



**AMBER**<sup>®</sup>  
**ALERT**

# PROPER MEDIA INVOLVEMENT AND COVERAGE

## Coordinating Media Coverage

When a child goes missing, the first 48 hours are the most critical. Involving the media as soon as possible can be essential for any agency responding to a missing child incident. Initiating an investigation and issuing an AMBER Alert is an excellent start towards finding the missing child. Coordinating media coverage ensures that the public is engaged as part of the search efforts - expanding the number of people actively looking for the child. Accurate information, including photos and current details, dispersed to as many people as possible may be the key to finding a child in time. Proper media involvement and coverage has been known to put pressure on the abductor or those who are familiar with the abduction and can lead to a successful recovery.



## How to Gain Media Interest

As soon as possible, put together and disperse a media package to all tribal, local, and regional media outlets. These outlets may include radio stations, television stations, and print and online newspapers.

## Creating a Media Package

A media package is an all inclusive document containing information about the missing child that can readily be sent to media outlets and, if possible, should contain the following items.

- **A description of the missing child including what the child was wearing at the time of the disappearance**
- **High-quality recent photos of the missing child**
- **Information about where the child was last seen**
- **Photos of the abductor or person that the child was last seen with if applicable**
- **A tipline where information can be reported by the public**

## Why is a Media Package Important

Creating and distributing a media package in coordination with the issuance of an AMBER Alert ensures that all reporters and media outlets immediately circulate accurate information. This will also ensure that media outlets receive detailed information without having to interview or question those close to the victim, thereby limiting unnecessary trauma to the family and community. Presenting the media with a pre-formulated package has the added benefit of controlling the quality of information released so that it is up-to-date and not based on old information or unsubstantiated rumors. Finally, the media package will ensure that all outlets receive the tipline number so that all pertinent information is reported to one centralized location.



## Who Should Receive a Media Package

Media packages can and should be sent to all types of media outlets. Though television news stations are important outlets to receive this information, radio and print outlets should be included to reach the maximum number of people. Ensure that all information is provided to all outlets. Even when providing information to radio stations, be certain to provide photos that can be posted on station's websites.

Tribal, local, and regional stations and outlets should be contacted by phone as soon as possible and ideally in coordination with the issuance of the AMBER Alert. When reaching out to the media, assignment editors are the individuals in charge of deciding which news pieces are aired or published during the day and have the authority to publish information about the missing child. Inform the assignment editor that you are working the case of a child that has just gone missing and that you would like to send them a media package with relevant information as soon as possible.

## Social Media

Social media is quickly becoming the primary source of news for many people and may be the most accessible source of information in areas with poor Internet access. Social media platforms can disperse information to a broader audience than almost any other medium. To release a media package via social media, the information should be arranged into an easy to understand format featuring the picture of the child and should only be posted or shared on reliable social media pages. Examples of effective pages to post to are the local police department, the local tribe or tribal council, and any community center or local/tribal youth-serving organizations with a high number of community followers.

## Keeping Media Attention

### Giving the Media a New Angle

It is important to keep the media involved throughout a missing child search in order to remain relevant in the eyes of the public. After the first week, if the child has not been located, media attention often begins to wane. Introducing a new angle is a great way to keep media and public attention on the case. Involving a new person in interviews is one way to give the media a new angle. Try working with someone with an influential voice in the tribe or community such as an elder or other respected leader. They can use their platform to speak to the media about the importance of the case to the community and local police.

### Police Announcements of Case Developments

Announcing developments in the case of the missing child during press conferences signifies to the media and the public that the case is still a priority for the department. Though many details are often confidential it can be helpful for the public to hear about the case from a new face or voice. This can be even more influential if the individual giving the updates is of significant rank within the department. For example, having the chief of police give the announcement about important case developments demonstrates to the community that not only is the case still being investigated, but it is being taken very seriously by the local department. This can be important in furthering positive and trusting relations with the Tribe or Native community.