



P.O. Box 7857
Madison, WI 53707-7857
www.doj.state.wi.us

**J.B. VAN HOLLEN
ATTORNEY GENERAL**

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For More Information Contact:
Bill Cosh 608/266-1221

**WISCONSIN CLEARINGHOUSE FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN
AND ADULTS**

Every year at this time, families come together to share in the joys of the season and to reflect. These days provide the opportunity to step back from our daily routine and consider our many blessings. For many of us, myself included as a father of two, our children are our chief blessing.

But too many of us will not hear our children's laughter this season. According to the FBI's National Crime Information Center, as of November 1, there were 831 missing Wisconsin children and 264 missing Wisconsin adults.

When a child or aging parent disappears, the lives of family members are turned upside down. As an investigation moves forward, the missing person's loved ones may experience helplessness, confusion and desperation. Many do not know where to turn for help or support.

Our role at the Wisconsin Department of Justice is not only to provide investigative assistance to the responding law enforcement agency, but also to offer victim family services through the Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Missing and Exploited Children and Adults. Each case involving an abducted or otherwise missing child presents its own unique set of circumstances, and our assistance is tailored to the case. This help includes advocacy for victim families, help in navigating the criminal justice system, and referring victim families to other resources, services and information to help guide them through these difficult times.

Children who are missing, whether they are runaways or abductees, may experience problems identical to child victims of other abuse and violence. In order to provide maximum assistance and support for victim families during an investigation, a multi-disciplinary team of experts can help assist victims and families during all stages of the process: when a child first goes missing, during the recovery of the child, and during reunification of the child with the victim family. Supplementing this direct assistance, the Wisconsin Clearinghouse also provides training for law enforcement, judges, prosecutors, attorneys, social service agencies and child protective services. This training, part of a collaborative effort with the National Center for Missing and

Exploited Children and the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention promotes a better understanding of the unique dynamics involved in the victimization of a child.

The disappearance of a child is the ultimate nightmare; one no family should ever have to endure. And they can be among the most complex and challenging cases for law enforcement to solve. It is the mission of the Wisconsin Department of Justice and its Wisconsin Clearinghouse For Missing and Exploited Children and Adults to help recover these children, to assist those families in need, and to protect the lives of Wisconsin citizens so that perhaps next holiday season, more family rooms will be warmed by the sounds of childhood.

J.B. Van Hollen
Wisconsin Attorney General

For more information and helpful links, please visit:

www.wimissingpersons.doj.state.wi.us

www.amberalertwisconsin.org

www.missingkids.com