



# Alert Systems for Missing Adults in Eleven States: Background and Issues for Congress

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May 7, 2009

Congressional Research Service

7-5700

[www.crs.gov](http://www.crs.gov)

R40552

## Summary

A patchwork of alert systems to recover vulnerable missing adults is developing through the country. These systems, administered at the state and local levels, are intended to alert law enforcement entities and the public that adults with cognitive impairment or other disabilities are missing and may need assistance. The alerts are activated on behalf of targeted groups of individuals—such as those with cognitive or mental impairment (e.g., Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia), developmental disabilities, or suicidal tendencies—who may be at high risk of going missing and unable to make their way home or to a safe place.

Recent media attention to cases of vulnerable missing adults has prompted policymakers to consider whether the federal government should expand its role in helping these individuals. Currently, the federal Missing Alzheimer’s Disease Patient Alert program funds a service that provides enrollees—individuals with Alzheimer’s or dementia—with a bracelet indicating that the individual is memory impaired, including a toll-free, 24-hour emergency response number to call if the person is found wandering or lost.

Some Members of Congress have expressed interest in assisting states to create and expand alert systems for missing adults. In the opening weeks of the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, the House passed legislation (H.R. 632) to establish a grant program to encourage states to develop, expand, and coordinate these alert systems. A companion bill (S. 557) was introduced in the Senate shortly thereafter. The proposed program is similar to a federal grant program that funds training and technical assistance for what are known as AMBER (America’s Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response) Alert systems. Each state has developed an AMBER Alert system to assist in the recovery of children who are believed to have been abducted.

In response to the increased congressional focus on alert systems for missing adults, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) gathered data on 11 states (Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Texas, and Virginia) that were known to have developed such systems. CRS conducted a review of state laws, regulations, or executive orders that established the systems, and contacted officials in each of the states to learn more about how the systems were administered. CRS found that most of the systems were established only recently, since 2006.

This report provides an overview of the alert systems in these 11 states, including (1) the legal authority to establish the systems; (2) the target population for the alerts; (3) administrative responsibility for the alerts, including coordination with AMBER Alerts; (4) training of law enforcement agencies and other entities about the alerts; (5) the process for activating alerts; (6) coordination of alerts with other states; (7) system costs; (8) use of the systems; and (9) any information about outcomes of the individuals for whom alerts were activated.

The last section of the report provides a discussion of issues for Congress to consider with respect to the federal role, if any, in developing state alert programs for missing adults. For example, some states with alert systems noted that they might have difficulty coordinating with another state that lacks a similar system. States may also have challenges coordinating with states that have alert systems with different criteria that must be met before an alert is activated. The federal government may be able to help establish protocols to coordinate cross-state alerts and to assist in establishing formal agreements or protocols for the use of interstate alerts. This report will not be updated.

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## Introduction

Adults may go missing for a variety of reasons. In some cases, the disappearance of an individual may be a personal choice. However, adults may go missing as a result of a disabling condition, a natural catastrophe, or a crime such as an abduction and other instances when foul play is involved. Unlike children, adults have the legal right to go missing under most circumstances. As a result, families of missing adults may receive limited assistance from state and local law enforcement agencies in recovering their loved ones.

Media attention to cases of missing adults—particularly seniors with dementia who have been found deceased after wandering from home either on foot or in a vehicle—has prompted policymakers to consider expanding the federal government’s role in helping to recover vulnerable adults who go missing. Congress has recently proposed measures to assist in such recovery efforts. At the start of the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, the House passed legislation (H.R. 632) to establish a grant program to encourage states to establish, expand, and coordinate alert systems for vulnerable adults who may go missing due to cognitive or physical disabilities, among other reasons.<sup>1</sup> A companion bill (S. 557) was introduced in the Senate on March 10, 2009. The proposed program is similar to a federal grant program that funds training and technical assistance for what are known as AMBER (America’s Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response) Alert systems. Each state has developed an AMBER Alert system to enlist the support of law enforcement agencies and the public in recovering children who are believed to have been abducted.

In response to the increased congressional focus on alert systems for missing adults, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) gathered data on existing state alert systems in 11 states. CRS conducted a review of state laws, regulations, or executive orders that established the systems, and contacted officials in the 11 states to learn more about how they are carried out. These systems were established beginning in 2006, and are administered by local and/or state law enforcement agencies. The systems are intended to alert law enforcement entities and/or the public that vulnerable adults are missing and may need assistance. Many states activate the alerts on behalf of targeted groups of individuals who may be at high risk of going missing, such as those persons with cognitive or mental impairment, including Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia, as well as persons with developmental disability.

This report provides an overview of the alert systems in 11 states. It begins with background information on current federal efforts to recover missing adults, followed by a description of the methods CRS used to obtain data from each state identified as having an alert system. Subsequent sections of this report provide an overview of each state’s alert systems, including (1) the legal authority to establish the systems; (2) the target population for the alerts; (3) administrative responsibility for the alerts, including coordination with AMBER Alerts; (4) training of law enforcement agencies and other entities about the alerts; (5) the process for activating alerts; (6) coordination of alerts with other states; (7) system costs; (8) use of the systems; and (9) any information about outcomes of the individuals who were believed to be lost and for whom alerts were activated. The last section of the report provides a discussion of issues for Congress to

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<sup>1</sup> A similar version of the bill (H.R. 6064) in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress was passed by the House on September 17, 2008.

consider with respect to the federal role, if any, in developing state alert systems for missing adults.

## Background

Individuals can go missing for a variety of reasons. They may become lost or disoriented due to a mental or cognitive impairment, developmental disability, or physical disability. Natural disasters, such as hurricanes or floods, may cause individuals to become displaced from their families and communities. Individuals may voluntarily go missing to escape domestic abuse, law enforcement, or for other reasons. Policymakers and advocates for the missing have identified persons with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia as being particularly vulnerable to missing episodes.<sup>2</sup> Increases in longevity among the older population and the aging of the baby boom generation have contributed to interest in establishing these systems. Wandering from home can be a frequent behavior that may pose a significant, sometimes life-threatening, danger to the well-being of those with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. According to the Alzheimer's Association, if not found within 24 hours, nearly 50% of those who wander risk serious illness or death.<sup>3</sup> Illness or death may occur from exposure to the elements, lack of food or hydration for an extended period, and general inability of the individual to think, act, or communicate to gain assistance.

While local and state law enforcement agencies are responsible for leading efforts to recover missing adults, in recent years the federal government has increasingly played a role in both helping to prevent certain types of missing adult incidents—particularly among vulnerable populations—and assisting in identifying and recovering those who go missing.<sup>4</sup> The federal Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert grant assists in identifying missing individuals with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia by funding what is known as Safe Return, a program administered by the Alzheimer's Association. Safe Return provides a MedicAlert bracelet or other form of identification to enrolled individuals. The identification indicates that the individual is memory impaired and includes a toll-free, 24-hour emergency response number to call if the person is found wandering or lost. As part of the program, the Alzheimer's Association provides support and referrals to caregivers of those enrolled in the program, and provides some training to law enforcement agencies about individuals with Alzheimer's disease. Authorization for the program has lapsed, but Congress has continued to appropriate funds. For each of FY2002 through FY2009 Congress appropriated between \$800,000 and \$2 million in funding. The Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert Program Reauthorization of 2009 (H.R. 908), which was approved by the House on February 10, 2009, would amend the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 to reauthorize the program through FY2016, and would revise program requirements to: (1) provide for competitive grants to nonprofit

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<sup>2</sup> Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia and it is estimated that as many as five million Americans have the disease. While memory loss is one symptom of Alzheimer's disease, other symptoms may include being disoriented to time and place. For instance, a person with Alzheimer's disease may become lost in an otherwise familiar place, such as their neighborhood or community, they may forget where they are or how they got there. For further discussion of Alzheimer's disease, see CRS Report RL32970, *Biomedical Advances in Alzheimer's Disease*, by Michele M. Schoonmaker and Laura B. Shrestha.

<sup>3</sup> Ashlen Anderson, "Public Policy Responses to Wandering Behavior," *Issue Kit*, Alzheimer's Association, September 2006, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> For further discussion of the federal role, see CRS Report RL34616, *Missing Adults: Background, Federal Programs, and Issues for Congress*, by Adrienne L. Fernandes.

organizations to assist in locating missing patients with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia; (2) expand the program to include locating other missing elderly individuals; and (3) establish a preference in awarding grants to national nonprofit organizations that have a direct link to patients with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and their families. Currently, grants may be awarded to only such organizations.

Separately, Congress provided funding from FY2002 through FY2006 for the Kristen's Act grant program which provided funding for a national clearinghouse and resource center for missing adults generally. Federal funding for Kristen's Act grants ranged from a high of \$1.7 million in FY2002, decreasing in each subsequent year to a low of \$150,000 in FY2006. The National Center for Missing Adults (NCMA) was the sole recipient of the grant. NCMA continues to operate, with non-federal funds, and takes reports of persons who go missing under a variety of circumstances, including due to a diagnosed medical condition, mental illness or diminished mental capacity, Alzheimer's disease or dementia, or alcohol or substance abuse.<sup>5</sup> NCMA adds profiles and pictures of missing persons to its website (<http://www.missingadults.org>), sends missing person flyers to the family and law enforcement, assists with press releases, helps generate or manage media attention, and maintains routine contact with the families of missing individuals. Authorization for Kristen's Act expired in FY2006. H.R. 632, which passed the House on February 10, 2009, would reauthorize the grant at \$4 million for each of FY2010 through FY2020. Companion legislation, S. 557, was introduced in the Senate on March 10, 2008.

In addition to funding the Kristen's Act grant, H.R. 632 would direct the Attorney General to establish a national "Silver Alert communications network" to assist regional and local search efforts for missing seniors, in coordination with states, local governments, and law enforcement agencies. The bill defines "missing senior" as any individual who is reported to, or identified by, a law enforcement agency as a missing person; and meets the requirements to be designated as a missing senior, as determined by the state in which the individual is reported or identified as a missing person. The bill further directs the Department of Justice (DOJ) to appoint a National Coordinator of the network to: (1) establish voluntary guidelines for states to use in developing alert programs to recover missing seniors; (2) develop protocols for recovering missing seniors and for notifying law enforcement agencies that a senior is missing; and (3) implement an advisory group to assist states, local governments, law enforcement agencies, and other entities involved in the network, among other activities. The bill authorizes such sums as necessary for these purposes. No time period is specified. In addition, H.R. 632 would authorize appropriations of \$5 million annually for FY2009 through FY2013 for grants to states to develop and enhance Silver Alert plans. The grants would be distributed by DOJ on an equitable basis throughout the United States. The federal share of the grant would not exceed 50%.

The focus of this report is on those state alert systems for missing adults. CRS sought to obtain detailed information from states about their alert systems to better inform Congress about their activities as well as analyze the similarities and differences among various state alert systems. In general, these alert systems are intended to rapidly disperse information about a missing person to

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<sup>5</sup> Among the nearly 4,000 adults reported missing to NCMA over about an approximately three-year period, about 45% had a diagnosed medical condition that required care or medication; and 35% had a mental illness or diminished mental capacity, which includes general depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, attention deficit (hyperactivity) disorder, autism, and other genetic conditions. The balance had Alzheimer's disease or related dementia (about 8%), alcohol or chemical dependency (about 7%), or another unspecified disability (about 5%). Detailed data are not available for characteristics other than disabilities.

law enforcement entities, and often the public. This type of alert system is different from the federally funded Safe Return program in that Safe Return maintains a database of individuals who have been pre-identified as being at risk of wandering due to Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia and choose to enroll in the program. In the event that an individual enrolled in the Safe Return program does go missing, Safe Return can provide information and a physical description of the missing individual, which can assist family members in filing a missing persons report and help law enforcement agencies, regardless of whether the state has an alert system, in search and recovery efforts. Provided that the missing individual is wearing identification, Safe Return can also facilitate reuniting missing persons with their caregivers.

## Methodology

Based on requests from some Members of Congress for information regarding the administration of alert systems for missing adults, CRS sought to identify states that were believed to have missing adult alert systems and contact those states to obtain further information. Using information from a variety of sources, including recent news articles, policy publications, and discussions with various stakeholders from organizations such as the Alzheimer’s Association and Project Lifesaver International, Inc.,<sup>6</sup> CRS identified 11 states with alert systems for missing adults—Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Texas, and Virginia.<sup>7</sup> CRS did not conduct a search of state statutes or survey all 50 states to determine whether each state had implemented an alert system for missing adults. Thus, the 11 identified states may not be an exhaustive list of all states with alert systems for vulnerable missing adults.

For the 11 selected states, CRS reviewed authorizing legislation, executive orders, and regulations to obtain program data on these state alert systems. CRS also contacted officials in each of the states to obtain additional information. Based on key areas of interest in state alert systems for missing adults that have been expressed by some Members of Congress, CRS prepared a detailed list of questions for state officials covering the following attributes (see **Appendix A** for a copy of the questions submitted to state officials):

1. Legal authority—whether authority for implementation and administration of the alert system was established by the state through statute, executive order, and/or regulations.
2. Target population—information on the characteristics of those who may go missing and the population eligible to be the subject of an alert.

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<sup>6</sup> These states were mentioned as having missing adult alert programs in news articles and policy publications, including Ben Schmitt, “Silver Alerts Could Help Pinpoint Missing Seniors’ Location,” *USA Today*, July 8, 2008; Kelly Wilkicki, “Silver Alerts Sound the Alarm when Certain Seniors Go Missing,” *National Conference of State Legislatures*, vol. 29, no. 516 (May 27, 2008); Kathy G. Miller, “Long-Term Care: Facility Quality and Safety,” *Health Policy Tracking Service*, Sept. 2008; National Center for Assisted Living, “NCAL Focus,” American Health Care Association, Washington, DC, Aug. 2006.

<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of this analysis, CRS selected those states with active alert programs. Therefore, Louisiana was the only state not selected because, according to state officials, the alert system had been authorized but not yet implemented. Thus, sufficient information to describe how Louisiana’s alert system operated was not available at the time of this report. CRS also identified four states—California, New York, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia—that have introduced legislation to implement similar alert programs in the last three years.

3. Administrative responsibility—the entity or entities responsible for implementation of and administering the alert system and any administrative coordination with the state’s AMBER Alert program.
4. Training—any training provided to law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders on the use of the alert system.
5. Process for activating alerts—includes information on: eligible entities authorized to file an actionable missing persons report; criteria for activating an alert; communication mechanisms for disseminating the alert; target audiences; and duration of the alert.
6. Interstate coordination—any state protocols for alert systems to coordinate with other states when an eligible missing person is believed to have crossed state lines.
7. System costs—costs associated with implementing the alert system as well as any costs for ongoing administration of the system.
8. Use of the system—the history of utilization of the alert system including any available data on the number of alerts that have been activated.
9. Outcomes—any available data on: the characteristics of those missing individuals who are the subject of an alert; circumstances related to their disappearance; and outcomes related to any search and recovery efforts.

Between September 2008 and March 2009, questions were electronically submitted to the state official identified by CRS as responsible for or most knowledgeable about the missing adult alert system in that state. All 11 states responded and, when necessary, CRS followed up with state officials for clarification. Officials provided varying levels of detail about their systems. For some states, CRS was unable to obtain information about the number of alerts activated and/or the costs associated with the alert system.

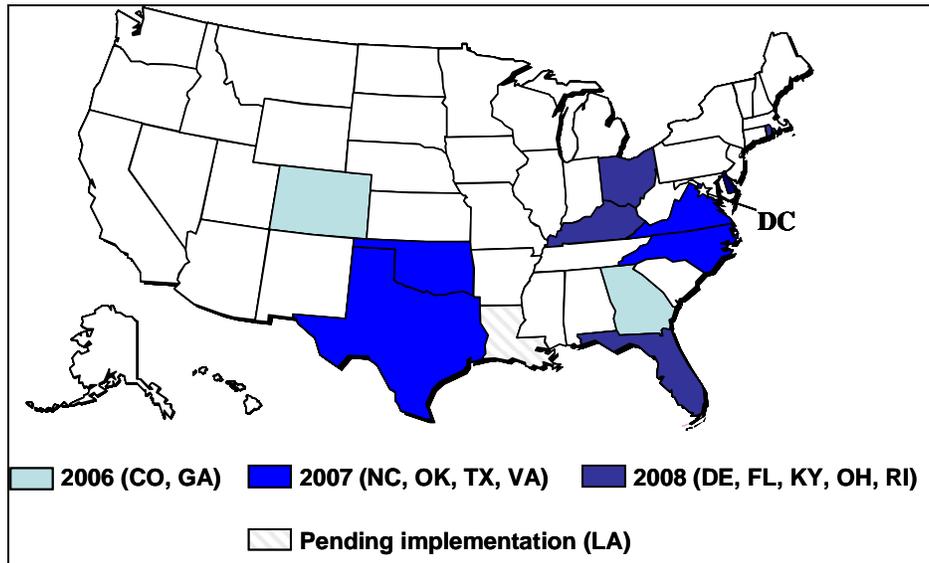
## Overview of State Alert Systems

Alert systems for vulnerable missing adults appear to be a recent but growing initiative. Among the 11 states CRS identified with active alert systems, Colorado and Georgia were the first to implement an alert system for missing vulnerable adults in 2006. Since then, nine other states have adopted the systems. Eight of the 11 states are in the South (Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia), one state is in the West (Colorado), one state is in the Midwest (Ohio), and one state is in the Northeast (Rhode Island).<sup>8</sup> See **Figure 1** for a U.S. map with the 11 states identified by CRS as having missing adult alert systems.

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<sup>8</sup> The U.S. Census Bureau defines four different regions: Northeast, Midwest, South, and West. States in the Northeast region include Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania; states in the Midwest region include Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas; states in the South region include Delaware, Maryland, the District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma; states in the West region include Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, and Hawaii.

**Figure I. Geographic Distribution of States with Alert Systems for Missing Adults**  
(by year of implementation)



**Source:** Congressional Research Service based on correspondence with state officials from September 2008 through March 2009.

**Notes:** States identified as having an alert system for missing adults represent a convenience sample.

**Table 1** provides a general overview of the alert systems implemented in the 11 states identified by CRS as having active programs. State alert systems were authorized either by law or executive order, with most states passing a law to create the alert system for missing adults.

**Table I. Summary of Selected States' Alert Systems for Missing Adults**

| State    | Description of Alert System   |
|----------|---|
| Colorado | In 2006, the state established the Missing Senior Citizen Alert Program, which requires the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to disseminate information to alert local law enforcement agencies and the public through the media about certain missing senior citizens. The alert system targets senior citizens with a verified impaired mental condition. The CBI activates the alert at the request of the local law enforcement agency.   |
| Delaware | In 2008, the state established the Delaware Gold Alert Program, which requires local law enforcement agencies to activate a Gold Alert in certain missing person investigation cases. The Gold Alert may be used to assist in locating a missing person with a disability, a missing senior citizen, or missing suicidal person. The investigative law enforcement agency activates the alert in cooperation with the Delaware State Police.  |
| Florida  | In 2008, the state established the Florida Silver Alert Plan, which authorizes the state to post information on road signs to alert the public about certain missing persons. The information is posted at the request of local law enforcement agencies in circumstances where a person age 60 or older with dementia is missing and under extraordinary circumstances for a missing adult age 15 to 59 with a similar condition. Local law enforcement agencies are encouraged to develop policies and procedures to broadcast information to the public about the missing person in their jurisdictions. |

| <b>State</b>   | <b>Description of Alert System</b>  |
|----------------|---|
| Georgia        | In 2006, the state established Mattie's Call, a missing person alert system administered by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI). Mattie's Call may be used to assist in locating a disabled adult, of any age, who is developmentally impaired or suffers from a cognitive impairment, such as dementia. The alert is activated by the GBI, at the request of a local law enforcement agency, to other law enforcement agencies and the public through media outlets and electronic highway signs.                      |
| Kentucky       | In 2008, the state established the Golden Alert system. The law requires rescue squads organized to search for a missing impaired adult to cooperate with local media outlets and law enforcement entities. The Golden Alert system targets missing "impaired adults" who are persons age 18 years or older that have a verified mental or cognitive impairment. Local law enforcement agencies determine if a missing person qualifies for an alert and, are responsible for activating the alerts and contacting the media. |
| North Carolina | In 2007, the state established a Silver Alert Program that activates a missing person alert to appropriate law enforcement agencies, the media, the public, and other entities. The Silver Alert Program targets missing persons, of any age, who are believed to be suffering from dementia or other cognitive impairment. The North Carolina Center for Missing Persons activates the Silver Alert at the request of the investigating law enforcement agency.  |
| Ohio           | In 2008, the state established the Ohio Missing Adult Alert system administered by the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation within the office of the Ohio Attorney General. The alert system targets missing individuals age 65 or older, or adults age 18 or older with a mental impairment. Alerts are authorized by a local law enforcement agency and are activated by the Ohio Attorney General's office or the Ohio State Highway Patrol.  |
| Oklahoma       | In 2007, the state established the Silver Alert System. The alert system targets individuals, of any age, with a proven mental or physical disability. At their discretion, the local law enforcement agency activates the alert to other law enforcement agencies and to the public through the media.   |
| Rhode Island   | In 2008, the state created the Rhode Island Missing Senior Citizen Alert system administered by the Rhode Island State Police, in coordination with local law enforcement agencies. The target population is seniors age 60 or older who have an impaired mental condition. Upon the request of the state police, the alert is activated to the Rhode Island Broadcasters Association, which in turn disseminates the information to member media outlets. Electronic highway signs may be activated on a case-by-case basis. |
| Texas          | In 2007, the state established the Texas Silver Alert Network administered by the Governor's Division of Emergency Management. The target population are senior citizens, age 65 or older, who are domiciled in Texas, and have a diagnosed impaired mental condition. The alert is activated at the request of a local law enforcement agency, to other law enforcement agencies and the public through the media.   |
| Virginia       | In 2007, the state established the Virginia Senior Alert system administered by the Virginia Missing Person Information Clearinghouse within the Virginia Police Department. The Senior Alert system is targeted at missing persons age 60 years or older who suffer a cognitive impairment. The alert is activated by local law enforcement agencies, at their discretion, to other law enforcement agencies and the public through the media. Regional and statewide alerts are activated by the Virginia State Police.     |

**Source:** Congressional Research Service based on correspondence with state officials between September 2008 and March 2009.

**Notes:** For details about specific state alert systems, see **Appendix B**. States identified as having an alert system for missing adults represent a convenience sample.

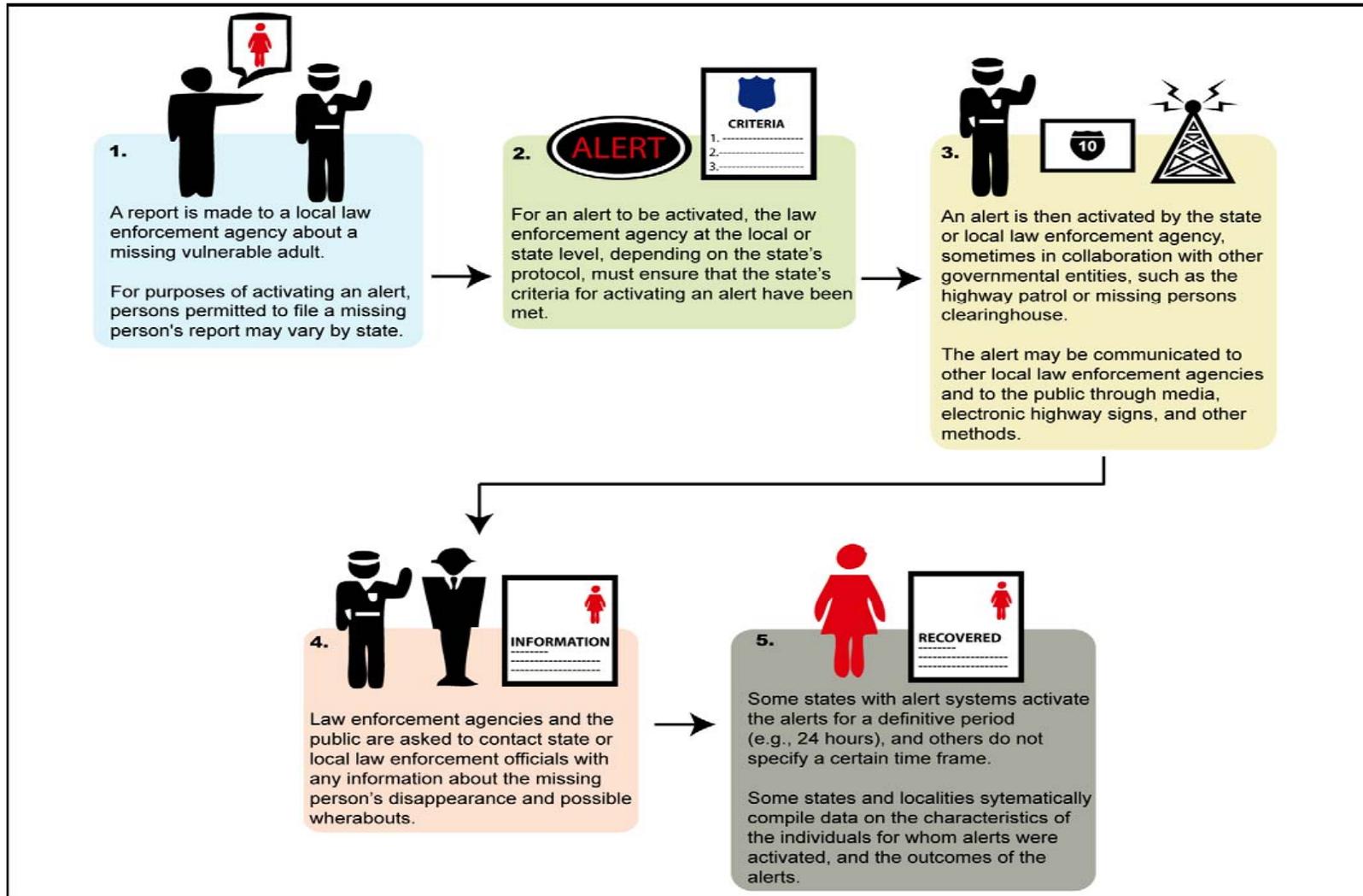
The administration of state alert systems for missing vulnerable adults appears to be a cooperative effort among state and local law enforcement agencies. These alert systems are intended to rapidly disseminate information to other law enforcement agencies and the public through various media outlets (e.g., television, radio, print media, lottery terminals, electronic highway signs, trucker alert systems) about a missing person by providing descriptive information about the missing person or vehicle, in the event a missing person is believed to be driving. For some states,

the impetus for legislation to establish the alert system came as a result of public attention surrounding missing person investigations that involved adults with mental or cognitive impairment.

Multiple states reported that they modeled their missing adult alert systems after their state AMBER Alert systems for abducted children. States indicated that while their alert systems for missing adults are similar to their AMBER Alert systems, AMBER alerts were more widely disseminated. Generally, the same state-level agencies administer or are involved in administering both alert systems, and in some cases, the two systems share one budget. Most states reported that training on the use of the alert system for missing adults is provided to state and/or local law enforcement agencies with some states providing education to the public and other stakeholders.

States have defined their target population for their alert systems differently. Some states include age as a factor for activating an alert, such as the population age 65 and older. Other factors include whether the individual has a cognitive, physical, or developmental disability, or a severe mental health impairment. In general, the process for activating an alert begins with the local law enforcement agency taking a missing persons report (see **Figure 2**). In order for an alert to then be activated, entities at the local and state level, depending on the state's protocol, must ensure that the criteria for activating an alert have been met. States may require that certain individuals file a missing persons report in order to activate the alert system. In most states, verification that the individual has a mental or cognitive impairment can be through a family member, caregiver, or guardian.

**Figure 2. Process for Issuing an Alert for Missing Vulnerable Adults**



**Source:** Congressional Research Service.

**Note:** This diagram is a general depiction of the process for activating an alert, and does not represent the exact process in each state.

One difference among states with alert systems is the designated entity responsible for activating the alert. In six states, a lead state agency is responsible for activating alerts at the request of a local law enforcement agency. The remaining five states have localized models for the dissemination of alerts where the local law enforcement agency activates the alerts locally and/or regionally and may seek assistance from the state law enforcement agency to disseminate the alert statewide. In general, the entity responsible for activating an alert will disseminate the missing person's information to other law enforcement agencies and various media outlets to alert the public. When the public is alerted about the missing information, generally information is publicized on how to contact law enforcement with tips or information. Most states have some mechanisms in place for coordinating alerts with other states to recover individuals who were believed to have crossed state lines during their disappearance.

Several states indicated there was no additional cost to implement the alert system or that implementation costs were absorbed by the existing budget for the AMBER alert program or another program. Some states provided data on the actual costs of operating the alert system. Data from these states estimated that the annual cost of operating an alert system was between \$40,000 and \$182,000. However, these estimates exclude costs to local law enforcement agencies or other stakeholders that may be involved in helping to administer the alert system.

Ten out of 11 states reported having used the alert system, the exception being Delaware. Although some states reported no information about the number of alerts that have been activated, states that did report this information reported activating anywhere between one (Rhode Island) and 82 alerts (North Carolina) since implementation of their alert system. However, the number of alerts a state has activated is likely affected by how long the system has been active, the process and criteria for activating the alerts, the state's identified target population for the alert, and whether the system is generally accepted by law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders as a viable tool to assist in the recovery of missing vulnerable adults. Most states were able to provide information about the outcomes of recovery efforts for these missing persons with the majority of states reporting that individuals were found recovered, though almost every state reported at least one individual who was found deceased.

## **Details of State Programs**

States provided varying levels of detail about their alert systems. This section summarizes information provided by state officials, including (1) legal authority; (2) target population; (3) administrative responsibility; (4) training; (5) process for activating alerts; (6) interstate coordination; (7) system costs; (8) use of the system; and (9) outcomes. These attributes are described in tables for each state in **Appendix B**.

### **Legal Authority**

Missing adult alert systems appear to be recent initiatives. Among the 11 states CRS identified, two states implemented their alert systems for missing adults in 2006, four states implemented alert systems in 2007, and five states implemented them in 2008. States that adopted these alert systems may have been more likely to be located near states that also have an alert system. In fact, Virginia state officials indicated that their alert system was developed as a result of similar efforts underway in other states. The majority of states with alert systems for missing adults derived their authority to establish the program from enacted law, with two exceptions. In 2006,

Oklahoma created a Silver Alert program through a non-binding resolution adopted by the state House of Representatives. In 2008, Florida's governor signed an executive order to establish the state's Silver Alert Plan.

In some cases, the impetus for legislation to establish the alert system came as a result of public attention surrounding missing person investigations that involved adults with mental or cognitive impairment. For example, Georgia's system was established in 2006 in response to a patient with Alzheimer's disease who went missing from her home in 2004. Ohio indicated that their system was developed in response to several incidents throughout the country, as well as elsewhere in Ohio, that involved missing older individuals or individuals with mental impairment. Other states indicated that the need to focus on the senior population as well as advocacy efforts on behalf of seniors was an important consideration for implementation of an alert system. Florida's executive order states that the senior population is growing and that the state needed to implement a standardized system to aid in the search of seniors who go missing. Colorado's authorizing law (S.B. 06-057) states that the program will aid in the recovery of missing seniors within the first few hours of their disappearance, a critical time frame for those with cognitive impairment.

## **Target Population**

In general, state alert systems for missing adults are targeted at a vulnerable population of adults due to advanced age, cognitive, physical, or developmental disability, or a combination of age and disability. However, states have defined their target populations differently. **Table 2** describes the target populations for state alert systems based on age and disability status. Four states (Colorado, Rhode Island, Texas, and Virginia) have alert systems that exclusively target older adults, defined as either 60 or 65 years of age or older with an "impaired mental condition" or "cognitive impairment." Florida and Ohio target older adults, but also provide conditions for activating alerts on behalf of missing younger adults. The remaining five states (Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Oklahoma) have alert systems that can be activated on behalf of adults of any age.

**Table 2. Target Population for State’s Missing Adult Alert System**

| State                 | Age      | Disability Status                                |
|-----------------------|----------|--|
| Colorado              | 60+      | Verified impaired mental condition               |
| Delaware <sup>a</sup> | 18+      | Disabled   |
|                       | 60+      | None Specified                                   |
| Florida <sup>b</sup>  | 18 to 59 | Irreversible deterioration of mental faculties   |
|                       | 60+      |  |
| Georgia               | 18+      | Developmental disability or cognitive impairment |
| Kentucky              | 18+      | Verified mental or cognitive impairment          |
| North Carolina        | 18+      | Dementia or other cognitive impairment           |
| Ohio                  | 18 to 64 | Mental impairment                                |
|                       | 65+      | None specified                                   |
| Oklahoma <sup>c</sup> | 18+      | Mental or physical disability                    |
| Rhode Island          | 60+      | Impaired mental condition                        |
| Texas                 | 65+      | Diagnosed impaired mental condition              |
| Virginia              | 60+      | Cognitive impairment                             |

**Source:** Congressional Research Service based on correspondence with state officials between September 2008 and March 2009.

- a. Delaware’s alert system targets three categorical groups: (1) missing senior citizens defined as persons age 60 or older; (2) missing persons with a disability; (3) and missing suicidal persons who are described as persons whose statements, actions, or conduct indicate that the person may voluntarily cause or inflict self-harm.
- b. Florida’s alert system targets the senior population age 60 or older; however, under extraordinary circumstances an alert can be activated for a missing person age 18 to 59 with irreversible deterioration of mental faculties.
- c. Although Oklahoma reported that there are no age criteria for activating an alert, state officials indicated their alert system is primarily targeted at missing elderly.

In all states, alert systems for missing adults are activated on behalf of adults who are disabled due to a mental or cognitive impairment. At least three states activate alerts on behalf of persons with physical disabilities or with severe mental health conditions. Oklahoma activates alerts on behalf of adults with physical disabilities. Georgia will activate an alert for an adult with a developmental disability. And in addition to targeting missing seniors and persons with a disability, Delaware’s alert system targets missing suicidal persons. Three states (Georgia, Ohio, and Virginia) provided language defining cognitive or mental impairment (see **Table 3**).

**Table 3. Definitions of Cognitive or Mental Impairment in Selected States**

| State    | Definition of Cognitive or Mental Impairment   |
|----------|--|
| Georgia  | Cognitive impairment refers to diminished conscious intellectual activity (i.e., thinking, reasoning, or remembering).   |
| Ohio     | Mental impairment is defined as a substantial disorder of thought, mood, perception, orientation, or memory that grossly impairs judgment, behavior, or ability to live independently, or provide self-care as certified by a licensed physician, psychiatrist, or psychologist. |
| Virginia | Cognitive impairment refers to Alzheimer’s disease or other forms of dementia. The individual must suffer from cognitive impairment to the extent that he or she is unable to provide care to himself or herself without assistance from a caregiver.                            |

**Source:** Congressional Research Service based on correspondence with state officials between September 2008 and March 2009.

**Notes:** Three of the 11 states provided a definition of cognitive or mental impairment.

Verification of a cognitive impairment or other disability is often included as part of the state’s criteria for activating an alert (see discussion of Criteria for Activating Alert below). Six states (Delaware, Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, and Virginia) indicated that the reporting party attests to the missing person’s condition and that this information is then verified by the investigating officer (no further information was provided about how the officer verifies the information). Other states (Oklahoma, Rhode Island, and Texas) require further documentation, such as prescription medications or medical records, in order to verify an individual’s condition. Texas reported requiring documentation from a medical or mental health provider regarding the missing senior’s condition. To verify an impaired mental condition in Colorado, family members must sign a statement stating that the missing person is mentally impaired. In Georgia verification that the individual has a cognitive impairment or other disability can be made through a family member, caregiver, or guardian, with no further verification by local law enforcement or additional documentation required.

## **Administrative Responsibility**

Administration of a state’s alert system is often a cooperative effort among state and local law enforcement agencies. Statewide agencies in six states (Colorado, Georgia, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Texas) take the lead in administering the program and activate alerts at the request of a local law enforcement agency. For example, in North Carolina, the Center for Missing Persons within the state’s Department of Crime Control and Safety activates alerts.<sup>9</sup> In Texas, the Governor’s Division of Emergency Management activates alerts; however, a local law enforcement agency also has the option of issuing an alert locally or regionally, if they are in area that has a regional alert program for missing seniors. Both Ohio and Texas reported having steering committees that provide guidance to the administering state agencies concerning the alert systems. The committees are comprised of local and state law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders.

<sup>9</sup> Most, if not all, states have clearinghouses that serve as a repository for information about missing persons. These clearinghouses are often operated by the state’s law enforcement agency.

In four other states (Delaware, Kentucky, Oklahoma, and Virginia), the local law enforcement agency takes the lead in administering the program and activates the alert locally or regionally, but can also seek assistance from the state law enforcement agency to disseminate the alert statewide or coordinate the alert with other states, if necessary (see section on Interstate Coordination below). Similarly, local law enforcement agencies in Virginia will administer and activate alerts locally and can make requests to the Virginia State Police to activate an alert regionally or statewide. In Oklahoma, local law enforcement agencies administer and activate alerts but may seek assistance from the state's Department of Public Safety in order to disseminate an alert to multiple law enforcement agencies throughout the state.

Finally, Florida's system of administration is somewhat different from the other states. The state's Silver Alert Plan is administered by the state Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse, within the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE). A Silver Alert is activated when the local law enforcement agency requests assistance from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement for an alert in multiple regions of the state via electronic highway signs. Alerts may be activated by the state only for persons who are believed to be driving and only alert the public through electronic highway signs and the FLDE website. Separately, local law enforcement agencies may activate a Silver Alert locally based on criteria established by the local law enforcement agencies.

### **AMBER Alert Coordination**

The 11 states provided information about coordination between their missing adult alert systems and AMBER Alert systems for abducted children. AMBER Alert systems are voluntary partnerships—between law enforcement agencies, broadcasters, and transportation agencies—to activate messages in a targeted area when a child is abducted and believed to be in grave danger (see **Figure 3**). Generally, states responded that the same state-level agency administers or is involved with both the AMBER alert and missing adult alert systems, and in some cases, the two systems share a budget. For example, Texas indicated that its Silver Alert Network and its AMBER Alert system are administered by the Governor's Division of Emergency Management, but operate as separate programs.<sup>10</sup> Further, multiple states reported that they modeled their alert systems for missing adults after their AMBER Alert systems. States also reported that law enforcement agencies often disseminate the information to the public through various media using the same communication mechanisms.

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<sup>10</sup> Texas also has 17 regional AMBER Alert programs, four of which have incorporated missing senior advisories as part of their operations.

### **Figure 3. Federal Support for AMBER Alert Systems**

AMBER (America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response) Alert systems are state administered. Each state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have implemented these systems statewide. Some states also have developed regional and local AMBER Alert systems. Federal law authorizes, and Congress has appropriated, funding through the Department of Justice (DOJ) to assist local and state law enforcement agencies in developing and carrying out their programs.<sup>11</sup> Each year since FY2003, funding has been appropriated for federal AMBER Alert activities, which is used to provide training and technical assistance to law enforcement officials. The DOJ has also issued guidance that states should reference in activating AMBER Alerts.<sup>12</sup> Many states follow these guidelines, activating an alert only when an abducted child is believed to be in grave danger and enough descriptive information exists about the victim and the abductor for law enforcement to activate an alert. These alerts are sent to the public via television and radio broadcasts and electronic signs, among other methods. The public is asked to be on the lookout for the abducted child and to contact law enforcement officials with any information about the child's whereabouts.

**Source:** Congressional Research Service.

State officials identified two major distinctions between missing adult alert and AMBER alert systems. First, five of the states (Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Kentucky, and Texas) indicated that AMBER Alerts are more widely disseminated than alerts for missing adults. For example, Texas officials indicated that both the missing adult alerts and AMBER Alerts are distributed via the media and on billboards and lottery machines. However, AMBER Alerts in the state are additionally distributed through venues including the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's Secondary Notification System, which notifies numerous stakeholders—law enforcement agencies, public service entities, internet and wireless providers, trucking companies, and others—about the missing child alert.<sup>13</sup>

Second, at least seven of the states (Colorado, Georgia, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia) use emergency alert system (EAS) technology to report AMBER Alerts, and not alerts about missing adults. (Note that the states were not prompted to provide information about the EAS, and the other four states did not.) The EAS sends emergency messages to the public with the cooperation of broadcast radio and television and most cable television stations.<sup>14</sup> The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) is designated by the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) to manage broadcaster involvement in EAS. The FCC currently provides technical standards and support for EAS, rules for its operation, and enforcement within the broadcasting and cable industries. According to the FCC, states and localities are not permitted to use the EAS to broadcast an alert about a missing adult.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> For further information, see CRS Report RL34050, *Missing and Exploited Children: Background, Policies, and Issues*, by Adrienne L. Fernandes.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, *Report to the Congress on AMBER Alert*, July 2005, [http://www.amberalert.gov/newsroom/pdfs/05\\_amber\\_report.pdf](http://www.amberalert.gov/newsroom/pdfs/05_amber_report.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> For further information, see U.S. Department of Justice, *Secondary Distribution of AMBER Alerts*, [http://www.amberalert.gov/secondary\\_distribution.htm](http://www.amberalert.gov/secondary_distribution.htm).

<sup>14</sup> For further discussion, see CRS Report RS21453, *Amber Alert Program Technology*, by Linda K. Moore.

<sup>15</sup> Congressional Research Service correspondence with the FCC in February 2009.

## **Training**

States provided varying levels of detail about the type of training and education law enforcement agencies and the public received about the state's alert system for missing vulnerable adults. Eight of the 11 states (Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Ohio, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Texas, and Virginia) reported that training was provided to state and/or local enforcement agencies. In four of these states, training or educational materials were also provided to the public and other stakeholders. For example, the Colorado Bureau of Investigation provided training or educational materials to law enforcement agencies, the public, media, and the state Alzheimer's Association chapter. Virginia State Police provided training to local law enforcement on the activation criteria and the procedures for activating the alert, while the Attorney General's office provided information to the public about the alert system. Florida state officials reported that funding is currently not available for training, but if funds become available, training on procedures for activating the system will be targeted to law enforcement and transportation officials. Finally, Kentucky and Oklahoma state officials reported that they were uncertain whether local law enforcement agencies received training, and did not provide any further information.

## **Process for Activating an Alert**

There is wide variation among states with respect to the process for activating alerts for vulnerable adults in the 11 states. The following describes the process for activating an alert. This process includes information on: (1) filing an actionable missing persons report; (2) criteria for activating an alert; (3) communication mechanisms for disseminating the alert; (4) target audiences; and (5) duration of the alert.

### **Filing a Missing Persons Report**

In general, the process for activating an alert originates with the local law enforcement agency taking a missing persons report. Seven states (Delaware, Georgia, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia) specified that certain individuals must file a missing persons report in order to activate the state or local alert system. For example, in Georgia a family member or caretaker must file a missing person's report. North Carolina requires a parent, spouse, legal guardian or custodian, or person responsible for the supervision of the missing individual to file the missing person's report. Other states identified medical personnel, long-term care ombudsman, a long-term care facility, cohabitants, and neighbors or close friends among those eligible to file a missing persons report in order to activate an alert. Four states (Colorado, Florida, Kentucky, and Ohio) indicated that any individual can file a missing persons report in order to activate an alert.

### **Criteria for Activating an Alert**

Once the appropriate individual has filed a missing persons report with the local law enforcement agency, the agency must review the report to determine if the state's criteria for activating an alert have been met. In addition to determining whether or not the missing person meets any age or disability criteria for activating an alert system (see section on Target Population above), all states reported additional criteria. Four criteria for activating an alert that are common across the 11 states include (1) the person's status is unknown; (2) the person's disappearance poses a credible threat to his or her health or safety; (3) there is sufficient information to provide information to

law enforcement agencies and/or the public about the missing individual; and (4) the person is domiciled in or a resident of the state in which they went missing. **Table 4** summarizes the presence of these four criteria by state.

**Table 4. Selected Criteria for Activating an Alert**

| State          | Status is Unknown <sup>a</sup> | Threat to Health or Safety <sup>b</sup> | Sufficient Information <sup>c</sup> | Domiciled in or Resident of State <sup>d</sup> |
|----------------|--------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| Colorado       | Yes                            | Yes                                     | —                                   | Yes  |
| Delaware       | Yes                            | Yes                                     | —                                   | Yes  |
| Florida        | Yes                            | Yes                                     | Yes                                 | —  |
| Georgia        | Yes                            | Yes                                     | Yes                                 | —  |
| Kentucky       | —                              | Yes                                     | —                                   | —  |
| North Carolina | Yes                            | —                                       | —                                   | —  |
| Ohio           | Yes                            | Yes                                     | Yes                                 | —  |
| Oklahoma       | —                              | Yes                                     | Yes                                 | —  |
| Rhode Island   | —                              | Yes                                     | Yes                                 | —  |
| Texas          | Yes                            | Yes                                     | Yes                                 | Yes  |
| Virginia       | Yes                            | Yes                                     | —                                   | —  |

**Source:** Congressional Research Service based on correspondence with state officials between September 2008 and March 2009.

**Notes:** Categories based on responses to the question "What are the criteria for issuing an alert?"

- a. States reported the following: the person's whereabouts are unknown; the person is believed to be missing; investigation by local law enforcement has verified or confirmed the person is missing. In Florida, the local law enforcement agency must have activated a local or regional alert and verified vehicle tag information.
- b. States reported either that the person's disappearance poses a credible threat to their safety and health or that the person is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death.
- c. States reported the following: there is sufficient information about the person's disappearance to disseminate to the public; there is enough descriptive information regarding the missing person or his/her vehicle; there is sufficient information to disseminate to the public that could assist in the investigation; or disseminating information to the public or media would assist in locating the person. In Florida, there must be a description of the vehicle and a tag number to display on the electronic highway sign.
- d. States did not furnish a detailed definition of the terms domiciled in or resident of the state.

States with alert systems for missing vulnerable adults have certain criteria for activating an alert that are somewhat similar across the states. Most states reported that a person's whereabouts must be unknown in order for an alert to be activated. In some states, local law enforcement have conducted a missing person's investigation and verified that the person is missing. Almost all states, the exception being North Carolina, indicated that the person's disappearance must either pose a credible threat to his or her health and safety or that the missing person is in immediate danger of serious bodily injury or death. Six of the 11 states reported that the alert may only be activated if there is sufficient information about the person's disappearance. For example, in Texas and Georgia there must be sufficient information to disseminate to the public and in Oklahoma submitting information to the public or media would assist in locating the person. Only a few states require that alerts be activated on behalf of persons who are domiciled or a resident

of the state. In Colorado and Texas, the missing person must have been domiciled in the state. To activate an alert in Delaware, the missing person must be a Delaware resident.

In addition to these four criteria, states may have other criteria that must be met before an alert is activated. For example, Florida only activates statewide alerts on electronic highway signs for those individuals who are missing and believed to be driving a vehicle, thus the state first requires activation of a local or regional alert and a description of a vehicle or tag number. Florida also requires the missing person's information be entered into the Florida Crime Information Center. North Carolina requires the local law enforcement agency to report the incident to the North Carolina Center for Missing Persons. Rhode Island reported that the person must have last been seen in the state in order for an alert to be activated.

### **Mechanisms for Disseminating the Alert**

As discussed above, one difference among states with alert systems is the designated entity responsible for activating the alert. Among the 11 states, six states (Colorado, Georgia, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Texas) have a lead state agency that is responsible for activating alerts at the request of a local law enforcement agency. In the remaining five states (Delaware, Florida, Kentucky, Oklahoma, and Virginia) the local law enforcement agency activates the alert locally or regionally and can seek assistance from the state law enforcement agency to disseminate the alert statewide or to another state, if necessary. For example, in Oklahoma, local law enforcement agencies activate alerts to law enforcement entities via the Oklahoma Law Enforcement Telecommunication System (OLETS), a communication system operated by the state's Department of Public Safety, which facilitates communication about missing adult alerts to law enforcement agencies throughout the state.

In general, the entity responsible for activating the alert will disseminate descriptive information about the missing person to other law enforcement entities and the public through agreements with designated media and other information outlets. States identified television, radio, newsprint, lottery terminals, electronic highway signs, and trucker alert systems among those entities involved in further disseminating information about the missing person. States reported that this descriptive information may be disseminated electronically by e-mail or by facsimile. Some states will use the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS) or a similar state-named system (e.g., OLETS) to disseminate information about the missing person, this may be through a "be on the lookout" message to law enforcement agencies.<sup>16</sup> Multiple states automatically authorize the use of electronic highway signs for dissemination of the alert, while other states use electronic highway signs on a case-by-case basis. Two states, Florida and North Carolina, reported the ability to use a reverse 911 system that leaves a recorded telephone message with information about the missing person and whom to contact with information.

### **Target Audiences**

Once an alert has been activated and information has been disseminated to local law enforcement and the media, local law enforcement agencies in all states are asked to "be on the lookout" for

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<sup>16</sup> NLETS is an international computer-based message switching system that links together state, local, and federal law enforcement and justice agencies for the purpose of exchanging information. For further information, see International Justice and Public Safety Information Sharing Network, *NLETS: The International Justice & Public Safety Network*, <http://www.nlets.org/WhoWeAre.aspx>.

the missing person and media outlets are encouraged, but not required, to provide the public with information on the missing person and their disappearance. States that post information in lottery terminals and on electronic highway signs provide information about the missing person to the public through these forms of communication. When information is disseminated to the public, information on how to contact law enforcement with tips or information is also included. States may include one or more contact numbers for the public to utilize such as the telephone number for the local law enforcement agency directing the search or the state alert system's coordinating office, emergency telephone systems such as 911 or 511, or the telephone number for state highway patrol.

### **Duration of the Alert**

Some states impose certain conditions related to the timing and duration of an alert that has been activated, while others do not. In general, states do not have a waiting period prior to the activation of an alert. One state, Texas, requires that the activation of an alert be implemented within 72 hours of the person's disappearance. Five states (Florida, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia) reported certain time constraints regarding the duration of active alerts. Oklahoma and Texas activate alerts for up to 24 hours; however, the requesting agency in Texas has the option to ask for an extension. In addition, time durations could also differ if a law enforcement agency decided to issue an alert locally or through an existing regional program. In Virginia, alerts can be activated for up to 12 hours, while Ohio evaluates the need for the alert after 48 hours and each 24 hours thereafter. The electronic highway signs in Florida are activated for six hours; however, information on the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's (FDLE) web-site can be posted as long as the person is missing. The remaining six states (Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Rhode Island) do not impose a time limit for the activation of alerts, but may give various stakeholders discretion regarding the duration of the alert. In Rhode Island and Delaware, the media outlets can determine how long they will broadcast the alert. Georgia will discontinue the alert at the family's discretion. North Carolina does not impose a time period for activation of the alert, but reported that alert information on electronic highway signs is activated for up to 12 hours.

### **Interstate Coordination**

The 11 states were asked about whether they coordinated with other states to recover individuals who are believed to have crossed state lines during their disappearance. Most of the states have some mechanisms in place for coordinating with other states. Notably, most also share a border with at least one other state with an alert system.

If needed, officials said they would send information about a missing adult from their state through national or interstate law enforcement communication systems. Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Texas, and Virginia reported that they would use NLETS. Delaware would disseminate information about a missing resident to fusion centers in nearby states, which are comprised of relevant law enforcement agencies in a particular jurisdiction that share information.<sup>17</sup> Ohio officials said that information would be conveyed to other states through "law enforcement computer systems," but did not specify which systems. Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina

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<sup>17</sup> For further information, see CRS Report RL34070, *Fusion Centers: Issues and Options for Congress*, by John Rollins.

indicated that their missing persons clearinghouses could coordinate with clearinghouses in other states. Rhode Island reported that it would coordinate with the other state's state law enforcement agency. Officials in a few of the states noted possible constraints in reporting residents missing, since most other states do not appear to have alert systems. Some officials suggested that states without the systems could ask law enforcement officials to "be on the lookout" for a missing individual.

At least four states have requested other states (all of which are featured in the report) to activate alerts on behalf of residents (though this information was provided only by the states that were asked to activate the alert). Nearly all states, with the exception of Texas, reported that an alert could be activated on behalf of a missing individual from another state. Texas officials said that a missing senior who came from another state would not meet one of the alert criteria – that the individual is domiciled in Texas, meaning that he or she is a full-time resident of the state. However, a local law enforcement agency could coordinate a public notification response within the affected areas for an individual not domiciled in the state, if permitted by the local authorities, without requesting assistance from the state alert network. For instance, a local law enforcement agency could enlist the assistance of media, public agencies, and other local entities. Further, officials in at least four regions could seek assistance from regional alert networks which have been established to recover missing adults. As discussed above, Colorado and Delaware include residency as part of their alert criteria; nonetheless, these states indicated that an alert could be issued on behalf of an individual who is not a resident.

Finally, nearly all states require that reports of missing persons be entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File.<sup>18</sup> The NCIC is used by law enforcement agencies in all states to inquire about criminal and missing person cases. For instance, if a law enforcement officer comes across a missing individual, the officer can search the NCIC database for any information about the individual that may have been entered by a law enforcement agency in that state or another state.

## **System Costs**

All states provided data about costs related to state-level agencies that carry out (or assist in carrying out) alerts for missing adults. For states that provided detailed information, cost estimates ranged from about \$40,000 to \$182,000 to operate the alert systems annually. No states provided information about any costs to local law enforcement agencies or other stakeholders that may be involved in helping to administer the alert system.

Colorado and Florida specified that the costs for implementing and administering the missing adult alert systems have been absorbed, in part, by the budget for the AMBER Alert system. Colorado additionally reported that there are ongoing costs for personnel and maintenance of both systems, but these costs were not specified. Florida reported that the administrative costs for both the AMBER and missing adult alerts include the salaries of on-call missing adult clearinghouse staff. The approximate cost is \$40,000 per fiscal year.

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<sup>18</sup> The NCIC is a federal computerized index with data on crimes and locator files for missing and unidentified persons, operated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Colorado was the only state that suggested that reporting missing adults to the NCIC is not mandatory. The state reported that the Colorado Bureau of Investigation requests, and does not appear to require, that law enforcement agencies enter information about a missing individual.

Georgia, North Carolina, and Ohio explained that funds are not set aside specifically for their adult alert systems, but that the cost of administration is absorbed by the budgets of the agencies that administer the alerts. North Carolina estimated that the cost to the missing person's clearinghouse, the agency that administers the alert, is \$125,000 annually. Officials in Ohio reported that an upgrade to their AMBER Alert and missing person alert technology will cost approximately \$100,000 at some future point.

Virginia and Texas provided more detailed cost information. Texas reported costs associated with the Governor's Division of Emergency Management (GDEM) and the Texas Missing Persons Clearinghouse, which jointly administer the alert system (and does not include costs to other agencies). The approximate cost to the GDEM for coordinating the program with its existing AMBER Alert and Blue Alert<sup>19</sup> programs and providing training on these programs was approximately \$92,000, which excludes initial operating costs. The GDEM has a coordinator to administer the alert system, along with the state's other alert systems. This position, along with ongoing costs for training and coordination activities are funded in state FY2009 through a grant (\$47,280) and internal operating expenses for the GDEM (\$45,000). The Missing Persons Clearinghouse, which provides investigative support to the GDEM, has two analysts dedicated to the alert system. Actual expenses, including salaries, operations, and travel for state FY2008, were approximately \$90,000. In total, the approximate cost annually to Texas for the alert system is about \$182,000.

Virginia officials provided cost data for the state police to activate regional or statewide alerts (local alerts are activated by local law enforcement agencies). In state FY2007, the cost was \$30,000 for implementing the program, and an additional \$30,000 for staff time and technology. The estimated ongoing costs are \$25,000 annually. The ongoing costs are for staff time to administer the system, including handling and processing requests for the alert, activating the alert, assessing the alert after it has been activated, posting and removing information to the Virginia State Police Department missing persons website, and creating posters. According to state officials, the state will need about \$50,000 to implement technology for the alert system and \$45,000 annually for training, outreach, and staff support.

Delaware, Rhode Island, and Oklahoma reported that no costs for the states are associated with the alert system. This appears to be, in part, because the alerts in Delaware and Oklahoma are administered and activated primarily by local law enforcement agencies, with some assistance from the state police or department of public safety. Kentucky did not provide any funding information, which also may be due to the fact that alerts are locally managed.

## **Use of the System**

Nearly all states, with the exception of Delaware, reported that alerts have been activated. Kentucky and Oklahoma do not keep records of alerts activated by local law enforcement agencies, but estimated that no more than 10 alerts have been activated in each state. The other eight reporting states provided the number of alerts activated, even if only at the state level, and most provided information about the outcomes of missing individuals. States reported activating between one (Rhode Island) and 82 alerts (North Carolina) as of the time they were surveyed. As

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<sup>19</sup> Blue Alerts provide notification about offenders who have harmed law enforcement officials.

previously mentioned, the number of alerts is likely affected by when the systems were implemented, the size of the state's population, and criteria for activating the alerts.

## **Outcomes**

Most states provided some information about the circumstances around a missing person's disappearance and their recovery. All states reported that the majority of the individuals were found alive, though at least one individual was found deceased in nearly every state, except Rhode Island. Five states (Florida, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas,<sup>20</sup> and Virginia) indicated how the missing individuals were traveling. Florida's missing adult alert is activated only for individuals who are driving; therefore, all 32 (100%) missing individuals for whom alerts were activated were driving. In North Carolina, of the 82 alerts activated, 43 (52.4%) were on behalf of individuals who were driving and 39 (47.6%) had wandered away. Of those 39 individuals, three took a plane to another state, two were last seen on bikes, one took a bus to another state, and one took a taxi. Of the 14 individuals for whom alerts were activated in Ohio, nine (64.3%) of the individuals were driving. In Texas, of 71 alerts activated, 58 (81.7%) of the individuals were driving and 13 (18.3%) individuals wandered from their home or another location. Of the seven individuals for whom alerts were activated in Virginia, one (14.3%) was believed to have been driving. Two states (Florida and Georgia) provided information about where the missing individuals were found. Of the seven individuals in Florida who were recovered as a result of the alert system, six were located a few counties away from their home county. In Georgia, of the 78 alerts for individuals who were found, one was located in another state with family and the other 77 were located within their home city or county.

Six states (Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Texas, and Virginia) were able to report whether the alerts aided in the recovery of missing individuals.<sup>21</sup> Half of those states reported that the alert systems have been instrumental in recovering missing adults while the other states reported that the alerts did not help in recovery efforts. Florida officials stated that seven of 32 individuals (21.9%) were recovered based on tips provided by drivers who had seen electronic messages on the highway about the missing adults. According to officials in Georgia, the alert aided in the recovery of all individuals who were recovered alive (which was all but one individual). In Texas, of the 77 alerts activated, they contributed to the recovery of 21 senior citizens (27.3%). Rhode Island has activated one alert, and according to state officials, the alert did not assist in the individual's recovery. Officials in North Carolina reported that the alerts did not directly assist in the recovery of the missing individuals; however, family members of the missing individuals and the law enforcement agencies that recommended the alert be activated are pleased with the design of the program. Finally, Virginia officials reported that the alert did not assist in the recovery of the seven individuals who went missing and for whom alerts were activated.

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<sup>20</sup> Although not requested, Texas also reported that no alerts were found to have been falsely reported.

<sup>21</sup> Officials in North Carolina did not say whether the alerts aided in the recovery of the missing person, but said that at minimum, the alerts brought attention to the individual.

## **Discussion**

This report describes the detailed findings of 11 states with active alert systems for missing adults. Findings from this study suggest that there is an existing patchwork of state alert systems with wide variation in target populations and administrative procedures for activating alerts. These systems are similar to alert systems for abducted children (AMBER Alerts), but target adults who are vulnerable to going missing due to cognitive or mental impairment, developmental or physical disabilities, and certain mental health conditions. Although the systems in each state vary, in all states either local or state law enforcement agencies are responsible for activating the alerts. Often these law enforcement agencies involve multiple stakeholders in the process of recovering those who go missing, including other local law enforcement agencies, the state highway patrol, the public through various media outlets, and the state's missing persons clearinghouse.

As the nation prepares for an aging population and likely increase in the number of individuals living in the community with cognitive impairment or other forms of disability, Congress may want to consider whether there is a role for the federal government in further developing state alert systems. For example, the federal government could provide funding to facilitate the expansion of alert systems to additional states. Similar to the federal role for state AMBER Alert programs, the federal government could assist in developing minimum guidelines for a missing adult alert system as well as provide states with technical support and training. Establishing a uniform network of state alert systems in every state could assist states and localities, in the event that a person is believed to be missing, with any necessary coordination across state lines. Further, the federal government could also play a role in assisting states with developing their systems so that data are more uniformly collected about the use and efficacy of state alert systems. Finally, the federal government could disseminate information about best practices for states looking to implement alert systems.

The following sections discuss various issues for Congress in considering the role of the federal government, if any, in state alert systems for vulnerable missing adults. These issues are: autonomy and individual rights; creating a uniform identity; training; coordination across states; efficacy of alerts; use of alerts; and support to family caregivers.

### **Autonomy and Individual Rights**

The use of any alert system for missing adults may challenge the legal rights of an individual, in this case an adult, who may choose to go missing. Unlike the AMBER Alert program which was established to alert law enforcement and the public when a child is missing and criminal activity may be involved, it is not a crime for an adult to wander from home or purposely go missing. To attempt to balance the rights of an individual with the concerns of family members or caregivers, states with alert systems have established specific criteria that must be met in order to activate a missing adult alert. In general, states have targeted missing individuals who are particularly vulnerable due to a credible threat to the individual's health and safety. Also, as previously mentioned, timing can be a critical factor in locating individuals with cognitive or mental impairment who wander either on foot or in a vehicle and may be without basic provisions or medicine, or exposed to the elements for extended periods. Concerns about violating an individual's privacy with respect to filing a missing person's report appear to outweigh the perceived benefits among various stakeholders including family members, law enforcement officials, and policymakers. While states were not explicitly asked for information about whether

reports of missing persons were credible, state officials in one state, Texas, indicated that all alerts activated by the state were based on legitimate reports of missing vulnerable seniors. In general, states felt the criteria they had established contained appropriate safeguards to ensure that missing persons were in fact missing due to a cognitive impairment or some other disabling condition.

## **Creating a Uniform Identity**

The popularity of state AMBER Alert systems appears to provide a platform for states to develop their missing adult alerts. Naming the missing adult alert system as a Senior, Silver, or Gold Alert may be an attempt by states to create a “brand” identity for the system similar to that of state AMBER Alerts. For example, three states use the word “Senior” in the title of their system: Colorado’s Missing Senior Citizen Alert Program; Rhode Island’s Missing Senior Citizen Alert Program; and Virginia’s Senior Alert System. Another four states refer to their alert systems as a “Silver Alert,” which is likely a reference to an older person (i.e., someone with grey or silver hair). However, the senior or silver reference may also be misleading in that it may not accurately describe the target population for these alert systems. In some states with a “Silver Alert” or “Senior Alert” system, alerts can also be activated on behalf of missing persons aged 18 to 59. Other states refer to their alert systems as Gold or Golden Alert or Missing Adult Alert. These named programs tend not to specify age criteria for activating an alert. The use of a name to create a specific brand identity for the alert system could also serve to distinguish the alert system from AMBER Alerts or other types of alerts. Further, creating a brand identity could be done to prompt law enforcement entities and the public to respond to the alert in a specific way that may be different from the response for other types of alerts. Similar to AMBER Alert, the federal government may want to consider a uniform name or identity for state alert systems for missing vulnerable adults to assist states in implementing alert systems, coordinating alerts across states, and educating various stakeholders about the system.

## **Training**

Most states with alert systems reported that law enforcement agencies have been trained on the procedures for activating missing adult alerts in their respective states. However, in some states where a local law enforcement agency activates the alert, it was not known whether there was uniform training at the local level. In addition, states were not asked the extent to which these alert systems train law enforcement and other public safety officials in techniques to assist in recovering persons with cognitive or mental impairments. Some advocates argue that specific training on Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia can be effective in both identifying and recovering these individuals in the event they go missing.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, persons who wander away from home may easily attract the attention of law enforcement through auto accidents or erratic driving, indecent exposure, shoplifting, and other deviant behavior. Often these individuals can not think, act, or communicate in a way that can assist them. However, proper training in identifying and communicating with an individual who has a mental or cognitive impairment can help to ensure that these individuals are returned safely to their home. Pending legislation (H.R. 632 and S. 557) to assist states develop and coordinate missing adult alert systems would include a training component where a federal coordinator, working in collaboration with the

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<sup>22</sup> Ashlen Anderson, “Public Policy Responses to Wandering Behavior,” *Issue Kit*, Alzheimer’s Association, September 2006, p. 2.

Administration on Aging and the Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert program, would provide training opportunities and educational resources to law enforcement and other entities.

## **Coordination Across States**

Some states with alert systems reported that they might have difficulty coordinating with another state that lacks a similar system. States may also have challenges coordinating with states that have alert systems with different criteria for activating an alert. Although state and local governments have taken the lead in implementing alert systems, the federal government could play a role in coordinating efforts when a missing individual is believed to have crossed state lines as well as assist in the development of formal agreements or protocols for the use of interstate alerts.

The federal government could model any policies to coordinate across state lines on the AMBER Alert program, which provides training and technical assistance to states on a number of issues related to abducted children. This training addresses how jurisdictions, including those in different states, can work together to recover children who are abducted, among other topics. Through conference and training exercises, state AMBER Alert coordinators, state and local law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders have opportunities to meet and exchange ideas, which may further facilitate coordination. In addition, the DOJ has issued recommended guidelines for activating AMBER Alerts to encourage states and localities to adopt similar alert criteria. Existing legislation (H.R. 632 and S. 557) that would create a similar network of state missing adult alert systems seeks to provide greater coordination between states for missing adult cases by establishing a Silver Alert Coordinator position at the DOJ. The purpose of the position is to help establish voluntary guidelines for states in developing Silver Alert plans that will promote compatible and integrated Silver Alert systems throughout the United States.

## **Effectiveness of Alerts**

It is not clear how effective state alert systems are in recovering missing vulnerable adults. At least a few of the states with alert systems did not maintain detailed outcomes data on the alerts that had been activated to date, and many could not report whether the alert was useful. In states where alerts are activated at the local level, aggregating data on the outcomes of these alerts may be more complicated than in states that have a designated agency at the state level that activates alerts. Furthermore, tracking outcomes from alerts is an administrative task that may require additional technology and resources, which states may not have the funding to support. Further, only three (Florida, Georgia, and Texas) of six states that reported whether the alerts were effective could say for certain that the reports aided in the recovery in the missing individual. For Georgia, the alert aided in all cases, while in Florida and Texas the alerts aided in fewer than 30% of all cases. The federal government could play a role in developing guidelines for data collection and outcomes measures as well as assisting states with developing technology and infrastructure necessary for reporting on the use and effectiveness of their alert systems.

## Use of Alerts

Some states expressed that overuse of alerts for vulnerable adults could desensitize the public to alerts in general, including AMBER Alerts.<sup>23</sup> State officials in Oklahoma and Virginia, both of which administer missing adult alert systems locally with some state-level involvement, commented that the Emergency Alert System, which may be used for AMBER Alerts, should not be used for missing adult alerts so that the public does not become desensitized to AMBER Alerts (note that the FCC does not allow the system to be used for purposes related to missing persons except for abducted children). Officials in Virginia further stated that the EAS is best for missing children because they are more likely to have been removed from their communities, whereas missing vulnerable adults tend to wander on foot in close proximity to the place they were last seen. This is consistent with the Alzheimer's Association's statement that most wandering adults with the disease are found within one mile of their home.<sup>24</sup> State officials concerned about using scarce law enforcement resources to recover missing vulnerable adults raised the issue of whether activating the alert system was the best use of these resources. Some states have expressed concern as to whether the alert systems should be used only in select circumstances and/or for select populations. In response to these concerns, states may choose to activate alerts regionally or statewide only in the case where an individual is believed to be driving, given that they can readily travel outside of their community.

## Support to Family Caregivers

Alert systems for vulnerable adults can assist local and state law enforcement agencies in the recovery of a missing adult; however, they often fail to address the circumstances that led to the person's disappearance. As previously mentioned, it is not uncommon for people with cognitive impairment resulting from Alzheimer's disease to wander away from home and become lost. According to the Alzheimer's Association, six out of ten people with Alzheimer's disease will wander during the course of the disease, sometimes frequently.<sup>25</sup> Some state and local law enforcement agencies have integrated the Alzheimer's Association's Safe Return program into their routines. Other law enforcement agencies are working in their communities to provide electronic monitoring services for certain individuals who are susceptible to going missing close to home and may not be visible to the public.<sup>26</sup> Missing alert systems for vulnerable adults could benefit from developing formal linkages with these programs, where they exist, and assist with disseminating information to the community about accessing these programs. Proposed legislation would authorize funding for grants to states and local governments to carry out

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<sup>23</sup>As noted by the Alzheimer's Association, repeated alerts for those that are prone to going missing could have the effect of desensitizing the public to any alerts—for abducted children and/or vulnerable adults. Ashlen Anderson, "Public Policy Responses to Wandering Behavior," *Issue Kit*, Alzheimer's Association, September 2006, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p.1.

<sup>26</sup>This technology was developed by Project Lifesaver International, a nonprofit organization that administers the Project Lifesaver program. Project Lifesaver uses a personalized wristband that emits a signal to track individuals prone to going missing, such as those with Alzheimer's disease and children with cognitive disabilities. The wristband is worn by the client continuously. When family members or caregivers report to the designated Project Lifesaver agency—typically a local law enforcement or first responder agency—that the client is missing, a local search and rescue team responds to the wanderer's area to search using a mobile locator tracking system.

programs that provide electronic monitoring services to elderly individuals that could assist in their recovery if they go missing.<sup>27</sup>

In the event that a state activates an alert for a missing vulnerable person and that individual is recovered alive, state alert systems may benefit from engaging community social services agencies or, in the case the individual is a senior, partnering with state units on aging and local area agencies on aging, funded under the Older Americans Act. These agencies or organizations could conduct caregiver assessments with the aim of preventing future wandering behavior. The caregiver assessment process could identify and link appropriate services and support for family caregivers such as back-up support, in cases of emergency, counseling, or respite care. Many of these services are already available to caregivers through federal funding that supports the National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP).<sup>28</sup> Caregiver assessments would also elicit information about the caregiver's health, willingness to provide care, and training and support needs. Through the assessment process family caregivers could learn about the resources available to them in their communities including the Alzheimer's Association's Safe Return Program or Project Lifesaver International, Inc., which has developed a program to track missing vulnerable adults through electronic technology.

## Conclusion

State alert systems for missing vulnerable adults appear to be an emerging trend, with alert systems developed in at least 11 states. As a result, Congress is considering legislation that would provide the federal government with a role in assisting states to develop these systems nationwide. Most states with existing alert systems have modeled their program after the AMBER Alert program. All state systems target persons with cognitive or mental impairments; however, there is wide variation in the specific target population and procedures for activating alerts. While states will continue to be faced with the challenge of balancing individual rights with efforts that can assist the most vulnerable of residents, states may benefit from federal efforts that could facilitate interstate coordination for missing persons believed to have crossed state lines. In addition, federal efforts could model the federal role in developing state AMBER Alerts systems by providing states with minimum guidelines, technical assistance, and training. State alert systems may also benefit from coordinating with existing federal, state, and local initiatives that can assist in locating vulnerable adults that go missing. In the event that the alert system assists in recovering a missing vulnerable adult, family caregivers may benefit from referral to the Safe Return Program, funded in part by federal appropriations under the Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert grant, or Project Lifesaver International, Inc. These alert systems could also educate and assess family caregivers about the needs of vulnerable adults and provide linkages to available community resources in an effort to prevent future wandering behavior.

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<sup>27</sup> S. 557 also authorizes the DOJ, after consulting with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), to create the Sammy Kirk Voluntary Electronic Monitoring Program. The program would award grants to state and local governments to carry out programs that provide electronic monitoring services to elderly individuals that would assist in their recovery if they go missing. The legislation proposes to fund the program \$2 million for each of FY2010 through FY2014 for these services. Note that the companion legislation, H.R. 632, does not contain provisions related to electronic monitoring.

<sup>28</sup> For further information on federal programs that can assist family caregivers, see CRS Report RL34123, *Family Caregiving to the Older Population: Background, Federal Programs, and Issues for Congress*, by Kirsten J. Colello.

## Appendix A. Questions for State Officials

**Table A-1. Questions on Alert Systems for Missing Adults Submitted to State Officials**

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| Questions by Category   |
|---|
| <i>A. Authorizing Legislation and Statutory Citation</i>  |
| 1. What legislation authorized the alert system? What is the statutory citation, if any?  |
| <i>B. Reason for Developing Alert System</i>  |
| 1. What was the impetus for developing an alert system for missing adults (i.e., media attention, governor's direction, legislative action, other)?   |
| <i>C. Administration of the Alert System</i>  |
| 1. Name the entity or entities that have the responsibility for administering the missing adult alert system (e.g., state police, state department of safety, missing person's clearinghouse, other).   |
| <i>D. Target Population</i>   |
| 1. Who is the target population for the missing adult alert system (e.g., age, disability type, other)?   |
| <i>E. Process for Activating an Alert</i>   |
| 1. Which entities may take a report of a missing person (e.g., law enforcement (specify whom), missing person clearinghouse, other)? Is there a standard intake form? If so, can you provide a copy of this form?   |
| 2. Which individual is authorized to make the report of the missing individual (e.g., spouses, parents, caretakers, legal guardians)?   |
| 3. What are the criteria for issuing an alert?  |
| 4. Which entity issues the alert?   |
| 5. If the alert criteria are met, is the entity required to issue the alert (mandatory) or is issuing the alert at the discretion of that entity (voluntary)?   |
| 6. Is there a waiting period requirement in order to issue an alert?  |
| 7. To whom is the alert issued (e.g., law enforcement, media, state government agencies, and/or the public, etc.) and how are these alerts issued?  |
| 8. Does the entity coordinate with the state department of transportation about placing information about the alert on an electronic sign on the highway?   |
| 9. What are law enforcement, media, and/or the public expected to do when they receive the alert? For example, are law enforcement agencies in a particular area asked to search for the missing individual and/or lookout for a car that the individual is believed to be driving? |
| 10. If the alert is issued to the public, how can they inform appropriate officials that the missing individual has been located?   |
| 11. For how long may an alert be issued?  |
| <i>F. Association with AMBER Alert</i>  |
| The U.S. Congress is interested in understanding the relationship between the missing adult alert system and the state's AMBER Alert system for missing children. Please describe the relationship, if any, between these two alert systems, including:                             |
| 1. Are both alert systems administered by the same agency?  |
| 2. Do both types of alerts use the same process described above, including the same technology? If not, how is the alert system for missing adults different than the AMBER Alert system?   |

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**Questions by Category**

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*G. Interstate Coordination*

The U.S. Congress is interested in learning about how your state's missing adult alert system coordinates alerts with other states when a person is believed to have crossed state lines. Please describe the procedures, if any, for coordinating alerts across state lines:

1. Does your state have a process for informing other states that a missing adult for whom an alert has been issued in your state may be located in another state? If so, please describe this process (include information such as the number of times the state has requested an alert to be issued, states coordinated with, circumstances for issuing the alert, outcomes of these missing persons cases)?
  2. Can your state issue an alert on behalf of a missing adult who is a resident of another state, but believed to be in your state? If so, please describe this process (include information such as the number of times an alert has been issued in your state on behalf of another state, states coordinated with, circumstances for issuing the alert, outcomes of these missing persons cases)?
- 

*H. Program Costs*

1. What were the costs, if any, associated with implementing the alert system? Please provide a dollar value for the most recent fiscal year available. Specify whether the fiscal year is federal (i.e., October 1 through September 30) or state (indicate the start and end dates for the state fiscal year).
  2. What are the costs associated with ongoing administration of the alert system? Please provide a dollar value for the most recent fiscal year available.
  3. If possible, please specify what the ongoing administrative costs are associated with (e.g., technology, labor, other)? Please provide a dollar value for each.
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*I. Use of Alert System*

The U.S. Congress is also interested in the extent to which the missing adult alert systems have been utilized and the extent to which data is available on outcomes from use of the system.

1. In which month and year was the alert system implemented?
  2. How many alerts have been issued since the system was started and through the most recent date available?
  3. How many were recovered alive? Deceased?
  4. In how many cases did an alert aid in the recovery of an individual, regardless of whether the person was recovered alive or deceased?
  5. In cases where the individual was recovered due to the alert, which entity located that individual? How far was the individual from his/her residence or last known location?
  6. In how many cases was the missing individual believed to have: Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia? Other mental impairments? If the missing individuals did not have Alzheimer's disease/dementia or mental impairments, what was the reason they were believed to be vulnerable?
  7. In how many cases was the missing individual believed to be driving?
- 

*J. Other*

1. Does the state require law enforcement agencies to add information about missing adults (for whom an alert has been issued) to the FBI National Crime Information System's Missing Person File or to any state missing persons database?
  2. Does the state provide education and training to law enforcement or other stakeholders (e.g., radio and TV broadcasters, department of transportation officials, etc.) about the alert system? If so, which entity provides this training, and for whom is the training provided? What type of training is provided?
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**Source:** Prepared by the Congressional Research Service.

## Appendix B. Detailed Tables of State Programs

**Table B-I. Colorado:Alert System for Missing Adults**  
 State refers to system as “Colorado Missing Senior Citizen Alert Program”

| Topics Inquired About   | Response by State  |
|---|--|
| Authorizing Legislation and Purpose for Developing Alert System | In 2006, Governor Bill Owens signed S.B. 06-057 establishing a missing alert program for missing senior citizens and missing persons with developmental disabilities system, and requiring the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to implement the program (see Section 24-33.5-415.8 of the Colorado Revised Statutes). The CBI subsequently implemented a program for missing senior citizens, known as the “Missing Senior Citizen Alert Program.” <sup>a</sup> The impetus for developing the program, as specified in S.B. 06-507, is that recovering missing seniors within the first few hours of their disappearance is vital, and the program can aid in recovering these individuals. The program was implemented in April 2006.   |
| Administration  | The Missing Senior Citizen Alert Program is administered by the CBI, in coordination with local law enforcement agencies. The alert is issued by the CBI at the request of a local law enforcement agency.   |
| Training on and/or Education About the Alert System             | The CBI offers training and disseminates information about the system through brochures and the CBI website. Entities that receive the training include public, media, law enforcement, and the Alzheimer’s Association, among other entities.   |
| Association with AMBER Alert                                    | Both the AMBER Alert system and Silver Alert system are administered by the same agency, the CBI. The same process is used to issue alerts on behalf of abducted children and missing adults, except that an AMBER Alert is distributed more widely and it is broadcast through the Emergency Alert System (EAS).  |
| Target Population   | The target population is missing senior citizens with a verified impaired mental condition.  |
| Reporting the Missing Person                                    | Any individual may file a missing person report for the missing senior. Upon notice that a senior citizen is missing, local law enforcement agencies are required to verify that the senior citizen is missing and that he or she has an impaired mental condition. To verify an impaired mental condition, a family member (or close friend, caregiver, doctor, or medical facility) must sign a statement stating that the missing person is mentally impaired. Upon receiving a request made by a local law enforcement agency, the CBI first must verify information about the identity of the law enforcement agency, confirm that the law enforcement agency has received the signed statement that the missing senior has an impaired mental condition, and verify that the information meets the definition of “missing senior citizen” (see below). The alert may then be issued. CBI corresponds with the requesting law enforcement agency to determine what steps the agency has taken to further their investigation. The local law enforcement agency has discretion in determining whether to request the CBI to issue the alert. |
| Information About Missing Persons Submitted to Databases        | The CBI requests that law enforcement agencies enter information into the federal National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File if the information has not already been entered.  |
| Criteria for Issuing Alert                                      | The following definition of a missing senior citizen must be met to activate an alert. A missing senior citizen is a person: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- whose whereabouts are unknown;</li> <li>- whose domicile is in Colorado;</li> <li>- who is 60 years of age or older;</li> <li>- who has a verified impaired mental condition; and</li> <li>- whose disappearance poses a credible threat to the safety and health of the person, as determined by local law enforcement.</li> </ul>  |

| Topics Inquired About                              | Response by State  |
|--|--|
| Disseminating Alert                                | The alert is issued to law enforcement agencies and the public through the media, including radio stations, television stations, and other media outlets. CBI advises that the media may include information about the missing senior's name, last known location, mode of transportation, events leading to the senior's disappearance, and his or her health and safety. Highway signs are used to display information only if the missing person is believed to be driving a vehicle. Law enforcement agencies are notified via National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS) and a "be on the lookout" alert. |
| Timing of Alert                                    | There is no waiting period for issuing an alert. An alert remains active until the individual is located. The CBI is responsible for cancelling the alert, and will notify media outlets if the missing senior has been found or at the end of the broadcasted notification period.  |
| Expected Response by Law Enforcement and/or Public | The public is asked to call 911 or local law enforcement with information. Law enforcement agencies contact the CBI with information.  |
| Interstate Coordination                            | The CBI notifies law enforcement in surrounding states through NLETS. If the CBI had reason to believe the missing individual traveled to another state, the agency would contact the other state's law enforcement agency. If a missing individual from another state went missing in Colorado and the circumstances of their disappearance meet the alert criteria, the CBI would issue the alert.   |
| System Costs                                       | The implementation costs were absorbed by resources for the AMBER Alert system. There are ongoing costs associated with personnel and maintenance of the notification systems.   |
| Use of Alert System                                | From approximately April 2006 through January 2009, the CBI issued eight alerts.   |
| Outcomes   | Of the eight individuals for whom alerts were issued, all were recovered alive. In all cases, the individual had an impaired mental condition based on the state's criteria for issuing an alert.  |

**Source:** Congressional Research Service based on correspondence with state officials in January 2009 and review of Section 24-33.5-415.8 of the Colorado Revised Statutes and accompanying rules and regulations.

- a. The state did not provide information about any alert program for persons with developmental disabilities.

**Table B-2. Delaware:Alert System for Missing Adults**

State refers to system as “Gold Alert Program”

| Topics Inquired About   | Response by State   |
|---|---|
| Authorizing Legislation and Purpose for Developing Alert System | In 2008, Governor Ruth Ann Minner signed S.B.I 227 establishing the Delaware Gold Alert Program (see Sections 8580-8583 of the Delaware Code). The impetus for developing the program was based on interest by members of the legislature. The program was implemented in July 2008.  |
| Administration  | The Gold Alert program is administered by local law enforcement agencies, in coordination with the Delaware State Police’s Information and Analysis Center (DIAC) and the media. The investigative law enforcement agency issues the alert in cooperation with the DIAC.  |
| Training on and/or Education About the Alert System             | Delaware State Police troopers have been informed of the Gold Alert procedures and protocols through a monthly roll call training session. State officials are unsure what type of training local law enforcement officers receive about the alert.   |
| Association with AMBER Alert                                    | The Delaware State Police is the only law enforcement entity authorized to disseminate an AMBER Alert. If another agency is investigating an abducted child case, it must contact the Delaware State Police to request an alert. The Gold Alert does not have the same criteria as the AMBER Alert. The investigating law enforcement agency determines if the Gold Alert is warranted, and is responsible for activating it. Law enforcement agencies follow the same protocols for disseminating press releases about the missing individual as they would for an abducted child. However, unlike the Gold Alert, the AMBER Alert is broadcast on billboards, roadway signs, and through the media. Based on an agreement with the Broadcasters Association, media outlets must broadcast an AMBER Alert. |
| Target Population   | The target population is missing persons with a disability, missing senior citizens who are persons age 60 or older, and missing suicidal persons who are persons whose statements, actions, or conduct indicate that the person may voluntarily cause or inflict self-harm.  |
| Reporting the Missing Person                                    | Persons that are related to or live with the missing person may report missing person cases. If medical personnel have sufficient information about the missing person, they may file a report. If all criteria are met, the investigating law enforcement agency is to issue the alert.  |
| Information About Missing Persons Submitted to Databases        | Information about the missing person must be entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and the Delaware Justice Information System (DELJIS).  |
| Criteria for Issuing Alert                                      | <p>The following criteria must be met for issuing an alert:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the person’s whereabouts are unknown;</li> <li>- the person is a resident of Delaware; and</li> <li>- the disappearance poses a credible threat to the health or safety of the person, as determined by the investigating law enforcement agency.</li> </ul> <p>In all cases, the investigating officer will verify the disability or impairment. If the officer determines that the person is in fact disabled or impaired, the alert will be issued. Proof from a medical authority that the person is disabled or impaired is not required.</p>   |

| Topics Inquired About                              | Response by State   |
|--|---|
| Disseminating the Alert                            | The law enforcement agency that is investigating the missing person sends an alert to all enforcement agencies and designated media outlets in Delaware. Alerts are issued through a standard electronic press release from the investigating law enforcement agency via email and/or fax. The DIAS can disseminate the information to all area law enforcement agencies and surrounding states' fusion centers (which are comprised of relevant law enforcement agencies in a particular jurisdiction that share information). Local media entities have discretion in broadcasting the alerts to the public. According to state officials, law enforcement agencies and local media have a strong working relationship, and officials would expect the media to broadcast the alert. The alert includes information that may assist in the safe return of the missing person. Electronic highway signs are not utilized in the program. |
| Timing of Alert                                    | There is no waiting period for issuing an alert and there is no time limit on how long the Gold Alert remains active. Media outlets determine how long they will broadcast the alert to the public.   |
| Expected Response by Law Enforcement and/or Public | The public is asked to call 911 or their local law enforcement agency with information about the individual.  |
| Interstate Coordination                            | If the CBI had reason to believe the missing individual traveled to another state, the DIAC would disseminate information about the missing person to surrounding states' fusion centers. Also, as part of standard investigative procedure, if the missing person is believed to be in another law enforcement agency's jurisdiction, that agency would be contacted by the investigating law enforcement agency, and information would be shared. If Delaware had credible and reliable information that a missing person from another state may be within the state, an alert would be issued on that person's behalf.   |
| System Costs                                       | There are no costs associated with the program.   |
| Use of Alert System                                | From approximately July 2008 through January 2009, local law enforcement agencies did not issue any alerts.   |
| Outcomes   | The state did not report on outcomes. As stated above, no alerts had been issued as of the time we inquired about the alert system.   |

**Source:** Congressional Research Service based on correspondence with state officials in January 2009 and review of Sections 8580-8583 of the Delaware Code.

- a. It is unclear whether accompanying rules and regulations have been promulgated.

**Table B-3. Florida: Alert System for Missing Adults**

State refers to system as “Florida Silver Alert Plan”

| Topics Inquired About   | Response by State  |
|---|--|
| Authorizing Legislation and Purpose for Developing Alert System | In 2008, Governor Charlie Crist signed Executive Order 08-211 establishing the Florida Silver Alert Plan. The impetus for creating the alert was the passage of Chapter 2008-162 (signed by the governor on June 17, 2008), which amended Section 937.021 of the Florida Statutes. The amended law requires local law enforcement to establish procedures for taking reports of missing adults, and to allow reports of missing adults to be made to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement’s (FDLE) Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse (MEPIC). As specified in Executive Order 08-211, Florida’s senior population is growing and the state needed to implement a standardized system to aid in the search of senior citizens who go missing. The alert system was implemented in October 2008. |
| Administration  | The Silver Alert Plan is administered by the FDLE/MEPIC, in coordination with local law enforcement agencies, the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, the Florida Department of Transportation, and the Florida Department of Highway Safety (which includes the Florida Highway Patrol). The FDLE/MEPIC activates the alert on highway road signs if specified criteria are met (see below). In addition, local law enforcement agencies may issue a Silver Alert locally, in coordination with the media.   |
| Association with AMBER Alert                                    | AMBER Alerts are carried out by the FDLE/MEPIC. The Silver Alerts are initiated by local law enforcement, and may involve the FDLE/MEPIC. The process for the Silver Alerts is not exactly the same as the process for AMBER Alert. The Silver Alerts require that local law enforcement agencies issue media statements and notify other law enforcement. The FDLE/MEPIC is responsible for activating only the road signs, and placing information on their home webpage. AMBER Alerts are administered by the state. FDLE/MEPIC carries out every step of the alert, such as the media notifications via radio and television, law enforcement, road signs, lottery machines, websites, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), and other notification systems.                             |
| Training on and/or Education About the Alert System             | When funding is available, training to law enforcement and transportation officials will be conducted by the FDLE/MEPIC. Executive Order 08-211 specifies that the Florida Department of Elder Affairs is to actively share information about the existence of the plan with key advocacy groups, services providers, and other organizations or agencies serving the state’s senior citizen population.   |
| Target Population   | The target population is a missing person age 60 or older who has an “irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties (i.e., dementia),” as verified by law enforcement officials, and under extraordinary circumstances for a missing person age 18 to 59 who has an “irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties.”   |
| Reporting the Missing Person                                    | Any individual is permitted to make a report of a missing person, as long as the report is credible. The local law enforcement agency may issue an alert locally, or request that an alert be issued on highway signs through the FDLE/MEPIC, which will issue the alert if the criteria are met.  |
| Information About Missing Person Submitted to Databases         | If a credible missing person report is made to a law enforcement agency, the agency is required under Florida Statute 937.021 to enter information into the federal National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File and the Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC).  |

| Topics Inquired About                              | Response by State  |
|--|--|
| Criteria for Issuing Alert                         | <p>The following criteria must be met to activate an alert statewide on highway signs, at the request of a local law enforcement agency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The missing person must be 60 years or older and there must be a clear indication that the individual has an irreversible deterioration of intellectual facilities (i.e., dementia), as verified by law enforcement, or under extraordinary circumstances when a person age 18 to 59 has an irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties and law enforcement has determined the missing person lacks the capacity to consent; and that the use of dynamic message road signs may be the only possible way to rescue the missing person.</li> <li>- Local law enforcement has already activated a local or regional alert by contacting media outlet in their and/or surrounding jurisdiction(s).</li> <li>- The law enforcement agency's investigation must conclude that the disappearance poses a credible threat to the person's welfare and safety.</li> <li>- If a vehicle is involved and the statewide messaging system is requested, there must be a description of the vehicle and a tag number to display on Florida Department of Transportation dynamic message signs.</li> <li>- The local law enforcement agency must verify vehicle tag information and have entered the missing person into the FCIC and issued a statewide "be on the lookout" to other law enforcement/911 centers.</li> </ul> |
| Disseminating the Alert                            | <p>The FDLE/MEPIC notifies the general public through road signs and the FDLE website. The investigating agency may contact the FDLE/MEPIC to activate the road signs if the alert criteria are met. Road signs are used only if a vehicle is involved (and the individual meets other criteria). The FDLE/MEPIC provides the Silver Alert vehicle information to the Florida Department of Transportation. Separately, local law enforcement agencies have different strategies for notifying the public, which may include contacting the media and using a type of reverse 911 calling system (through the organization, A Child is Missing, Inc.) with a recorded message telling local residents about the alert. Local law enforcement agencies issue a "be on the lookout" alert through a system for law enforcement agencies, and notify their local media however they deem appropriate.</p>   |
| Timing of Alert                                    | <p>A waiting period is not required before issuing an alert on the road signs. The road signs are activated for six hours. The information on the FDLE website is posted as long as the person is missing.</p>   |
| Expected Response by Law Enforcement and/or Public | <p>Law enforcement are asked to be on the lookout for the individual and their vehicle. The media is requested to publicize the information on the missing individual and the public is asked to notify law enforcement if the missing person or vehicle is seen. Any information is to be reported to the investigating law enforcement agency, a local law enforcement agency via 911, or the Florida Highway Patrol (*347).</p>   |
| Interstate Coordination                            | <p>Because Silver Alerts have not been instituted in every state, the state has not yet addressed how requests will be handled when it is suspected that the missing person crossed state lines. However, Florida law enforcement agencies can inform agencies in another state through the use of the federal National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS). The FDLE/MEPIC may also contact AMBER Alert coordinators in states with Silver Alert systems to request activation for a missing adult. The FDLE/MEPIC will activate road signs for an out-of-state resident if the Silver Alert criteria are met. Florida has had one Silver Alert request from Georgia, involving a missing senior who was known (through use of credit cards) to be in Florida. The missing incident met the activation criteria. Road signs were in the process of being activated when the missing person was located.</p>   |
| System Costs                                       | <p>Funds used to maintain the AMBER Alert system are used for the Silver Alert plan. The administrative costs provide for analysts of both the Silver Alert and AMBER Alert systems to be on call year around. The approximate cost to FDLE is \$40,000 per fiscal year (July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2008).</p>  |
| Use of Alert System                                | <p>From approximately October 2008 through December 2008, the FDLE issued 32 Silver Alerts on highway signs.</p>   |

| Topics Inquired About | Response by State  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Outcomes              | In order to issue the statewide alert on the road signs, an individual must be believed to be driving (and meet other criteria). Of the 32 alerts issued, 31 individuals were recovered alive and one was found deceased. All were driving, and in at least 30 of the 32 cases, it was believed that the missing individual suffered from a form of dementia or Alzheimer's disease. Road sign activation aided in the recovery of seven individuals. The local law enforcement agency recovered these individuals based on tips from persons who read the highway signs. One individual was located within the same county. The other six individuals were located a couple of counties away from where they went missing. According to the state, the alerts on the road signs aided in the recovery of seven individuals. |

**Source:** Congressional Research Service based on correspondence with state officials in January 2009 and review of Executive Order 08-211 and Section 937.021 of the Florida Statutes.

**Table B-4. Georgia: Alert System for Missing Adults**

State refers to system as “Mattie’s Call”

| Topics Inquired About   | Response by State   |
|---|---|
| Authorizing Legislation and Purpose for Developing Alert System | In 2006, Governor Sonny Perdue signed H.B. 728, establishing Mattie’s Call, an alert system for missing adults (see Sections 35-3-170 - 38-3-180 of the Official Code of Georgia). The system was implemented in 2006 in the name of Mattie Moore, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease and went missing from her home in 2004. The impetus for the system was media attention surrounding this missing person investigation.   |
| Administration  | The Mattie’s Call system is administered by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI), in cooperation with local law enforcement agencies, the Georgia Association of Broadcasters, and other partners. The alert is issued by the GBI, based on a request from a local law enforcement agency.   |
| Association with AMBER Alert                                    | Both Levi’s Call (the state’s AMBER Alert system) and Mattie’s Call have strict activation criteria and the processes for activating the alert are very similar. The local law enforcement agency takes reports of missing children and adults, and contacts GBI Communications. The on-call agent for that jurisdiction screens the request to make sure the activation criteria are met. GBI makes the decision to activate and send the alert bulletin to media outlets and secondary partners. The only difference is that the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA), which oversees the state’s Emergency Alert System (EAS), requires the media to disseminate voice-recorded information about missing children for whom an alert has been issued. An alert for an adult under Mattie’s call is not made through the EAS. |
| Training on and/or Education About the Alert System             | The GBI has provided training to numerous law enforcement partners and stakeholders about the system. It plans to continue its training through partnerships with the Georgia Association of Broadcasters and the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police.  |
| Target Population   | The target population is a disabled adult, of any age, who is developmentally impaired or suffers from dementia or another cognitive impairment. A cognitive impairment refers to diminished conscious intellectual activity (i.e., thinking, reasoning, or remembering).   |
| Reporting the Missing Person                                    | A family member or caretaker is authorized to file a missing person’s report. The reporting party must articulate to local law enforcement that the missing person is impaired. Local law enforcement agencies take the report for the missing person and verify that the alert system criteria are met. Law enforcement agencies are not required to verify the person’s disability or cognitive impairment. The local law enforcement agency has the discretion to request that GBI issues the alert. The GBI ensures that the activation criteria are met before the alert is issued.  |
| Information About Missing Persons Submitted to Database         | Prior to the activation, the missing person must be entered into the federal National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File.  |
| Criteria for Issuing Alert                                      | <p>The following criteria must be determined for the GBI to activate an alert. The local law enforcement agency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- believes that a disabled adult is missing;</li> <li>- determines that the missing disabled adult is in immediate danger of serious bodily injury or death;</li> <li>- confirms an investigation has taken place that verifies the disappearance; and</li> <li>- has sufficient information to disseminate to the public that could assist in the investigation.</li> </ul>  |

| Topics Inquired About                              | Response by State   |
|--|---|
| Dissemination Alert                                | The GBI issues the alert to law enforcement agencies through the NCIC, telephone, and e-mail. The alert can be limited to a specific geographic area or activated statewide. The GBI notifies local media outlets and other secondary partners, such as the Outdoors Billboard Association, Keep Georgia Safe, Georgia Department of Transportation (DOT), and others. Media outlets have discretion in determining whether to broadcast the alert to the public. The Georgia Department of Transportation is responsible for placing information on electronic signs on the highway. The DOT prioritizes alerts about traffic or weather emergencies, but will otherwise broadcast the alert. The Outdoor Advertising Agency of Georgia places the alert information on its digital billboards statewide. The public is alerted through media outlets that voluntarily broadcast the information, as well as through electronic sign on the highway. |
| Timing of Alert                                    | Once the local agency has taken the missing person report and requests the activation, the system can be activated immediately. An alert will remain active until the individual is found or the family requests that it be discontinued.   |
| Expected Response by Law Enforcement and/or Public | Once law enforcement agencies receive the alert via the NCIC, they are advised to be on the lookout for the missing person and/or any vehicle described in the alert. The public is given the same information and asked to call 911 with any information, in some communities a specific call line is set up by the local law enforcement agency.  |
| Interstate Coordination                            | The information about the missing individual from Georgia, as added to the NCIC, is made available to other states. In addition, the GBI has a strong relationship with the Missing Persons' Clearinghouses in other states and can request activation of any alert systems on behalf of the GBI (but not all states have such alert systems). The request would have to meet another state's activation criteria as well. Georgia has not yet requested another state to activate an alert on behalf of the GBI. If an individual from another state went missing in Georgia, the requesting state's Missing Persons' Clearinghouse could contact GBI and request the activation. The process would then be the same as an in-state activation. No state has made this request.  |
| System Costs                                       | There were no costs associated with implementing the alert system. Ongoing costs are absorbed by the participating agencies from their general operating budgets. Costs for Mattie's Call are not specified in the agencies' budgets.   |
| Use of Alert System                                | From July 2006 through January 21, 2009, the GBI issued 79 alerts.  |
| Outcomes   | Of the 79 alerts, 78 individuals have been recovered. Of those recovered, all but one individual was alive. One individual continues to be missing. In all cases, the missing individuals were believed to have a developmental disability or cognitive impairment. According to state officials, the alert aided in the recovery of all the individuals who were recovered alive. Those individuals who were located were recovered by a law enforcement agency. One alert ended with the subject located in another state with family. All others were recovered within city or county limits of the alert.   |

**Source:** Congressional Research Service based on correspondence with state officials in January 2009 and review of Sections 38-3-170 - 38-3-180 of the Official Code of Georgia.

**Table B-5. Kentucky: Alert System for Missing Adults**

State refers to system as “Gold Alert”

| Topics Inquired About   | Response by State  |
|---|--|
| Authorizing Legislation and Purpose for Developing Alert System         | In 2008, Governor Steve Beshear signed Senate Bill 125 establishing the Kentucky Gold Alert Program (see Chapter 039F00 of the Kentucky Revised Statutes). The program was implemented in July 2008.   |
| Administration  | The Gold Alert program is administered by local law enforcement agencies, in coordination with the Kentucky Division of Emergency Management (KYEM) and in cooperation with the media. The investigative law enforcement agency issues the alert. KYEM provides guidance to local officials and law enforcement about administering the alert.   |
| Association with AMBER Alert  | KYEM is the only law enforcement entity authorized to disseminate an AMBER Alert, while the Gold Alert is disseminated by local law enforcement agencies. Unlike AMBER Alerts, law enforcement agencies are not required to disseminate Gold Alerts.   |
| Training on and/or Education About the Alert System                     | Local law enforcement agencies have conducted workshop on the alert.   |
| Target Population   | The target population is an “impaired adult,” defined as a person age 18 years of age or older who has a verified mental or cognitive impairment.  |
| Reporting the Missing Person  | Any individuals may report missing person cases. Issuing the alert is at the discretion of the local law enforcement agency, and the agency makes the decision to issue the alert based on the information provided by the reporting party.  |
| Information About Missing Persons Submitted to Missing Person Databases | <i>State officials provided a response of “unknown.”</i>   |
| Criteria for Issuing Alert  | Local law enforcement can establish their own criteria for issuing the alert. <i>(Note that the target population, as specified in S. 125 is an “impaired adult,” defined as a person age 18 years of age or older who has a verified mental or cognitive impairment and who disappearance poses a credible threat to the health or safety of the person, as determined by the local law enforcement agency.)</i>  |
| Timing of Alert   | There is no time limit on how long the Gold Alert remains active. The search for the missing person must be undertaken for a minimum of two hours.   |
| Dissemination Alert   | The law enforcement agency that is investigating the missing person sends an alert to the local emergency management director, local search and rescue coordinator, local media outlets, and KYEM. The methods for disseminating the alerts vary, but multiple methods are encouraged. Local officials may activate the alerts through electronic message boards. Media outlets are not required to broadcast the alert, although they typically provide a description of the person and contact information. Local law enforcement officials and the media are sensitive to privacy issues. |
| Expected Response by Law Enforcement and/or Public                      | The public is asked to call a number to provide any information about the individual.  |
| Interstate Coordination   | Kentucky does not have a system for coordinating with other states if a missing person from the state crosses state lines, but would be willing to work with these other states. Further, if a missing individual was believed to have crossed into Kentucky from another state, KYEM would issue a statewide media alert about the individual.  |
| System Costs  | <i>State officials provided a response of “unknown.”</i>   |
| Use of Alert System   | From approximately July 2009 through February 2009, local law enforcement agencies have issued alerts for approximately 15 individuals.  |

| Topics Inquired About | Response by State  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Outcomes              | Of the 15 individuals for whom alerts were issued, three were found deceased. The alert assisted in the recovery of about seven to nine individuals. |

**Source:** Congressional Research Service based on correspondence with state officials in March 2009 and review of Chapter 039F00 of the Kentucky Revised Statutes.

**Table B-6. North Carolina:Alert System for Missing Adults**

State refers to system as “Silver Alert Program”

| Topics Inquired About   | Response by State  |
|---|--|
| Authorizing Legislation and Purpose for Developing Alert System | In 2007, North Carolina Governor Mike Easley signed H.B. 38 establishing a Silver Alert program (see Section 43B-499.8 of the North Carolina General Statutes). The system was developed in response to anticipated increases in the population of individuals with dementia and cognitive impairment. The system was implemented on December 19, 2007.  |
| Administration  | The Silver Alert program is administered by the North Carolina Center for Missing Persons (NCCMP), an agency within the North Carolina Department of Crime Control and Public Safety, in coordination with local law enforcement agencies and the North Carolina Department of Transportation. The NCCMP is the only agency that can activate the Silver Alert System and will do so only at the request of an investigating law enforcement agency.   |
| Association with AMBER Alert                                    | The North Carolina Center for Missing Persons administers both the AMBER Alert system and Silver Alert system. The Silver Alert was modeled on the AMBER Alert. However, the Emergency Alert System (EAS) is used only for AMBER Alerts.   |
| Training on and/or Education About the Alert System             | Training is provided to law enforcement agencies and non-profit organizations by NCCMP staff when requested.   |
| Association with AMBER Alert                                    | The North Carolina Center for Missing Persons administers both the AMBER Alert system and Silver Alert system. The Silver Alert was modeled on the AMBER Alert. However, the Emergency Alert System (EAS) is used only for AMBER Alerts.   |
| Target Population   | The target population is individuals, of any age, who are believed to have dementia or other forms of cognitive impairment.  |
| Reporting the Missing Person                                    | A parent, spouse, guardian, legal custodian, or person responsible for the supervision of the missing individual may make the report. A local or state law enforcement agency takes the report of a missing person. The responding law enforcement agency must first investigate the missing person case and determine if the criteria are met for issuing a Silver Alert. If the Silver Alert criteria are met, law enforcement agencies then call the NCCMP to request a Silver Alert. The law enforcement agency also fills out a form that includes information about the reporting law enforcement agency, date of incident, and description of the individual, among other information. The reporting party must sign an Authorization to Release Information before any information will be released to the public and media. If the criteria are met, the alert must be issued by the NCCMP. |
| Information About Missing Persons Submitted to Databases        | The law enforcement agency immediately enters the information into the federal National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File.   |
| Criteria for Issuing Alert                                      | The following criteria for a missing person must be met to activate a Silver Alert: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the person is believed to be suffering from dementia or other cognitive impairment, as determined by the person making the report;</li> <li>- the person is believed to be missing – regardless of circumstance;</li> <li>- a legal custodian of the missing person has submitted a missing person’s report to the local law enforcement agency where the person went missing; and</li> <li>- law enforcement reports the incident to the NCCMP.</li> </ul>   |
| Timing of Alert   | The NCCMP is to “make every effort to disseminate the [alert] as quickly as possible” (North Carolina Statutes 143.B-499.8). No agency may observe any waiting period. The alert may be activated as long as needed until the person is located. The electronic highway signs, discussed below, are activated for 12 hours.  |

| Topics Inquired About                              | Response by State   |
|--|---|
| Dissemination Alert                                | The alert is issued and relayed to all appropriate law enforcement agencies, the media, the public, North Carolina State Highway Patrol Communications Centers, and the executive management of the North Carolina Department of Crime Control and Public Safety. Law enforcement issues a statewide “be on the lookout” bulletin to all law enforcement agencies and provides a 24-hour phone number to receive lead calls during the investigation. If the individual is wandering or has walked away, law enforcement also activates phone calls in the immediate area using a type of reverse 911 calling system (through the A Child is Missing Program) with a recorded message telling local residents about the alert. The NCCMP posts and updates information about the alert on the department’s website, notifies the local media about the missing person, and requests the North Carolina Department of Transportation to activate highway message signs in cases where a vehicle is used. The highway signs are activated statewide if the individual is driving a motor vehicle. |
| Expected Response by Law Enforcement and/or Public | Law enforcement agencies in the affected area as well as statewide are sent the “be on the lookout” bulletin. Anyone is expected to call 911 or highway patrol in the event of a sighting. The public is asked to contact the NCCMP, dial 911, or call the highway patrol with any information regarding the missing individual. The requesting agency’s phone number is also provided. When highway signs are activated, motorists are notified about the missing individual and directed to call 511 for further information. The recorded message on 511 is available for 48 hours.  |
| Interstate Coordination                            | The state informs contiguous states through the use of a “be on the lookout” bulletin through the NCIC. If necessary, the NCCMP contacts other missing person clearinghouse managers in other states. Alerts may be issued on behalf of a resident of another state. The missing person report is taken by the law enforcement agency that has jurisdiction over where the person was last known to be. The agency calls the NCCMP and requests a Silver Alert. For example, the NCCMP activated an alert on behalf of an individual who was following his wife in a separate vehicle as they were traveling home to Florida. The man was thought to be missing in the Sanford, North Carolina area. The wife reported him missing and the Sanford Police Department took the report and requested the Silver Alert. The man later turned up safe at his home in Florida.   |
| System Costs                                       | The General Assembly did not appropriate funding to implement and operate the Silver Alert system. The program costs are absorbed by the NCCMP budget. The NCCMP estimates that the cost to operate the program annually is approximately \$125,000.  |
| Use of Alert System                                | From December 19, 2007 through October 15, 2008, the NCCMP issued 82 alerts.  |
| Outcomes   | Of the 82 individuals for whom alerts were issued, 73 were found safe, seven were found deceased, and two were still missing. Further, 52 individuals were reported to have Alzheimer’s disease or dementia and 30 individuals were reported with some other cognitive impairment. In 43 cases, the individual was driving a motor vehicle. In 39 cases, the individual wandered away on foot. Of those 39 individuals, three took a plane to another state, two were last seen on bikes, one took a bus to another state, and one took a taxi. According to state officials, the alert may not have been the single reason for finding the missing individual, but in every case, the state reported that it has brought attention to the individual who needs help. The state reported that it has not evaluated the circumstances in which the individuals went missing.   |

**Source:** Congressional Research Service based on correspondence with state officials in October 2008 and review of Section 43B-499.8 of the North Carolina General Statutes.

**Table B-7. Oklahoma: Alert System for Missing Adults**

State refers to system as “Silver Alert System”

| Topics Inquired About  | Response by State  |
|--|--|
| Authorizing Legislation and Purpose for Developing Alert System        | In 2006, the Oklahoma House of Representatives adopted House Resolution 1055, which authorizes the creation of a Silver Alert System. Pursuant to the adoption of Resolution 1055, local law enforcement agencies, in partnership with the Department of Public Safety (DPS), implemented the system in June 2007.   |
| Administration   | The system is administered by local law enforcement agencies, in coordination with DPS and the media. The local law enforcement agency issues the alert, and can seek assistance from DPS, which houses the Oklahoma Enforcement Telecommunications System (OLETS), a communication system that can be used to inform other law enforcement agencies about missing adult alerts and other matters.   |
| Association with AMBER Alert   | The AMBER Alert system is administered by the Department of Public Safety, and the Silver Alert system is administered by local law enforcement agencies in cooperation with DPS. The two systems use similar technology. For AMBER Alerts, the local law enforcement agency completes a form on an OLETS terminal and it is sent to a central law enforcement communications facility, operated by the Department of Public Safety, in Oklahoma City. The AMBER Alert is then sent to television, radio, and print media. The Silver Alert uses the same system; however, when the form is completed, the reporting agency sends the alert directly to the media and appropriate law enforcement agencies. Further, AMBER Alerts can be broadcast through the Department of Transportation’s electronic signs on the highway. The Emergency Alert System (EAS) may be used only for AMBER Alerts. According to state officials, the EAS may not be appropriate for Silver Alerts; too many alerts may make the public complacent, and in turn, the AMBER Alert program may not be as effective. |
| Training on and/or Education About the Alert System                    | Training is provided to law enforcement personnel that operate the Oklahoma Law OLETS terminals, by the state’s Council on Law Enforcement and Education Training and select personnel from various law enforcement agencies in the state. According to state officials, information may also be provided to local law enforcement agencies through their training academies.  |
| Target Population  | The target population is individuals with a proven mental or physical disability. According to state officials, the Silver Alert system is primarily used to recover senior citizens. However, Resolution 1055 is silent on any age criteria.  |
| Reporting the Missing Person   | Spouses, parents, caretakers, legal guardians, or medical personnel, or individuals who come across the missing person may report that an individual is missing. Local and state law enforcement agencies take the report. At the request of a local law enforcement agency, the reporting party is responsible for providing the appropriate information about the condition of the individual. These agencies must first investigate the missing person case and determine if the criteria are met for issuing a Silver Alert. If the criteria are met, law enforcement agencies complete a form in the state’s law enforcement database to initiate the alert. The form includes information about the reporting law enforcement agency, date of incident, and description of the individual, among other information. Issuing the alert is at the discretion of the agency.  |
| Information About Missing Persons Submitted to Missing Person Database | Local law enforcement agencies are not required to enter information into the federal National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File or other law enforcement databases for missing persons.   |

| <b>Topics Inquired About</b>                       | <b>Response by State</b>   |
|--|--|
| Criteria for Issuing Alert                         | <p>The following criteria must be met to activate a Silver Alert:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- the person must have a proven mental or physical disability, as determined by a caretaker or medical personnel;</li><li>- there is reason to believe that the person is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death; and</li><li>- disseminating information to the general public or media would assist in locating the person.</li></ul> <p>At the request of a local law enforcement agency, the caregiver, medical personnel or family member would be responsible for providing the appropriate information about the condition of the individual. The law enforcement agency would determine if this information is adequate.</p> |
| Dissemination Alert                                | <p>Silver alerts may be issued to law enforcement agencies locally, regionally, or statewide, and to the media. These alerts are issued to all law enforcement agencies in Oklahoma using OLETS. The information is sent electronically via OLETS to the media. The public is made aware of the alert by television, radio, and print media. Electronic signs, including those operated by the Department of Transportation, are not activated when a Silver Alert is issued.</p>  |
| Timing of Alert                                    | <p>There is no waiting period to issue the alert. The alert may be activated for up to 24 hours.</p>   |
| Expected Response by Law Enforcement and/or Public | <p>The agencies are requested to broadcast the information to their officers, and the media may alert the public. Any tips and information are to be reported to the local law enforcement agency that issued the alert or to 911.</p>   |
| Interstate Coordination                            | <p>Law enforcement officials may announce the alert to officials in other states through the National Law Enforcement Telecommunication System (NLETS), using OLETS. If the missing individual from Oklahoma is (or believed to be) in another state or en route to another state, information in the Silver Alert will be sent to that state via OLETS. If Oklahoma receives information that an individual from another state who is the subject of a Silver Alert, is believed to be in Oklahoma, that information would be sent via OLETS to the law enforcement agencies and the media in Oklahoma.</p>   |
| System Costs                                       | <p>According to state officials, there were little, if any, costs to DPS associated with developing the Silver Alert system.</p>   |
| Use of Alert System                                | <p>Local law enforcement agencies issue the alerts and maintain records about the alerts issued and whether individuals were recovered. This information is not submitted to the Department of Public Safety or any other state entity. State officials estimated, based on anecdotal information, that six alerts were issued from approximately June 2007 through September 2008.</p>  |
| Outcomes   | <p>The state did not report on outcomes. As discussed above, information about the individuals for whom alerts are issued is not systematically collected.</p>   |

**Source:** Congressional Research Service based on correspondence with state officials in September and October 2008 and review of Oklahoma House Resolution 1055.

**Table B-8. Ohio:Alert System for Missing Adults**

State refers to system as “Missing Adult Alert System”

| Topics Inquired About   | Response by State  |
|---|--|
| Authorizing Legislation and Purpose for Developing Alert System | In 2008, Governor Ted Strickland signed Senate Bill 87 establishing the Ohio Missing Adult Alert system (see Section 5502.522 of the Ohio Revised Code). The alert was developed in response to several incidents of missing adults throughout the country and Ohio that involved older individuals or individuals with mental impairments. The system was implemented in June 2008.   |
| Administration  | The alert system is administered by the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation, within the Ohio Attorney General’s office, in coordination with local law enforcement agencies, Ohio State Highway Patrol, other state agencies, and the media. Together, these agencies make up the Ohio AMBER Alert Steering Committee, which developed the AMBER Alert and Missing Adult Alert systems. The Ohio Attorney General’s Office or the Ohio State Highway Patrol are the only agencies that can activate an alert, and will do so at the request of an investigating law enforcement agency.  |
| Association with AMBER Alert                                    | The Ohio AMBER Alert Steering Committee has oversight over the AMBER Alert and Ohio Missing Adult Alert systems. The processes and tools are similar for both programs. The same technology is used for both programs; however, the Emergency Alert System (EAS) is used only for AMBER alerts.  |
| Training on and/or Education About the Alert System             | Law enforcement agencies are trained by members of the AMBER Alert Steering Committee. Training covers the program criterion and activation process.   |
| Target Population   | The target population is individuals ages 65 or older, or adults ages 18 or older with a mental impairment. “Mental impairment” means a “substantial disorder of thought, mood, perception, orientation, or memory that grossly impairs judgment, behavior, or ability to live independently, or provide self-care as certified by a licensed physician, psychiatrist, or psychologist” (Section 5502.522(G)(3) of the Ohio Revised Code).   |
| Reporting the Missing Person                                    | Local and state law enforcement agencies take reports of a missing person. These agencies must first investigate the missing person case and determine if the criteria are met for issuing an alert. Requesting an alert is at the discretion of the law enforcement agency. A report can be made to local law enforcement by any individual. Issuing the alert is at the recommendation of the local law enforcement agency and at the discretion of that agency, the Ohio Attorney General’s office, or Ohio State Highway Patrol.   |
| Information About Missing Persons Submitted to Database         | Information must be entered into the federal National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File as part of the local law enforcement agency’s request to issue the alert.  |
| Criteria for Issuing Alert                                      | <p>The following criteria must be met to activate an alert:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the local investigative law enforcement agency confirms the individual is missing;</li> <li>- the individual is 65 years of age or older, or has a mental impairment;</li> <li>- the disappearance of the individual poses a credible threat of immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death to the individual; and</li> <li>- there is sufficient descriptive information about the circumstances surrounding the individual’s disappearance to indicate that activation of the alert will help locate the individual.</li> </ul> <p>Individuals who identify the person as missing are not required to attest that the person is missing due to their condition; however, they may provide prescriptions or other medical paperwork to verify that the individual is under the care of a licensed medical professional.</p> |

| Topics Inquired About                              | Response by State   |
|--|---|
| Dissemination Alert                                | The alert is issued to all appropriate law enforcement agencies, the media, truckers, the Ohio Lottery Commission, Ohio Outdoor Advertising Association, and the public. Email and fax messages are sent throughout the state to media outlets. The information is posted on electronic billboards and Ohio Department of Transportation signboards in the local area of interest, and a Truckers Alert system is activated for truckers in the state. The Ohio Lottery posts the information on lottery terminals. Alerts are also issued on electronic signs managed by the Ohio Department of Transportation and the Ohio Outdoor Advertising Association. |
| Expected Response by Law Enforcement and/or Public | The Ohio Attorney General's Office coordinates special response teams and programs to assist in the search for the missing person. Law enforcement may also form their own search teams. Teams may help in direct search, media relations, victim services and case investigation. Law enforcement and the public are asked to be observant in finding the individual. The media's role is to disseminate information to the public. Any tips and information are to be reported to a toll-free telephone number, local law enforcement, or 911.  |
| Timing of Alert                                    | There is no waiting period to issue the alert and no set time limit for an alert to be issued. The Ohio Attorney General's Office, in consultation with the local law enforcement agency, evaluates the need for the alert after 48 hours and each 24 hours thereafter.   |
| Interstate Coordination                            | Alert information is shared with adjacent states through law enforcement computer systems. Ohio has not requested an alert on behalf of an adult who is believed to be in another state. Ohio can issue alerts on behalf of adults who reside in other states but are believed to be in the state. Ohio's criteria for issuing an alert must be met before an alert may be issued. To date, no states have requested Ohio to issue an alert.  |
| System Costs                                       | A budget was not developed to implement the alert system, and costs have been absorbed by the state agencies on the AMBER Alert Steering Committee. Those agencies have not developed any estimates on the cost to implement the system. The precise ongoing costs are unknown. Labor and other costs vary based on the number of alerts issued, duration of the alerts, and state employees involved in issuing the alert. In the future, the agencies expect to pay for improved notification software, estimated at \$100,000 for both AMBER and Missing Adult Alerts.   |
| Use of Alert System                                | From approximately June 2008 through September 2008, the Ohio Attorney General's Office and the Ohio State Highway Patrol issued 14 alerts.   |
| Outcomes   | Of the 14 individuals for whom alerts were issued, 13 were found alive and one was found deceased. Seven of the missing individuals had Alzheimer's disease and/or dementia; four had mental health issues; and two had medical issues and were ages 65 or older. Nine of the individuals were driving. According to state officials, the alerts did not directly assist in the recovery of the missing individuals; however, family members of the missing individuals and the law enforcement agencies that recommended the alert be activated are pleased with the design of the program.  |

**Source:** Congressional Research Service based on correspondence with state officials in September 2008 and review of Section 5502.522 of the Ohio Revised Code.

**Table B-9. Rhode Island: Alert System for Missing Adults**  
 State refers to system as “Missing Senior Citizen Alert Program”

| Topics Inquired About   | Response by State  |
|---|--|
| Authorizing Legislation and Purpose for Developing Alert System | In 2008, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed S7048 and H7048 creating the Rhode Island Missing Senior Citizen Alert program (See Sections 42-28-3.3 and 42-28-3.4 of the Rhode Island Code). The bills were effective without the governor’s signature in July 2008. Private agencies that care for the senior population with mental health concerns sought and received support from members of the state legislature who introduced the bill that was eventually passed into law after several years trying. The program was implemented in September 2008.  |
| Administration  | The alert program is administered by Rhode Island State Police, in coordination with local law enforcement agencies, the Rhode Island Broadcasters Association (RIBA), and other agencies such as the Rhode Island Department of Transportation. The Rhode Island State Police issues the alert to media outlets and the local law enforcement agency conducts the investigation.  |
| Training on and/or Education About the Alert System             | The Rhode Island State Police provided training to all local law enforcement agencies about the program.   |
| Association with AMBER Alert                                    | The Rhode Island State Police administers both AMBER Alerts and the Missing Senior Citizen Alert program. The agency issues the AMBER Alert, while RIBA issues the Missing Senior Citizen Alert. Further, the agency is more directly involved with the investigation of AMBER Alerts and handles inquiries from the media and the public about these alerts. The local law enforcement agency is responsible for handling these types of inquiries for Missing Senior Citizen Alerts.   |
| Target Population   | The target population is for a missing person whose whereabouts are unknown, who is a resident of Rhode Island, who is age 60 or older, who has an impaired mental condition.  |
| Reporting the Missing Person                                    | The missing senior citizen’s family, legal guardian, long-term care ombudsman, or long-term care facility where such person resides, may report the person missing. The reporting party must provide the appropriate documentation showing that the individual has an impaired mental condition. If all criteria are met, the investigating law enforcement agency requests the Rhode Island State Police to issue the alert through RIBA.   |
| Information About Missing Persons Submitted to Databases        | Local law enforcement agencies are not required to enter information into the federal National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File or other law enforcement databases for missing persons.   |
| Criteria for Issuing Alert                                      | <p>The following criteria must be met for issuing an alert:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the person is age 60 or older;</li> <li>- the person has an impaired mental condition supported by documentation;</li> <li>- the circumstances surrounding the person’s disappearance poses a credible threat to their safety and health;</li> <li>- the person must have last been seen in Rhode Island; and</li> <li>- enough descriptive information is available for the missing person and/or his or her vehicle.</li> </ul> <p>In all cases, the investigating law enforcement agency will verify the mental condition.</p> |
| Disseminating the Alert   | Upon request by the Rhode Island State Police, RIBA disseminates the alert to media outlets, that are members of the organization. These media outlets have discretion in broadcasting the alerts to the public. Electronic highway signs maintained by the Department of Transportation may be activated on a case-by-case basis. The alert includes information that may assist in the safe return of the missing person.  |

| <b>Topics Inquired About</b>                       | <b>Response by State</b>  |
|--|---|
| Timing of Alert                                    | There is no waiting period for issuing an alert and there is no time limit on how long the alert remains active. Media outlets determine how long they will broadcast the alert to the public.  |
| Expected Response by Law Enforcement and/or Public | The public is asked to call 911 or their local law enforcement agency with information about the individual.  |
| Interstate Coordination                            | If the Rhode Island State Police had reason to believe the missing individual traveled to a bordering state, the agency would disseminate information about the missing person to the state police agency. If a missing person from another state was last seen in Rhode Island, the investigation would be handled as if the individual was from Rhode Island. The state has not had to request alerts for residents nor has it issued alerts for residents of other states. |
| System Costs                                       | There are no costs associated with the program.   |
| Use of Alert System                                | From approximately September 2008 through February 2009, the Rhode Island State Police issued an alert on behalf of one individual with a mental condition who was recovered alive.   |
| Outcomes   | The individual for whom an alert was issued was not driving. The alert did not assist in the recovery of the individual.  |

**Source:** Congressional Research Service based on correspondence with state officials in March 2009 and review of Sections 42-28-3.3 and 42-28-3.4 of the Rhode Island Code.

**Table B-10. Texas: Alert System for Missing Adults**

State refers to system as “Silver Alert Network”

| Topics Inquired About   | Response by State  |
|---|--|
| Authorizing Legislation and Purpose for Developing Alert System | In May 2007, Governor Rick Perry signed S.B. 1315, creating the Texas Silver Alert Network. (see Sections 411.381-411.389 of the Texas Government Code). As specified in S.B. 1315, the impetus for the law was based on concerns that senior citizens with Alzheimer’s disease or other mentally debilitating diseases wander from their residences and may die if not found. The legislation stated that “[a]n alert system similar to the AMBER Alert Program could help to locate these persons before any harm happens to them.” The system was implemented in September 2007.  |
| Administration  | The Silver Alert Network is administered by the Governor’s Division of Emergency Management (GDEM), with the investigative support of the Department of Public Safety’s (DPS) Missing Person’s Clearinghouse and in coordination with local law enforcement agencies. The GDEM issues the alert at the request of a local law enforcement agency. A Steering Committee and After-Action Review Board - comprised of law enforcement agencies, other government agencies, and other stakeholders -provide recommendations to DPS about the Silver Alert program, but have no direct authority to administer the program.  |
| Training on and/or Education About the Alert System             | The GDEM offers training to law enforcement agencies statewide about the Silver Alert Network. In addition, information about the Silver Alert is provided to public, private and local governmental entities through briefings, conferences, and workshops. An existing Online AMBER Alert Course, currently available to law enforcement and the public, may be used in the future to provide information about the Silver Alert.  |
| Target Population   | The target population is senior citizens, age 65 or older, who are domiciled in Texas, and have a diagnosed impaired mental condition.   |
| Reporting the Missing Person                                    | An immediate family member, caretaker, or legal guardian may report that an individual is missing. In some cases, the report may be filed by a neighbor or close friend who notices the person is missing. Local and state law enforcement agencies take reports of a missing person. These agencies must first investigate the missing person case and determine if the criteria are met for issuing a Silver Alert (see below). If the criteria are met, law enforcement agencies then fax a Silver Alert Request Form to the GDEM and follow up with a phone call. The form includes information about the reporting law enforcement agency, date of incident, and description of the individual, among other information. The alert is issued at the request of an investigating law enforcement agency and after DPS has confirmed that a request for activation meets the criteria. If the alert criteria are met, the alert must be issued.   |
| Information About Missing Persons Submitted to Databases        | Information about the missing person must be entered into the federal National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File before an alert is activated.   |
| Criteria for Issuing Alert                                      | <p>The following criteria must be met to activate the Texas Silver Alert Network:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the missing person is 65 years of age or older;</li> <li>- the senior citizen is domiciled in Texas;</li> <li>- the senior citizen has a diagnosed impaired mental condition, and their disappearance poses a credible threat to the senior citizen’s health and safety (law enforcement requires the family or legal guardian of the missing senior citizen to provide documentation from a medical or mental health professional of the senior citizen’s condition);</li> <li>- an investigation has confirmed that the senior citizen’s disappearance is due to his/her impaired mental condition, and alternative reasons for his/her disappearance have been ruled out;</li> <li>- the Silver Alert request is within 72 hours of the senior citizen’s disappearance; and</li> <li>- there is sufficient information available to disseminate to the public that could assist in locating the senior citizen.</li> </ul> |

| Topics Inquired About                              | Response by State  |
|--|--|
| Dissemination Alert                                | <p>The GDEM issues alerts to the public through primary and participating media outlets; the Texas Department of Transportation; the Texas Lottery Commission; and the Independent Bankers Association of Texas. Local primary media stations are provided with a fax notification. Media participation is voluntary. The Texas Lottery Commission places Silver Alert information on their electronic scrolling signs, billboards, and tickets (as applicable). The Independent Bankers Association of Texas, depending on the technology available at each institution, can place Silver Alert information within their lobbies and drive-through locations, along with electronic scrolling signs and billboards. Local, state and federal law enforcement agencies are also provided alert advisories through the Texas/National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (TLETS/NLETS). (As part of training to law enforcement entities, they are encouraged to coordinate with local media when Silver Alerts are activated.) In addition, the GDEM maintains an email notification database for those entities (such as a government entity, including the military, or business) that wish to provide notification to the public. Highway signs are activated by the Texas Department of Transportation only if accurate vehicle information is available <i>and</i> it is confirmed that the senior citizen was driving the vehicle at the time of the disappearance.</p>   |
| Timing of Alert                                    | <p>There is not a waiting period to issue the alert. An alert may be issued for up to 24 hours. The requesting agency has the option to request extensions, granted upon review by the GDEM.</p>   |
| Expected Response by Law Enforcement and/or Public | <p>Law enforcement and the public are encouraged to look for the missing senior citizen. Media outlets (which may voluntarily participate) are encouraged to provide Silver Alert information to the public. The GDEM provides state network partners with information about the missing senior citizen, along with vehicle information if it is available. The public is encouraged to contact the appropriate law enforcement agency. The number of the agency is provided.</p>  |
| Association with AMBER Alert                       | <p>The GDEM administers both AMBER and Silver Alerts. The systems operate independently, although training on the Silver Alert system has been incorporated into the existing AMBER Alert coordination and training program. (Coordination refers to those activities used to facilitate review of alerts, planning, peer-training, and strengthening communication between network partners and other participating entities.) Texas' 17 regional AMBER Alert programs are managed and operated independently of the Texas Silver Alert Network. These programs employ a multitude of local and regional resources to recover abducted children. The GDEM supports communication, peer-training, and networking with all Texas regional AMBER Alert programs through meetings and workshops. Four of the regional AMBER Alert programs have incorporated missing senior advisories within their operations, and some regional AMBER Alert programs coordinate AMBER Alerts with local counties in nearby states. The GDEM process for receiving Silver Alert requests and informing the public about the alert is similar to the process for AMBER Alerts, except that the Emergency Alert System (EAS) is used only for AMBER Alerts. In addition, AMBER Alerts are distributed through the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)'s Secondary Distribution Notification System, which notifies participating law enforcement agencies, public service entities, internet and wireless providers, trucking companies, restaurant chains, and electronic billboard companies, among other entities; and to BeyondMissing.com, a program that distributes information about the alert through fax and email.</p> |

| Topics Inquired About   | Response by State  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Interstate Coordination | When an individual is believed to be in another state, the GDEM routes a message about the Silver Alert through the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS) to the other state's law enforcement point of contact. The GDEM collects statistics on the operational aspects of an alert, such as the number of requests and activations. It does not collect investigative case data, which could include information about whether the missing individual is believed to be in another state. The legislation authorizing the Silver Alert Network indicates the missing senior citizen must be domiciled within Texas; however, local law enforcement and media could still coordinate a public notification response within the affected areas about an individual who is not domiciled in the state, without activating the Silver Alert Network.  |
| System Costs            | The following costs are associated with the GDEM and the state's missing person clearinghouse (and does not include costs to other agencies). The approximate cost to the GDEM for coordinating the program with its existing AMBER Alert and Blue Alert programs and providing training on these programs was at least \$92,000 (this does not include initial operating costs). The GDEM has a coordinator to administer the alert system, along with the state's other alert systems. This position, along with ongoing costs for training and coordination activities are funded in state FY2009 through a grant (\$47,280) and internal operating expenses for the GDEM (\$45,000). The Missing Persons Clearinghouse, which provides investigative support to the GDEM, has two analysts dedicated to the alert system. Actual expenses, including salaries, operations, and travel for state FY2008, were approximately \$90,000. |
| Use of Alert System     | From September 1, 2007, through January 11, 2009, the GDEM issued 77 alerts for missing senior citizens.   |
| Outcomes                | Of the 77 individuals for whom alerts were issued, 71 were found alive and four were found deceased; 58 individuals were driving. According to state officials, the alert contributed to the recovery of 21 senior citizens (27.3%). As required by the alert activation criteria, the missing senior citizen must have a diagnosed impaired mental condition. No alerts were found to have been falsely reported. The GDEM collects statistics on the operational aspects of an alert, such as the number of requests and activations. It does not collect investigative case data, which would include detailed information about the circumstances around an individual's disappearance.  |

**Source:** Congressional Research Service based on correspondence with state officials in January 2009 and review of Sections 411.381-411.389 of the Texas Government Code.

**Table B-1 I. Virginia: Alert System for Missing Adults**

State refers to system as the “Virginia Senior Alert System”

| Topics Inquired About   | Response by State   |
|---|---|
| Authorizing Legislation and Purpose for Developing Alert System | In 2007, Governor Tim Kaine signed H.B. 2372 creating the Virginia Senior Alert system (see Sections 15.2-1718.1 and 52-34.4 - 52-34.6 of the Code of Virginia). The system was created with the purpose of modeling similar efforts underway in other states. The system was implemented in July 2007.   |
| Administration  | The Senior Alert system is administered by local law enforcement agencies, in coordination with the Virginia Missing Person Information Clearinghouse, within the Virginia State Police Department; Attorney General’s office; and the media. The alerts are issued locally by local law enforcement agencies, and regionally and statewide by the Virginia State Police.   |
| Association with AMBER Alerts                                   | The Virginia State Police Department issues all AMBER Alerts and issues regional and statewide Senior Alerts. The media is informed in the same way about the alerts, through email and facsimile. The state has a website for law enforcement agencies to request AMBER alerts. According to the state, funding is not available to build a similar website for Senior alerts. Further, the Emergency Alert System (EAS) is used only for AMBER Alerts. According to the state, the EAS may not be appropriate for Senior Alerts. Most, if not all, seniors who have been reported missing in Virginia travel on foot in close proximity to the place they were last seen. The state has explained that using EAS is more effective for AMBER Alerts because a child abduction usually happens quickly, and there is the high risk of death or serious physical injury to the child. In cases of missing seniors, the state would rather the media to report frequently about the individuals, and for search teams to begin their rescue efforts as soon as possible. |
| Training on and/or Education About the Alert System             | The Virginia State Police train local law enforcement agencies about the system and activation process. This training covers the criteria for activation and the activation process. The Attorney General’s Office has provided similar information to the public in formal presentations.  |
| Target Population   | The target population is individuals ages 60 years or older who suffer a cognitive impairment to the extent that he or she is unable to provide care to himself or herself without assistance from a caregiver. A cognitive impairment refers to Alzheimer’s Disease or other forms of dementia.  |
| Reporting the Missing Person                                    | A report can be made to a law enforcement agency by any caretaker. A caretaker can attest that the individual is missing and meets the qualifying medical criteria; however, the law enforcement agency that takes the report of the missing individual determines if this information is accurate and the person’s condition is suitable for the alert. Local and state law enforcement agencies take reports of a missing person. These agencies must first investigate the missing person case and determine if the criteria are met for issuing a Senior Alert, make the request (to the Virginia State Police, if needed), and complete accompanying request forms. The law enforcement agency (local or the Virginia State Police) has the discretion to issue the alert.   |
| Entity that Issues Alert  | Information about the missing person must be entered into the federal National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File before an alert is activated.  |
| Criteria for Issuing Alert                                      | The following criteria must be met to activate a Senior Alert: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the person is 60 years old or older;</li> <li>- the person has a cognitive impairment that renders him or her unable to provide care to himself or herself without assistance (including a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease or dementia);</li> <li>- the person’s whereabouts are unknown; and</li> <li>- the person’s disappearance poses a credible threat (as determined by a law enforcement agency) to his or her health or safety.</li> </ul>   |

| Topics Inquired About                              | Response by State   |
|--|---|
| Dissemination of Alert                             | The alert is issued by local law enforcement agencies (for local alerts) or the Virginia State Police (for regional or statewide alerts) to other appropriate law enforcement agencies, the media, and the public. The Virginia State Police notifies radio and television media about the alert through email and facsimile. In turn, the media may inform the public. The Virginia Missing Persons Clearinghouse posts and updates information about the alert on the Virginia State Police Department's Senior Alert website and where appropriate, creates posters for the missing individuals. The state does not typically issue alerts through electronic signs on the highway or other locations, and would only use the signs if the missing person is believed to be in a car. If alerts were issued on electronic signs, these signs would be those managed by the Virginia Department of Transportation, and where available, the Lamar Advertising Company, which owns signs in the state. |
| Expected Response by Law Enforcement and/or Public | Law enforcement agencies and the public are asked to be observant in finding the individual. The media are not required to issue an alert about the missing individual. The law enforcement agency that initiated the alert is required to provide phone number for tips and leads, and this number must be staffed at all times.   |
| Timing of Alert                                    | There is no waiting period to issue the alert; however, the law enforcement agency must first determine that the individual is, in fact, missing and not accounted for at all possible locations. An alert may be issued for up to 12 hours.  |
| Interstate Coordination                            | The state has not requested another state to issue an alert, but would use the National Law Enforcement Telecom System (NLETS) to transmit information about an alert. Virginia can issue alerts on behalf of adults who reside in other states but are believed to be in Virginia. However, Virginia's criteria for issuing an alert must be met before an alert may be issued, and the alert would be issued from the Virginia State Police. North Carolina requested the state to issue an alert for a missing North Carolina resident, which was activated. The individual was found deceased in North Carolina.  |
| System Costs                                       | The approximate costs to implement the program were \$30,000, for staff time (\$15,000) and technology (\$15,000) in state FY2007 (July 1-June 30). The estimated ongoing costs are \$25,000 annually. The ongoing costs are for staff time to administer the system, including handling and processing requests for the alert, activating the alert, assessing the alert after it has been issued, posting and removing information to the Virginia State Police Department missing website, and creating posters. The state will need about \$50,000 to build technology for the alert system and \$45,000 annually for training, outreach, and staff support.  |
| Use of Alert System                                | From approximately July 2007 through September 2008, the Virginia State Police issued seven alerts.   |
| Outcomes   | Of the seven individuals for whom alerts were issued, five were found alive and two were found deceased. All had Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia, and one was believed to have been driving. Most, if not all, traveled on foot in close proximity to the place they were last seen. According to the state, the alerts did not directly assist in the recovery of the missing individuals.   |

**Source:** Congressional Research Service based on correspondence with state officials in September 2008 and review of Sections 15.2-1718.1 and 52-34.4 - 52-34.6 of the Code of Virginia.

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