Incident Planning Guide: Missing Person

Definition

This Incident Planning Guide is intended to address issues associated with a missing person, whether an infant, child, or adult, caused by abduction, elopement, or wandering. Hospitals may customize this Incident Planning Guide for their specific requirements.

Scenario: Infant Abduction

A newborn's grandmother has been visiting and helping to care for the newborn while the new mother rests. The grandmother tells a nursing assistant that she is going to the cafeteria while her daughter and the baby sleep. A short while later, the new mother contacts the nurses' station asking for her mother and the baby. Following some quick questions, the staff suspect the baby's grandmother may have taken the newborn with her to "protect" the baby from the mother's high-risk lifestyle. Your hospital's leadership and security are immediately notified and the Infant Abduction Response Plan is activated. An overhead announcement on the public address system notifies all staff. The baby is not found and law enforcement is called to assist. The mother is frantic and nursing staff requests support from behavioral health. Law enforcement officials arrive, ask for the hospital's Incident Commander, and request a private room in the pediatric unit to conduct interviews and collect evidence. The Hospital Command Center is activated and the Incident Commander begins to address ongoing coordination with law enforcement, securing the building from media reporters and other unsecured visitors, providing behavioral health support to patients, staff, and families; and preparing for a media briefing that is scheduled in one hour, and assessing the impact on the hospital's reputation.

Scenario: Child Abduction

A 6-year-old boy is recovering from minor surgery on the pediatric ward. His parents are divorced, and his mother has sole custody. An order of protective custody is in effect to keep the father away from the child and his mother. While his mother goes to the cafeteria for coffee, the boy's father enters the hospital and takes the sleeping boy from his room. Upon return, the frantic mother notifies the nursing staff of her son's disappearance. Your hospital's Missing Child Response Plan is activated. An overhead announcement on the public address system notifies all staff. The boy is not found and law enforcement is called to assist. The mother is frantic and nursing staff requests support from, from behavioral health. Law enforcement officials arrive, ask for the hospital's Incident Commander, and request a private room in the pediatric unit to conduct interviews and collect evidence. The Hospital Command Center is activated and the Incident Commander begins to address ongoing coordination with law enforcement, securing the building from media reporters and other unsecured visitors, providing behavioral health support to patients, staff, and families, assessing the impact on the hospital's reputation, and preparing for a media briefing that is scheduled in one hour.

Scenario: Missing Adult

A 62-year-old man with dementia is recovering from pneumonia on your hospital's medical ward. He is given sedation at night to help him sleep. Upon arriving in the morning to visit her father, the patient's daughter cannot locate him in his room or on the unit. Nursing staff report that he is not scheduled for tests today. The Missing Person Response Plan is activated. An overhead announcement on the public address system notifies all staff. The boy is not found and law enforcement is called to assist. The daughter is frantic and nursing staff requests support from, from behavioral health. Law enforcement officials arrive, ask for the hospital's Incident Commander, and request a private room to conduct interviews and collect evidence. The Hospital Command Center is activated and the Incident Commander begins to address ongoing coordination with law enforcement, securing the building from media reporters and other unsecured visitors, providing behavioral health support to patients, staff, and families, assessing the impact on the hospital's reputation, and preparing for a media briefing that is scheduled in one hour.

Does your Emergency Management Program address the following issues?

Mitigation

1.	Does your hospital address the threat and impact of a missing person (infant, child, adult) in the annual Hazard Vulnerability Analysis, including the identification of mitigation strategies and tactics?
2.	Does your hospital participate in pre-incident local response planning with public safety officials (e.g., emergency medical services, fire, and law enforcement), local emergency management officials, other area hospitals, regional healthcare coalition coordinators , and other appropriate public and private organizations, including meetings and conference calls to plan and share status?
3.	Does your hospital have security systems and procedures in place to prevent infant and child abduction (e.g., arm bands, secured areas, education and training)?
4.	Does your hospital have security systems to ensure patients with altered mental capacity (e.g., dementia) cannot wander from assigned areas or units?
5.	Does your hospital identify all potential entry and exit points of the hospital and contain this information in a single document or file for rapid access?
6.	Does your hospital have security cameras, panic alarms, automated door intrusion detection, etc.? Is there rapid access to the recordings or reports of these systems? Are these systems monitored 24/7?

Preparedness

1.	Does your hospital have a Missing Person Plan that includes: ☐ The role of local law enforcement? ☐ Primary and redundant contact information for law enforcement? ☐ The use of a liaison role to coordinate response and recovery with law enforcement officials? ☐ Policies, procedures, and equipment to coordinate communications, messaging, and information sharing with law enforcement officials? ☐ Policies and procedures to share information obtained from security systems with law enforcement and, if necessary, prosecutorial authorities? ☐ A method to rapidly notify staff and visitors of the incident? Are there standardized codes that signifies a missing (infant, child, adult) incident? Has staff been trained on the notification(s)?
2.	Does your hospital provide training and education to all staff to respond to a missing person, whether infant, child, or an adult?
3.	Does your hospital exercise the Missing Person Plan annually and revise it as needed?
4.	Does your hospital have a policy and procedures in place to rapidly notify staff and visitors of the incident? Is there a standardized code that signifies a missing person? Have staff been trained?
5.	Does your hospital have policy and procedure to search the campus that includes: ☐ Identifying, assigning, and training of staff or contractors to conduct and report searches across all areas of your hospital and campus? ☐ Tracking systems to ensure all areas have been searched? ☐ Hospital and campus floor plans, maps, and evacuation routes? ☐ Response to all areas internal and external areas, and the surrounding neighborhood?

	☐ Search grids?
	☐ Restricting Movement?
	☐ Sharing search results with the Hospital Incident Management Team and law enforcement?
6.	Does your hospital have pre-incident standardized messages for communicating risks and recommendations to the public and the media?

Immediate and Intermediate Response

1.	Does your hospital have a process to confirm that a person (infant, child, adult) is missing?
2.	Does your hospital identify in writing who has the authority to activate the Missing Person Plan?
3.	Does your hospital have a Lockdown Plan (full and zoned lockdown capabilities)?
4.	Does your hospital provide training for all staff on the lockdown procedure and impact on operations?
5.	Does your hospital have a plan and procedure in place to notify all staff and visitors of a missing person? Does messaging reach all areas of the hospital? Are multiple people trained and given the authority to activate notifications and messaging?
6.	Does your hospital have a staff person assigned to liaise with law enforcement?
7.	Does your hospital have a dedicated staging area for law enforcement on arrival? ☐ Is the staging area documented in the Missing Persons Plan? ☐ Is there a dedicated staff person to liaise with law enforcement? ☐ Is there a staff person with responsibility to gather patient and employee information and provide intelligence to law enforcement?
8.	Does your hospital have 24/7 access to risk management expertise and legal counsel?
9.	Does your hospital use social media to disseminate information during and after the incident? ☐ Who has approval over messages to be released? ☐ Is information coordinated within the Joint Information Center?

Extended Response and System Recovery

1.	Does your hospital have dedicated space for long term operations of outside response agencies, including law enforcement?
2.	Does your hospital have a means to relocate services if campus lockdown is extended?
3.	Does your hospital have memoranda of understanding with other hospitals to support clinical operations if campus lockdown is extended?
4.	Does your hospital have a plan to provide behavioral health support and stress management debriefings to patients, staff, and families, including obtaining services of local or regional resources?
5.	Does your hospital have Hospital Incident Management Team position depth to support extended operations?

6.	Does your hospital have a continuing process to capture all costs and expenditures related to operations?
7.	Does your hospital plan provide for the loved ones of hostages to have a quiet room in a secure area with support services?
8.	Does your hospital have a plan that oversees and coordinates reunification of the missing person and their family? Does it address law enforcement considerations?
9.	Does your hospital have an evidence collection policy developed in conjunction with local law enforcement and prosecutorial authorities?
10.	Does your hospital have a procedure to reunite hostages with their loved ones?
11.	Does your hospital have procedures to collect and collate incident documentation and formulate an After Action Report and Corrective Action and Improvement Plan for submission to the Incident Commander?