt, the requesting CART's definition and utilization of such documents will take precedence over the AATTAP certification team's definition. The following definitions generally apply.

- **Policy**—A binding document signed by the CEO and distributed to all personnel in the agency.
- **Written Directive**—A binding document signed by the CEO but often distributed only to specific individuals serving a specific function.
- **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)**—Generally distributed to the impacted unit only, this is a binding document usually targeting a particular unit, skill, or expertise and serving as a “how to” manual for applicable personnel.
- **Training Roster**—A list of all CART members, contact information, and training attended.
- **Personnel Roster**—Current roster of all team members, contact information, and duties.
- **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**—An agreement between all participating stakeholders on the standard operating procedures and policies set forth by the CART.
- **Position Description**—A description of each member's role and responsibility on the team.
- **Proof of Distribution**—Accepted Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) and/or the CART manual distributed to all stakeholders.
- **Interviews**—Interviews conducted with CART members and key participants.
- **Observation**—Procedures, processes and/or documentation reviewed/ witnessed by the assessors throughout the CART certification process.



Component 1: Response Criteria

CARTs must have established criteria detailing when activation, mobilization, or callout is appropriate. The Component 1 standards require the criteria to be well-defined and acknowledged as understood by all participating agencies.

The following is an example of criteria for a CART activation, mobilization, or callout discussed during CART training; however, additional deployment criteria may be defined and adopted by member agencies.

- A missing or abducted minor child (under the age of 18) with a belief of endangerment or imminent harm circumstances.
 - These circumstances must be clearly articulated to the CART coordinator in order to activate, mobilize, and deploy team members.
 - The child's disappearance or abduction should meet the agreed upon 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 otherwise endanger the child.
 - This information may reflect the appropriate AMBER Alert criteria or any other activation criteria indicating endangerment of the child.

To initiate a request for assistance, the criminal justice agency administrator (or designated commanding officer proxy) must contact the CART coordinator (or authorized proxy) who will approve or deny the request based upon the criteria specified in the CART's governing policy/operating procedure. This process should be guided by interagency agreements or MOUs.

Activation, mobilization, and callout are terms utilized interchangeably to characterize the assembly and deployment of a CART.

Component 1 Standards

- 1.1 The CART has written criteria which establish the circumstances for which a CART activation can be approved and executed. **(Policy/written directive/proof of distribution)**
- 1.2 Written documentation clearly shows these response criteria have been communicated to and are agreed upon by all participating agencies. **(MOU/training roster/policy/proof of distribution)**



Component 2: Team Composition

This section addresses the composition of the team and personnel selection to ensure team membership represents the various stakeholders involved in incidents of endangered missing and abducted children. For a CART to be successful during an activation, mobilization, or callout, the team must have personnel available with levels of expertise which afford swift and accurate response. Areas of personnel expertise include interviewing, search and rescue, canvassing, search and seizure, forensic evidence collection, information analysis, and other areas relating to endangered missing and abducted child cases.

Component 2 Standards

- 2.1 The assigned CART coordinator is responsible for the team's development, training, callout coordination, policies and procedures, debriefings, after-action reports, and other logistical needs as determined by the CEOs and CART members. The CART coordinator can be either sworn or civilian/code, and must have demonstrated supervisory capabilities with a proven background in leadership and management. **(Job description document/proof of distribution)**
- 2.2 The CART roster and/or organizational chart will be posted at member agencies and distributed to all personnel from each agency. The CART coordinator is responsible for maintaining a current CART roster, including all contact information and version history/date of last update. **(Personnel roster or organizational chart)**
- 2.3 The CART should include representatives of various agencies to include the following personnel/roles: public safety (federal, state, tribal, and/or local), prosecutor(s), corrections, child welfare, school resource officers, Crime Stoppers, search and rescue groups, and/or other organizations that can assist the CART in the event of an endangered missing or abducted child. **(Personnel roster or organizational chart displaying effective date or last updated information/version history available/interviews/observation)**
- 2.4 The CART coordinator is responsible for maintaining selection criteria for assignment and replacement of CART personnel. Priority consideration should be given to roles with specialized skills. Written policy or directive should detail the selection process, and include position descriptions, appropriate training plans, skill inventories, and policy guidance. This documentation should establish that all personnel serving as CART members possess the required expertise. **(Policy/written directive/training roster/position descriptions/interviews/observations)**
- 2.5 The CART must demonstrate capacity to sustain activation, mobilization, and deployment over multiple days. **(Personnel roster/MOUs)**



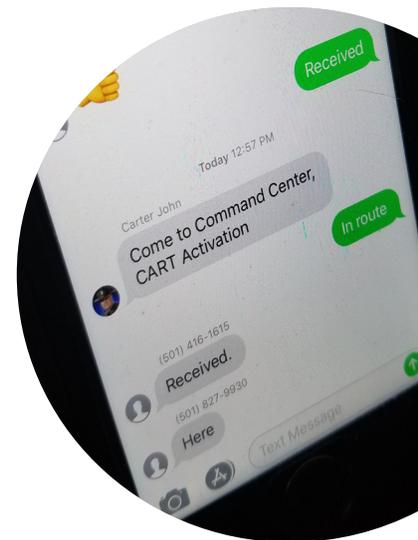
A CART must have personnel available with levels of expertise which afford swift and accurate response.

Component 3: Notification Protocols

This section relates to important considerations for CART activation, mobilization, or callout. For a CART to be successful in its mission, the agency of jurisdiction must have a proven and effective method to execute the team's deployment. The CART coordinator or designee must know who to contact and team members must be able to respond immediately.

Component 3 Standards

- 3.1 Each participating law enforcement/public safety agency has a written policy detailing procedural information for CART activation, mobilization, callout, and deployment. Each agency's policy or written directive should designate the individual authorized to request activation. **(Policy/directives for all involved agencies on CART/proof of distribution)**
- 3.2 The CART has written documentation detailing processes for CART coordinator notification and approval of activations, mobilizations, callouts, and deployments. **(Policy/MOUs)**
- 3.3 Policy or directive shall include a succession plan in the event the designated CART coordinator is unavailable. This should be updated prior to any announced changes in the CART coordination protocol. **(Organizational chart/proof of distribution)**
- 3.4 The CART will maintain written procedures/processes for CART activation, mobilization, callout, and deployment, including all of the following: **(Policy/directives/observations and interviews can supplement policy or directives)**
 - a) Method and format of notification to members and any other responding personnel
 - b) Responding member responsibilities
 - c) Response time requirements
 - d) Equipment responding members are required to bring (if applicable)
- 3.5 The CART has an established method to ensure proper identification of CART members during activation (such as identification badges with photo, agency, and full name). CART member identification protocols shall not conflict with any member agency's security and confidentiality requirements. If such conflict exists, the impacted agency must be identified and an alternate identification protocol established prior to an activation, mobilization, or callout. **(Observed/photo should be placed in file)**
- 3.6 The CART policy or written directive shall include an expected response time for activation, mobilization, or callout to a designated location, and should consist of proof of agreement by participating member agencies. **(Policy/MOUs)**



Component 4: Communications

Component 4 establishes requirements for written protocol, directive, and/or policy on communications, coordination, and specific interagency agreements to support the CART and overall investigative response. During CART activation, mobilization, callout, and deployment, multiple agencies will be on scene in staging areas or actively engaged in the investigation, requiring both internal and interagency communications. CART member agencies must have established communication protocols to accommodate the host of challenges associated with deploying to investigate, rescue, and recover endangered missing and abducted children.

Component 4 Standards

- 4.1 The CART has a process in place for immediate activation of a non-emergency number for tips and leads. **(MOUs/SOP/policy)**
- 4.2 The CART has written guidelines detailing call center/phone bank staffing to accomplish effective intake and logging of calls. **(Policy/SOP)**
- 4.3 The CART has an established process, system, and tools for leads management, including the coordination, assignment, prioritization, tracking, and resolution/closure of leads. **(Policy/SOP/directive/training roster)**
- 4.4 The CART coordinator maintains a current list of all communication equipment to be utilized with team activation, and includes all the following information.
 - a) Personnel responsible for maintenance and upkeep of equipment (e.g., regular testing, fresh batteries, proper storage, and transport)
 - b) Personnel trained and assessed for proficiency in the use of assigned equipment
 - c) Field test records to ensure equipment is compatible with all jurisdictions covered by the CART, with written backup plan(s) for equipment failure
- 4.5 An established procedure for ensuring equipment can be accessed in a timely manner, and by more than one team member, in the event of CART activation. **(SOP/MOUs)**

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 established and understood across all roles and functions of the team.

Component 5: Command and Control

During a CART activation, the requesting agency generally maintains the lead role. The CART is comprised of experts, equipment, and a planned strategy to respond to critical incidents of endangered missing and abducted children—and thus serves as a multidisciplinary resource and operational force multiplier to enhance the overall response and investigation. 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 established and understood across all roles and functions of the team. This component addresses the standards of CART command and control for all deployments.

Component 5 Standards

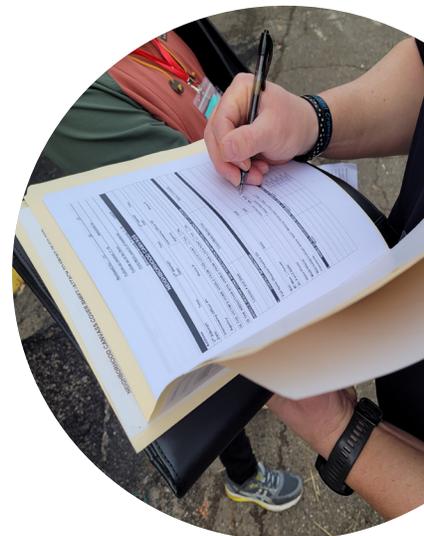
- 5.1 The CART maintains an organizational chart detailing roles, lines of authority, reporting requirements for all members, full oversight of the team, and how authorizations are made for all CART functions. **(Organizational chart/policy/SOP)**
- 5.2 A written directive agreed upon by all participating agencies exists and details an Incident Command System (ICS). The ICS is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazards incident management approach developed and adopted by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and must be a component of the CART policy, directive, and training. ICS documentation for the CART must include the role of the CART coordinator, the role CART plays in the establishment of a command post for the investigation, how the incident commander (IC) is determined once the CART has arrived on scene, and how conflicts will be resolved between the CART and other responding entities (e.g., federal, state, tribal, or local authorities). **(Policy/MOUs)**
- 5.3 A written directive exists describing the various assignments necessary during CART activation, mobilization, callout, and deployment, including, but not limited to, a lead investigator, emergency operations coordinator (EOC), AMBER Alert representative, witness coordinator, leads analyst, media representative, support/ logistics representative, search coordinator, family liaison, technical support, legal advisor, and a crime scene/forensic evidence collection representative. **(Policy/SOP)**

Component 6: Search, Canvass, and Rescue Operations

This component recognizes the intricacies involved in conducting searches for endangered missing and abducted children. Search, canvass, and rescue operations are among the most crucial components of CART operations. Time is of the essence during these incidents; agencies should use all available means to search immediate and collateral areas, obtain potential direction of travel, and gather investigative leads. Immediate and collateral areas include the last known location of the child, witnessed locations of suspect and/or victim activities, individuals with knowledge of the abduction, and other identifiable places critical to the determination of the location of the child. Searches must be coordinated, conducted, and controlled by trained personnel. Tracking and search dogs (also referred to as K-9), when available, are essential in light of the scope and complexity of investigating these incidents. K-9 search and tracking resources often provide information leading to the rapid recovery of the child. Component 6 standards reflect the various elements that must be in place to ensure searches are conducted quickly and effectively, and are not compromised.

Component 6 Standards

- 6.1 The CART has documentation detailing the types of searches in which the team has been trained, and the forms to be used when conducting these searches (e.g., neighborhood canvass, sex offender interviews, roadblock canvass, and grid searches). Documents should be personnel-specific and include specialized skills or certifications, such as K-9. **(Policy/SOP)**



- 6.2 The CART has a designated search coordinator responsible for ensuring searches are properly conducted during activation, including logging of search areas and participants, briefing and updating search personnel, defining search perimeters, and establishing evidence handling procedures. **(Policy/directive/SOP)**
- 6.3 The CART has a written protocol for a requesting K-9 search and tracking resources which can be dispatched to the scene within a defined response time. **(Policy/SOP)**
- 6.4 If the CART utilizes volunteers, proper vetting methods should be clearly established and understood. Approved volunteer personnel should be fully briefed and understanding confirmed for supervision and reporting, any specific volunteer roles and what those involve, training on parameters for and methods of volunteer activity, and any equipment to be used. If an agency does not utilize volunteers, a plan must be in place to handle volunteers who self-dispatch to the area to help. **(Policy/SOP)**

Component 7: Training

This component addresses minimum training standards for CART development and ongoing proficiency. A training coordinator for CART should be designated, and can be a member of the team or participating agency. The training coordinator must possess the requisite skills, knowledge, competencies, and abilities to design, develop, and deliver required and recommended training which supports CART operations. Training should be designed for both individual and team assignments, emphasizing expectations and responsibilities to ensure an effective multidisciplinary, multiagency response. Component 6 standards delineate who should be trained and the needed training standards which outline required skills and competencies for all team roles and functions. Appropriate minimum standards established by each state's legislative or executive branches shall be the threshold for referenced training and will represent the minimum standards for required skills and competencies.

Component 7 Standards

- 7.1 A training coordinator has been designated for the CART. **(Organizational chart/policy/SOP)**
- 7.2 Training occurs semi-annually (at a minimum) and team members practice and/or train together. At least 60 percent of CART members must attend each general training session and any designated specialty training sessions. **(Policy/training rosters/SOP)**
- 7.3 CART-related training for all team members must be documented and maintained. **(Policy/training rosters/SOP)**
- 7.4 CART members for whom specialized skills are required, such as investigators, crime scene, search/rescue, and K-9 handlers, receive training for these skills from their employing agencies. **(Policy/training rosters/SOP)**
- 7.5 A current skills inventory document is maintained which details all training each team member receives, and which notes the knowledge, skills, and competencies the member is able to demonstrate as a result. **(Policy/training rosters/SOP)**



Component 8: Legal Issues

The complexity and time-critical nature of endangered missing and abducted child incidents necessitates the CART's full readiness to execute investigative actions which support effective offender prosecution and victim protection. In other words, the goal in these cases is to rescue the child and develop a solid prosecutable case against the offender without violating the constitutional rights of the innocent or the accused. Component 8 establishes standards to ensure these elements are achieved and that issues such as search and seizure and the role of the prosecutor on the CART are addressed within the overall CART protocol. When establishing a CART, agencies must be fully aware of potential legal issues. If legal opinions are necessary or immediate legal action is needed during a callout, a proactively developed relationship with a legal advisor is essential to ensuring all potential jurisdictional and liability concerns are considered and addressed, and that all necessary MOUs and mutual aid agreements are in place before an incident occurs.

Component 8 Standards

- 8.1 Written CART policy or directive detailing the scope of the team's work with other agencies and the authority team members have to operate outside their jurisdiction. **(Policy/SOP/MOUs)**
- 8.2 Written policy or directive, and/or MOUs, mutual aid agreements, and state statute which fully address liability issues, including protection of CART members who may be injured while on an activation, as well as protection of both them and their agencies from civil liability. **(Policy/SOP/MOUs)**
- 8.3 Written policy or directive addressing the role of the prosecutor in CART deployment. **(Policy/SOP/MOUs)**
- 8.4 Documentation of the CART's relationship with a legal advisor(s), with express consideration for appropriate access to legal representation for cases of civil liability within the jurisdictions the CART serves. **(Policy/SOP/MOUs)**

Component 9: Equipment Inventory

Component 9 concerns the physical resources and equipment necessary during CART activation, such as command vehicles, thermal infrared imaging systems, air support, tracking and search dogs, and all-terrain vehicles. The standards in this section speak to how the CART identifies, confirms, and readies these physical resources and equipment by addressing the following questions.

- a) What is the resource?
- b) Who has it?
- c) Who maintains it for operability?
- d) How is it accessed?
- e) Is access different depending upon time of day or day of week?
- f) What is the response time for acquiring and/or deploying the resource?
- g) Are there any costs involved with the CART's utilization of the resource?

Equipment inventory standards establish that the team must be able to identify, confirm, and ready physical resources and equipment necessary during an activation, such as command vehicles, thermal infrared imaging systems, air support, tracking and search dogs, and all-terrain vehicles.

Component 9 Standards

- 9.1 The CART maintains a current list of equipment available to the CART, guidelines for use, and roster for all personnel with expertise for the listed equipment who can be utilized to operate and/or troubleshoot the equipment during CART activation, mobilization, callout, or deployment. This documentation must be updated at least semi-annually and can be accessed by all members of the team. **(Policy/SOP/observation)**
- 9.2 The CART inventory provides specific details for requesting and securing operational access to each resource/equipment item listed, and must include the following information for each. **(Policy/SOP/MOUs)**
 - a) Item name and description
 - b) Written agreement for use, signed by the owner/owning agency; to include an agreement on any assumption of costs by the CART
 - c) Estimated mobilization/deployment response time
- 9.3 The CART inventory must demonstrate the team's full capacity to respond to endangered missing or abducted child incidents with the appropriate amount of physical and equipment resources. Proofs for this standard are reviewed by CART assessors prior to and during the on-site assessment and evaluation process, from which they will determine what is reasonable and appropriate for effective incident response. **(Policy/directive/organization chart/personnel rosters/SOP/MOUs)**

Component 10: CART Protocols

Component 10 addresses the inclusion of CART protocols and operating procedures within an official CART Response Manual to ensure the team functions in a manner consistent with its established standards. The maintenance of and regular updates to the CART manual ensure any changes to team dynamics, policies, or procedures are appropriately and uniformly documented in a designated location. While the standards in this section reflect documentation developed by the CART member agencies and managed by the CART coordinator, all documents are required to be shared and accepted by each participating agency. Signatures of all CEOs for participating agencies are required to signify acceptance and adoption.

CART Coordinator Responsibilities

In preparing documentation to meet standard 10.1 (*see next page*), these are the responsibilities of the CART coordinator in response to an activation, mobilization, callout, or deployment.

1. Initiate the activation, mobilization, callout, and deployment notice for CART members
2. Coordinate the AMBER Alert (if applicable or designated) in accordance with department/agency procedures
3. Activate and provide notice to establish a published telephone number in order to receive information and leads from the public
4. Respond to the scene of the incident and assume or appoint the role of incident commander to facilitate rescue, recovery, and investigation
 - a) Establish law enforcement contact with lead agency
 - b) Assign CART members to designated positions, locations, or staging areas
 - c) Obtain and document comprehensive incident briefing



- d) Make investigative assignments as necessary or make assignments to supervisory investigative point of contact
 - e) Coordinate all activities on the scene with the requesting (lead) agency
 - f) Coordinate the utilization of crime scene unit(s)
 - g) Ensure the communications center has made all required notifications.
 - h) Ensure the CART resources (EOC, private organizations, media, etc.) are immediately initiated and appropriately utilized
 - i) Provide or designate a public information officer or similar point of contact for the lead agency in managing all media inquiries and information releases
5. Provide timely and periodic briefing summaries to the lead agency and CART members
 6. Provide other coordination and management as determined by the CEOs of participating CART agencies

Component 10 Standards

- 10.1 A written CART response manual shall be developed and approved by participating agencies to include detailed information on all of the following items (at a minimum). **(Policy/SOP)**
 - a) Explanation of the CART coordinator's role and responsibilities
 - b) All standards included in the current edition of AATTAP's CART Certification Guide
 - c) All critical team assignments and protocols for notification, activation, mobilization, callout, and deployment of team members
 - d) Equipment inventories and procedures for request, mobilization, deployment, and use
 - e) Confirmation of ICS structure on scene, and designation of an IC
 - f) Search and canvass capabilities and protocols for request, mobilization, deployment, and use
 - g) Legal documents
 - h) CART forms to be used
 - i) Leads tracking capabilities and protocols for use
 - j) Published tip line for public use, and protocols for call intake and data management
 - k) Procedures for vetting, use, and management of volunteers
 - l) A list of predetermined activities, sequenced as needed, to execute immediately when CART arrives on scene, in order to limit downtime
- 10.2 Written documentation detailing when and how a debriefing is conducted, and an after-action report is created, following each actual incident and field training exercise. The documentation must address how issues identified through the debriefing will be resolved.
- 10.3 A structured debriefing is required following the CART certification field exercise. For purposes of this certification exercise, the assessor report will serve to meet the after-action reporting requirement. **(Policy/SOP)**

An official CART Response Manual ensures the team functions in a manner consistent with its established standards. The maintenance of and regular updates to the manual ensures any changes to team dynamics, policies, or procedures are appropriately and uniformly documented in a designated location.

Component 11: Victim Assistance and Reunification

An endangered missing or abducted child incident can absolutely devastate a family and paralyze a community. Families who have experienced this type of tragedy have indicated they were not prepared for the myriad issues they faced, such as being thrown in the spotlight of the media, being the focus of the investigation to eliminate them as suspects, and dealing with psychics, volunteers, and others who arrive at their doorstep or contact them with offers to help. The CART should identify a victim advocate and/or have additional resources available to assist the family and to provide appropriate coordination and information sharing with the responding/lead law enforcement agency.

After the child has been recovered, it is imperative services are made available to the child and family as soon as possible to assist with physical, medical, and psychological needs resulting from the abduction. A qualified practitioner should conduct a forensic interview immediately following recovery and emergent medical needs. The forensic interview assists in gathering critical information that can support apprehending suspect(s), determining if other crimes were committed against the child, and whether returning the child home will provide an appropriate, safe environment. Additionally, the forensic interview may provide information to support prosecution of defendants and identify other potential victims and/or suspects resulting in additional investigations. Component 11 standards outline law enforcement and public safety responsibilities to the child victim and family, to ensure proper and immediate support responses. A reunification plan is also required as a part of the CART's policy and procedures.



Component 11 Standards

- 11.1 The CART has procedures in place to ensure medical and psychological assistance is readily available during CART activations, mobilization, callouts, and deployments. While the services must be identified and made available through CART protocol, this standard does not require a specific law enforcement or responding agency/organization to directly provide the services. **(Policy/SOP/MOUs)**
- 11.2 The CART has a key position (e.g., victim/family advocate) assigned to the team to address family assistance throughout the investigation and longer term as needed based on case outcomes and the prosecutorial/judicial process. This standard requires a description of the position, including the role of a victim advocate. **(Organizational chart /policy/observation/SOP)**
- 11.3 The CART has a plan in place that identifies services and resources available at the community, state, and national levels to assist in victim and family support during the investigation, reunification and post-reunification referrals. These resources are documented in the CART's Resource Inventory. **(Resource Inventory)**
- 11.4 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 CART activation, and all listed forensic interviewers will provide a statement of qualifications/certifications/licensure accepted in the prosecution jurisdiction. **(Organizational chart/policy/SOP)**

Component 12: Community

A vital component of any CART program is utilizing members of the team to provide outreach, awareness, and training to community organizations and the general public. This assists in keeping the community safe as well as educating the public about your CART program and its vital role in recovering endangered missing or abducted children. Additionally, this public awareness can foster interest in assisting the CART program and volunteering when an incident occurs. Community organizations often look for avenues to assist public safety officials with logistical items such as food, water, command post space, and bathroom facilities during a major incident.

Component 12 Standards

- 12.1 Jurisdictions represented in CART have an established community outreach plan relating to the prevention of child abduction, the AMBER Alert plan utilized in that jurisdiction, and the vital role of the CART in recovering endangered missing and abducted children. (Policy/SOP)
- 12.2 Jurisdictions represented in CART conduct educational sessions to juveniles and/or their parents regarding internet safety and other child-safety prevention programs. (Policy/SOP)



Public awareness can foster interest in assisting the CART program and volunteering when an incident occurs. Community organizations often look for avenues to assist public safety officials with logistical items such as food, water, command post space, and bathroom facilities during a major incident.

CART Certification Requirements

CART programs interested in pursuing certification must first establish eligibility, followed by an application process. An annual recertification application is also part of the process.

Certification Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for CART certification, jurisdictions must meet and/or complete the following items. **Forms mentioned in this section can be found in the CART Resources area of the AMBER Advocate website.**

- The designated CART coordinator and the core members of the team must have attended a USDOJ sponsored CART training program or other appropriate AATTAP sponsored training.
- The CART coordinator or designee will maintain a record of AATTAP training attended by personnel assigned to the team verifying each member has received sufficient training and appropriate certifications to serve on the CART.
- The CART must conduct one tabletop or field scenario exercise annually to test operational readiness and complete an appropriate after-action report for each. The report is to be submitted as part of the application package.
 - If the CART has experienced an activation in the previous 12 months, this may be substituted; the after-action report is still required.
 - Activation is defined as a mobilization of a substantial number of CART members/components (or the entire team) where a mission has been established and credible evidence supports activities to reflect an actual good-faith response of the CART.
 - The CART coordinator may submit the after-action report or utilize AATTAP's AAR template (a fillable PDF that is downloaded locally, completed, saved, and supplied to AATTAP via email).
- If several agencies are designated as leads in the CART organization, MOUs for each lead agency must be in place. The documents should be included with the application packet.
- The CART must agree to an on-site certification event conducted by a designated team of AATTAP assessors. On-site certification will include the following requirements.
 - The CART will make all requested personnel available as specified by the AATTAP assessment team.
 - A full-scale mock field exercise will be conducted and observed by the AATTAP assessment team for the purpose of demonstrating practical and proficient understanding of CART standards and best practices.
 - A safety plan for the mock scenario exercise must be completed and provided prior to execution of the field exercise, and must include details on safety of personnel, volunteers, and general community. This AATTAP safety plan web submission form may be used if desired, or the team can submit its own plan (must include, at a minimum, the items shown on



the AATTAP plan). The AATTAP safety plan web form is completed and submitted online by the requesting CART program's CART coordinator, and a complete copy of the form is automatically emailed to designated AATTAP staff and the submitter.

The CPC, CCM, and AATTAP assessment team assigned to the certification event will thoroughly review all pertinent documents and proofs related to all CART certification standards as established in this manual.

Applying for CART Certification

CART programs interested in pursuing certification from AATTAP and the USDOJ can make an application by completing the CART Certification Application web form. Signed letters of agreement from all lead agencies (or an MOU with all agency CEO dated signatures) are submitted electronically, via document upload, as part of the online application form. This form is submitted by the requesting CART program's CART coordinator, and a complete copy of the form is automatically emailed to designated AATTAP staff and the submitter.

Review of CART Certification Assessment Criteria and Standards by AATTAP Certification Team

The following guidelines pertain to records review and compliance conducted and confirmed by both the requesting CART coordinator and the AATTAP CART certification team.

The CART must demonstrate full compliance with all certification standards. If noncompliance items/areas are noted, they will be reviewed and discussed by the AATTAP CART certification team. A formal response from the AATTAP CPC or assigned lead assessor which outlines needed actions for follow-up/resolution will be provided to the requesting CART coordinator.

- For additional directives or policies provided by CART member agencies, a current date must be shown, and the policy or directive must be incorporated as part of the official, complete CART policy. Distribution of documents to all applicable individuals must be confirmed. This is to demonstrate that each member agency CEO has established directives reflecting CART participation and authority for enforcement of these directives.
- Standard compliance documentation (SCD) and all related proofs required will be submitted to the CDC by the requesting CART coordinator as specified. The AATTAP CART certification team will review documentation prior to and in conjunction with the on-site assessment event.
- In the event a standard which is observed/confirmed as part of the on-site event is not in compliance, the CART coordinator may be able to achieve compliance, as determined by the lead assessor, before event conclusion. Otherwise, the requesting agency CART coordinator and the lead assessor will develop a strategy to correct any deficiencies.
- For any standard requiring observable or documented action, if an action has occurred previously, proof should be included/attached with relevant notation to the applicable records for that SCD. For example, for Standard 2.4, if during a callout a relief schedule was created and utilized, documents relating to that event should be included with the SCD record to demonstrate compliance.

CART programs interested in pursuing certification from AATTAP and the USDOJ can make an application by completing the CART Certification Application web form.

- If a standard has a previously executed observable component, a photo/digital image should be included with the SCD file.
- When proof elements (documents, images) are added to a SCD record, the applicable component of the element should be noted (e.g., “See page 2 of attached SOP for relevant proof information.”).
- Simulation of certain events/tasks by the CART during the field exercise must be pre-approved by the CART lead assessor before the on-site visit.

CART Certification Evaluation and Quality Assurance

An evaluation system is utilized to foster continuous improvement of the AATTAP certification process. Two components will be evaluated upon conclusion of the certification process and award/announcement of certification.

External Evaluation: Participating Agency Evaluation Feedback

- Survey Component 1—The CART coordinator will be asked to evaluate his/her experience with the lead and co-assessor(s).
- Survey Component 2—The CART coordinator will be asked to evaluate the overall certification process.

Internal Evaluation: Annual AATTAP Evaluation of CART Certification Assessors

The AATTAP CPC will complete annual evaluations for all assessors who were actively assigned over the past 12 months to ensure retention and demonstration of skills and competencies, and to promote continuous improvement in the performance of CART assessor duties.

Recertification

After a team has received its official U.S. Department of Justice certification, the CART coordinator is required to submit an annual recertification application to maintain team certified status. The recertification application is to be submitted annually based upon date of original certification. Annual recertification requirements are as follows.

- If the team has had an actual CART activation (partial or full), the CART coordinator may submit the after-action report for the event with the recertification application.
- If the team has not had an actual CART activation during the same time frame, the CART coordinator should conduct a mock activation exercise or tabletop exercise.
- If both an actual activation and mock activation exercise have been conducted, only one after-action report is required for submission.
- The after-action report should include the circumstances of the activation, how the CART was utilized during the activation, how many team members responded, how best practices were followed, and lessons learned.
- The CART coordinator must submit the team’s recertification application via the [CART Annual Recertification Application web form](#). This form is completed and submitted online by the requesting CART program’s CART coordinator, and a complete copy of the form is automatically emailed to designated AATTAP staff and the submitter.



Appendix 1

CART Certification Forms and Resources

The following resources can be found in the [CART Certification area of the AMBER Advocate website](#). The [CART Resources area](#) contains additional reference downloads and sample forms relative to CART operations.

CART Certification Guide—This AATTAP publication is for use by CART programs interested in preparing for and achieving certified CART status by the USDOJ.

Online Application for CART Certification—For initial/first-time CART certification. To be completed and submitted online by the requesting CART's coordinator, via the web form provided, along with documents uploaded as part of the submission process.

Online Application for CART Recertification—For recertification by currently certified CART programs. To be completed and submitted online by the requesting CART's coordinator, via the web form provided, along with documents uploaded as part of the submission process.

CART Certification After-Action Report Form (AAR)—This fillable PDF form can be used to submit an AAR as part of certification and/or recertification in the event the CART does not have its own AAR form.

CART Certification Standard Compliance Form—This fillable PDF form is used by CART assessors and is provided so the requesting agency CART coordinator/ leadership team can view its format and information captured during the compliance review process.

Safety Plan for CART Certification Field Exercise—Used by requesting CART programs to document their safety plan for field exercises, including that which is part of their final CART certification on-site assessment event. Can be completed and submitted online, via the web form provided, or the requesting CART may provide the information via its own form.

Quality Assurance for CART Certification—These online evaluations are completed by the participating CART coordinator to give feedback on the process.

- Lead Assessor Survey
- Co-Assessor Survey
- Overall Certification Process Survey

Appendix 2

CART Assessment

Field Scenario Sample Schedule

The following two-day event schedule represents a basic framework for AATTAP to conduct on-site assessment and evaluation activities. The final agenda and schedule for each CART certification on-site event will be developed by the AATTAP CART certification manager (CCM) and AATTAP assessment team. Final approval for the event is made by the AATTAP administrator or deputy administrator.

DAY ONE

8 a.m. – 10 a.m. | Meet with CART Coordinator and Interviews with Designated CART Personnel

The assessors will meet with the CART coordinator upon arrival and discuss any final logistics for the day. The assessors will then interview specific members of the CART for policy or procedure clarification and to validate that policies are communicated to personnel. Interviews will be pre-determined by the CART coordinator (e.g., communications center supervisor, public information officer (PIO), investigations chief, watch commander) and the CCM. If member agency CEOs request to speak with assessors about any areas of the assessment, such discussions are conducted now.

10 a.m. – 12 p.m. | Site Visits and Select Personnel Interviews

The CART coordinator and assessors will visit each site to be used during the exercise to address any logistical concerns including site and participant safety. Any additional personnel not involved in the exercise but involved in a true CART activation and missing child event (e.g., sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE), child abuse pediatrician, child advocacy center director, forensic interviewer, etc.) shall be briefly interviewed to verify their understanding of their roles and responsibilities during the missing child search, recovery, and reunification.

1 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. | Agency Introductions

The agency head, CART coordinator, and invited CART participants will begin this session with a welcome and introductions.

2 p.m. – 4 p.m. | Field Exercise Briefing

A representative from each agency participating in the field exercise and primary participants will meet for a briefing.

4 p.m. – 5 p.m. Closing On-Site Review

The agency head, CART coordinator, and any other invited agency representatives will meet to discuss preliminary findings and to answer any questions as a final preparation for the next day's events. It is expected that CEOs from each agency, or their appropriate command staff proxies, are present.



DAY TWO

7 a.m. – 12 p.m. | Field Scenario Exercise

The activation begins at the command center.

12 p.m. – 2 p.m. | Press Event/Media Availability

All agency representatives and major participants will meet for debriefing with assessors; command staff participation is strongly recommended.

2 p.m. – 4 p.m. | Closing Comments

Upon conclusion of the certification process, the CART assessment team will meet with CART member agency leaders and key participants to provide observations. The CART coordinator will be apprised of preliminary status (pending certification decision/award), including any necessary actions to be taken in order to successfully complete CART Certification.



For questions on CART certification, email askamber@fvtc.org or call (877) 712-6237.