



COLORADO
Bureau of Investigation
Department of Public Safety

Missing Children Report

2021 Annual Report



Bringing our Missing Children Home!



Introduction

MISSING CHILDREN AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM

Each year, thousands of children are reported missing in the United States. Colorado is no exception. Although many of those missing children return safely, those who do not continue to be exposed to harmful and dangerous situations. In response to the growing national concern for missing and exploited children, the Federal Children's Assistance Act was passed in 1982. It directed the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to become actively involved in missing children cases. Federal efforts were further strengthened by the creation of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) in 1984.

During this time, child abduction cases were becoming more highly publicized in Colorado and public concern was mounting. In 1985, the legislature created the Colorado Missing Person Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse serves as a central repository for information on missing children in order to better define the problem. It collects, compiles, exchanges and disseminates information to help find missing children. Today there are Missing Person Clearinghouses in all 50 states as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Canada and the Netherlands. NCMEC continues to work closely with each of the Missing Child Clearinghouses providing training and technical assistance as needed to bring our missing children home.

An average of 39 children are reported missing every 24 hours in Colorado with the majority being runaways.

In 1996, there was public outcry after 9-year-old Amber Hagerman was abducted from a local grocery store in Arlington, Texas while riding her bicycle with her younger brother. Members of the community were outraged there was not a mechanism in place to alert the community when a child goes missing. Thus was born America's Missing Broadcast Emergency Response (AMBER) Alert which is a cooperative effort between law enforcement and the broadcasters to raise awareness in the community when a child is abducted. In 2002, the AMBER Alert program was created in Colorado.

In the 2000s, the definition and reporting guidelines were changed to better protect this vulnerable population. A missing child is defined as any individual less than 18 years of age whose whereabouts are unknown to the child's parents or legal guardian. In 2003, Suzanne's Law increased the age of a missing child from 18 to 21. Additionally, law enforcement is required to enter a missing child into the national criminal justice system within 2 hours of receiving a report for a missing child.

In 2014, federal legislation referred to as "Children Missing from Care" passed requiring state agencies to report a missing child to both the law enforcement agency as well as NCMEC within 24 hours of receiving information about a missing child under their care. This is one of our most at risk populations. Many of the children that fall into this category runaway of their own free will but find themselves in some of the most serious and dangerous situations.

Initially the missing child clearinghouse was established to raise awareness for those children who may have wandered away or who were abducted. Over the decades we have seen these approaches change as our communities change. Today it is less likely that a child will be taken from their bike in their neighborhood and more likely they will fall victim through online enticement which can occur through various social media apps and online gaming. This is the new way predators are abducting our children. It is happening less on the streets in our communities and more often in our homes and through our electronic devices. These predators are just as dangerous to our children.

We must continue to evolve with the times and do what we can to protect our most vulnerable population.

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE ACTIVITIES

- ◆ Develop and present specialized training programs to criminal justice and youth service professionals.
- ◆ Provide information regarding cases originating in Colorado to the NCMEC for inclusion in the national directory of missing and abducted children.
- ◆ Provide and ensure follow-up on all missing children cases originating in other states but linked to Colorado in some way, when requested.
- ◆ Provide information to out-of-state agencies concerning applicable Colorado State laws, relevant agency relationships, and recovery procedures.
- ◆ Help reunite missing children with their lawful parent or guardian by establishing cooperative mechanisms with other state clearinghouses.
- ◆ Assist in the preparation of missing children bulletins and their distribution to law enforcement agencies and school districts.
- ◆ Counsel citizens and business groups on how they may respond to the plight of missing children.
- ◆ Attempt to locate abductors by completing nationwide automated record and file searches and interacting with other organizations, agencies, or groups that may be instrumental in locating missing children.



RESPONSIBILITIES

LISTS

The Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Missing Persons Unit, compiles and distributes lists of missing children from reports submitted by local law enforcement agencies. The reports are released to school districts and to any other person or organization the Unit determines may be instrumental in the identification and recovery of missing children.

STATISTICS

Consistent with statute, the Missing Persons Unit maintains and distributes statistics on missing children which include:

- ◆ The number of missing children reported.
- ◆ The number of missing children cases resolved.
- ◆ The approximate physical location at which each child was last seen.
- ◆ The time of day each child was last seen.
- ◆ The age, gender, and physical description of each child reported missing.
- ◆ The activity the child was engaged in at the time last seen.
- ◆ The number of reported sightings of missing children.

(See charts on pages 6-10)

This report documents the circumstances of recovery of missing children. These include a breakdown by age, race, and sex in cases resolved by: recovery by a law enforcement agency, recovery by an agency other than law enforcement, voluntarily returned, deceased, and circumstances unknown. These were summarized for the first time in the 1991 Annual Report to give a clearer picture of what is being done to resolve missing children cases in Colorado.

DEFINITIONS

CCIC - Colorado Crime Information Center

Kidnapped - A person who is missing under circumstances indicating that the disappearance is not voluntary and who has been abducted by a stranger or non-family member.

Lost - A person who is presumed to have wandered away and has become lost and unable to return to a known location.

Missing Child - A child whose whereabouts are unknown, whose domicile at the time he was first reported missing was Colorado, and whose age at the time he was reported missing was seventeen years or younger.

NCIC - National Crime Information Center

NCMEC - The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

Non-Custodial Abduction - The taking of a child by the non-custodial parent or family member, with the intent to deprive the legal parent or guardian possession of that child.

Runaway - An un-emancipated juvenile who has left the home environment without a parent's or legal guardian's permission. (Classified as non-suspicious for statistical purposes.)

Resources

NCMEC

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's (NCMEC) mission is to help prevent child abduction and sexual exploitation; help find missing children; and assist victims of child abduction and sexual exploitation, their families, and the professionals who serve them.

NamUs

The National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) is a national centralized repository and resource center for missing persons and unidentified decedent records.

NamUs is a free online system that can be searched by medical examiners, coroners, law enforcement officials and the general public from all over the country in hopes of resolving these cases.

Rocky Mountain Innocence Lost Task Force

Part of a joint initiative with the Department of Justice that targets organizations involved in child prostitution.

MONITORING

The Unit reviews missing person's reports submitted to the Colorado Crime Information Center (CCIC) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) for validity, completeness and accuracy and ensures the originating agency makes any necessary corrections or additions.

When a child has been missing for thirty days, the Unit must attempt to obtain the child's dental records and attach them to the NCIC missing person report.

The Unit sends lists of children missing from Colorado to each Colorado school district for comparison with their enrollment records to identify missing children in their schools. If a district chooses, it may submit enrollment lists to the Unit for comparison with NCIC records to locate children missing from all states. When a match is verified, the Unit notifies the appropriate authorities to facilitate the return of the missing child.

AMBER ALERTS

AMBER

America's Missing Broadcast Emergency Response

The AMBER Alert System started in Dallas-Fort Worth in 1996 after 9-year-old Amber Hagerman was kidnapped while riding her bicycle in Arlington, Texas. Amber was later found brutally murdered, her case remains unsolved to this day. Broadcasters and law enforcement worked together to develop an early warning system to help find abducted children. America's Missing Broadcast Emergency Response was born, with the acronym AMBER in dedication to Amber Hagerman. Colorado adopted the AMBER alert program in 2002.

AMBER alerts enable communication with the public to disseminate information quickly for an abducted child. The Department of Justice created a criteria to release AMBER alerts to the public.

The criteria for AMBER alerts consists of the following:

- The abducted child must be 17 years of age or younger.
- The abducted child must be in immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death.
- There must be enough descriptive information available to believe a broadcast will assist or aid in the recovery of the child.
- The activation must be requested by a local law enforcement agency or AMBER Designee from another state.



The Colorado Bureau of Investigation is the liaison between local law enforcement and the primary Emergency Alert System (EAS) broadcaster for issuing alerts. AMBER alerts can only be issued by the Colorado Bureau of Investigation in the state of Colorado. In order to notify the public quickly of an AMBER alert, notification outlets include: statewide media, highway signboards, emergency alert system, wireless emergency alerts, Twitter, and other outlets such as social media and lottery machines. If the circumstances of the missing child does not meet AMBER criteria, a Missing Endangered Advisory Alert can still be sent out to the media, although it will not be sent through the Emergency Alert System or as a Wireless Emergency Alert.

AMBER Statistics*

- 395 attempted abductions occurred in 2021
- 1,114 children recovered specifically because of the AMBER Alert
- 123 children recovered specifically because of WEA (wireless emergency alerts)

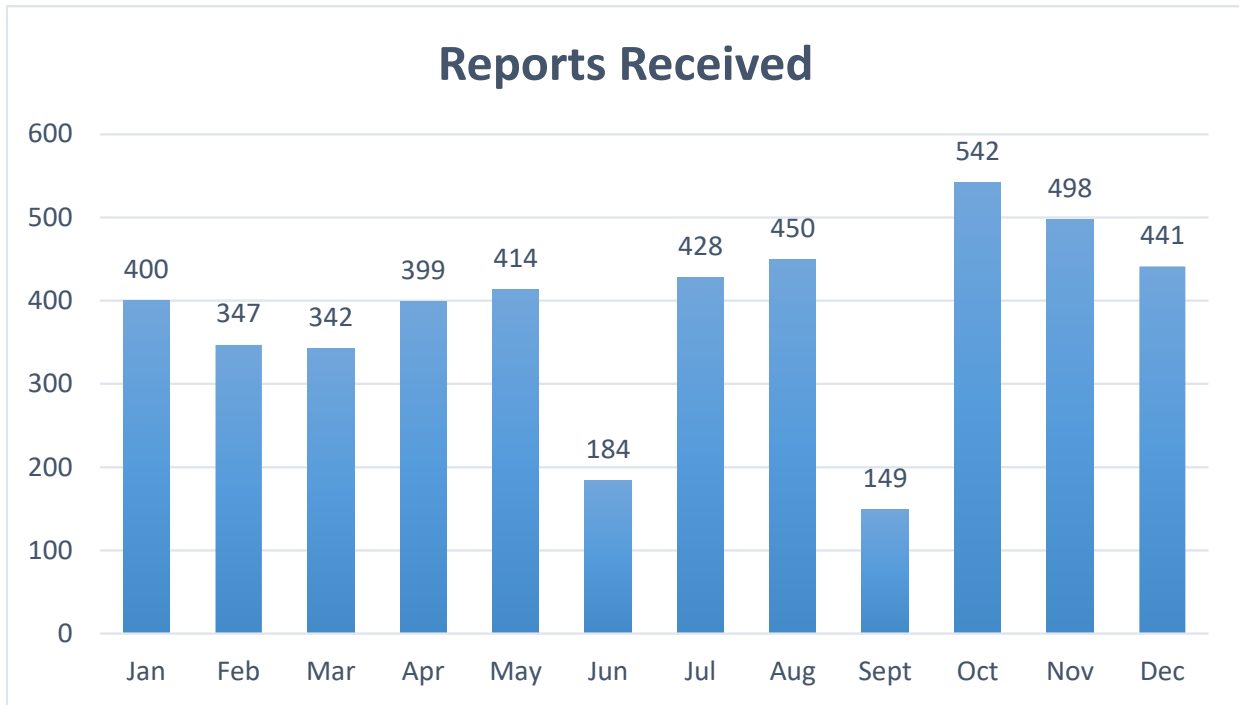
Colorado AMBER Alerts

- In 2021, there were 5 AMBER Alerts issued
- Every child in the AMBER Alerts were recovered safely
- The number of AMBER Alerts decreased by one from 2020

* As of May 2022 stats from US Dept of Justice <http://amberalert.ojp.gov/statistics>

FACTS OF INTEREST

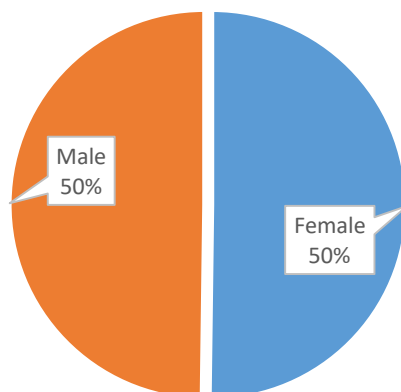
Information in this report was provided to the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI) by local law enforcement agencies using the CCIC automated information system. Each report filed with the local agency is entered into the CCIC computer as a separate case. The numbers below reflect cases as opposed to actual missing children, i.e. some children may have been reported missing, recovered, and subsequently missing once more. Thus, the intent of this report is to reflect the total number of entries in CCIC and total number of entries removed from CCIC in a given month. It does not indicate recovery rates based on each child. Finally, because this data is based only on reports, the program has no way of identifying those children who have not been reported to local authorities by parents or legal guardians. This information reflects persons reported as missing who are age 17 and younger.



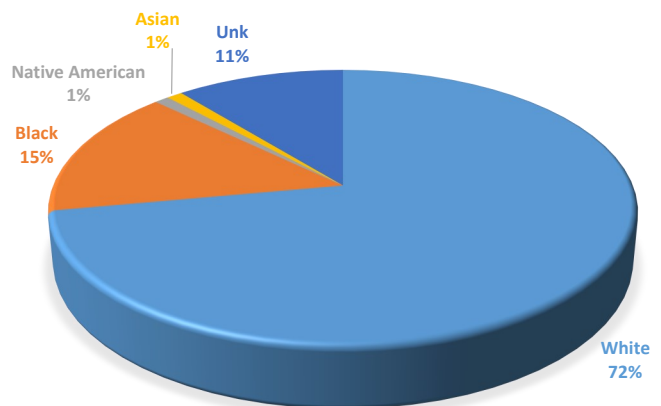
A total of 4,594 reports were received in 2021.

This is a decrease of 56.04% from the 8,197 reports received in 2018.

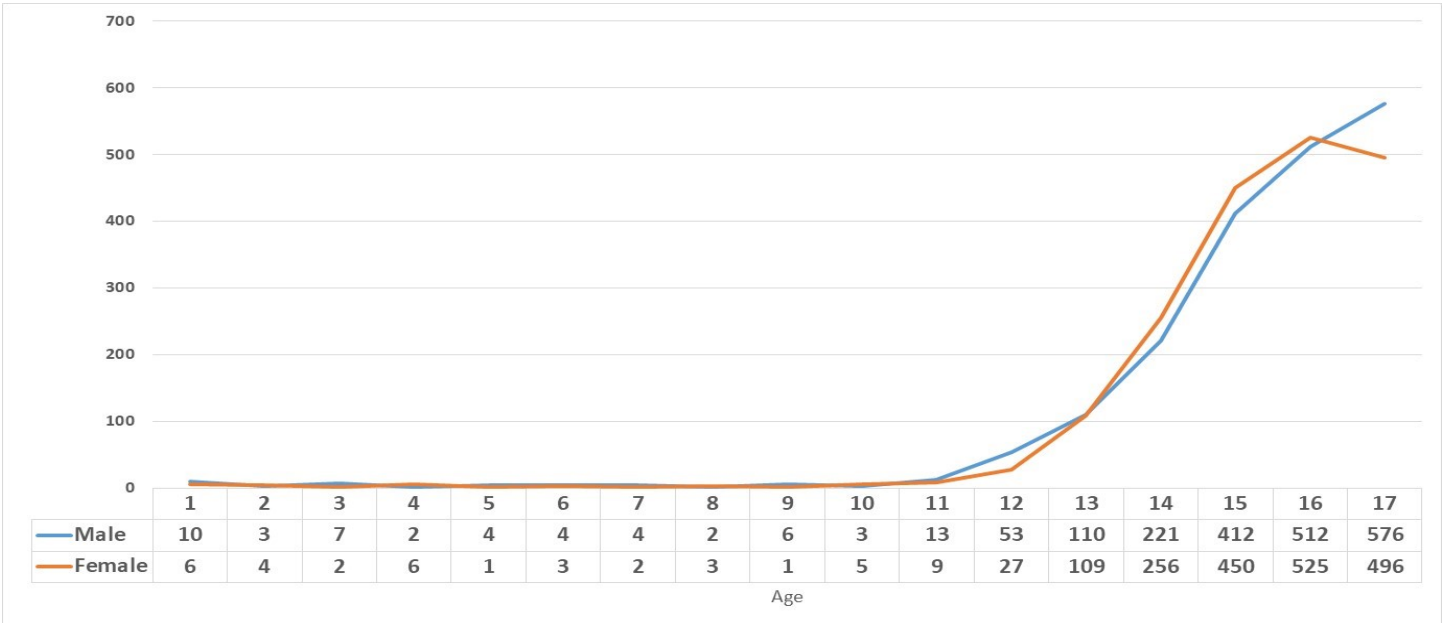
Gender



RACE



Missing by Age and Sex



81% of the children reported as missing were between the ages of 14 and 17.

45% of the children reported as missing were between the ages of 15 and 16.

The highest reported day of the week for children to last be seen was Friday.

The most common time for children to be last be seen was around 5 PM.

Day Last Seen

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Total
Female	284	362	335	312	311	395	250	2305
Male	321	340	320	351	322	385	303	2286
Total	605	702	655	663	633	780	553	4591

Time Last Seen



CIRCUMSTANCE OF MISSING

Non-Suspicious - typically signifies children who have either run away or have been taken by a family member but are not considered to be a victim of a non-custodial abduction

Lost - a person who is presumed to have wandered away and has become lost and unable to return to a known location

Kidnapped - a person who is missing under circumstances indicating that the disappearance is not voluntary and who has been abducted by a stranger or non-family member

Non-Custodial Abduction - the taking of a child by the non-custodial parent or family member with the intent to deprive the legal parent or guardian possession of that child

Suspicious - a person who is missing with insufficient information to enable placing the record in any other probable category

Unknown - the circumstances of their missing were not reported to law enforcement or the CBI

Age	Non-suspicious	Lost	Kidnapped	Non-custodial kidnap	Suspicious circumstance	Unknown	Total
0	13	0	0	2	0	0	15
1	2	0	1	3	3	0	9
2	8	0	0	0	0	1	9
3	1	0	0	2	1	1	5
4	4	0	0	2	2	0	8
5	3	0	0	0	1	1	5
6	4	0	0	2	2	0	8
7	2	0	0	0	0	2	4
8	6	0	0	0	1	0	7
9	6	0	0	0	0	2	8
10	19	0	0	1	1	1	22
11	75	0	0	0	4	1	80
12	216	0	1	0	1	1	219
13	469	2	0	1	3	2	477
14	848	1	0	1	3	8	861
15	1018	1	1	1	6	11	1038
16	1049	1	0	0	10	12	1072
17	728	1	0	2	3	13	747
TOTAL	4471	6	3	17	41	56	4594

Activities When Missing

	Female	Male	Total
At Friends/Relatives Inside Residence	64	53	117
At Friends/Relatives Outside Residence	31	20	51
At Home Inside Residence	1,254	1,187	2,441
At Home Outside Residence	301	275	576
At Public Place Inside Building	15	27	42
At Public Place Outside	45	77	122
Friends/Relatives Residence In Vehicle	17	4	21
Friends/Relatives Residence On Foot	14	16	30
In Custody Of A Public Institution	24	62	86
Inside A Building	16	17	33
Inside Private Residence	83	87	170
Inside Public Place	11	13	24
Inside School Building	71	59	130
On Trip In Local Area	0	2	2
On Vacation Trip In State	0	1	1
On Vacation Trip Out-Of-State	0	0	0
Other	20	40	60
Outside A Building	16	12	28
Outside At Private Residence	33	24	57
Outside At Public Place	29	30	59
Outside School Building	69	73	142
Public Place In Vehicle	12	11	23
Public Place On Foot	33	39	72
School In Vehicle	4	3	7
School On Foot	8	12	20
Traveling To Or From Anywhere On A Bicycle	5	3	8
Unknown	126	133	259
Work In Vehicle	2	2	4
Work On Foot	5	2	7
Total	2,308	2,284	4,594

Over half of the children were reported to have been last seen in or near their residence. A residence can be a family home, non-profit residential group home, foster home, or residential treatment facility.

CIRCUMSTANCES OF RECOVERY

Blank / Unknown - the circumstances of the child's recovery was not reported to law enforcement or the CBI

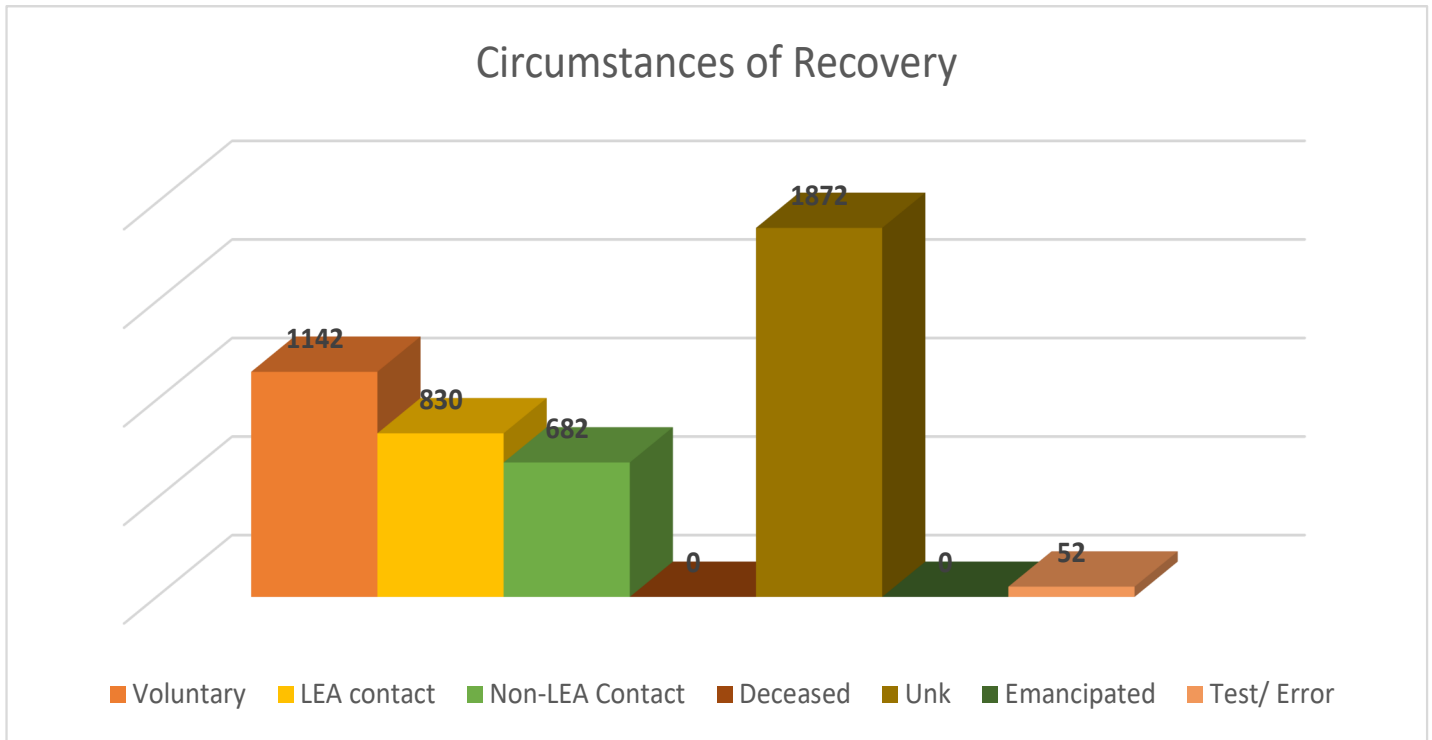
Deceased - the child was located deceased

Contacted by Law Enforcement - contact with law enforcement was responsible for the recovery of the child

Non-Law Enforcement Agency Contact - contact with a non-law enforcement agency was responsible for the recovery of the child

Test Record - the record was entered as a test record or was entered in error

Voluntary - the child returned voluntarily



Of the cases closed in 2021, 25% were resolved when the child returned voluntarily.

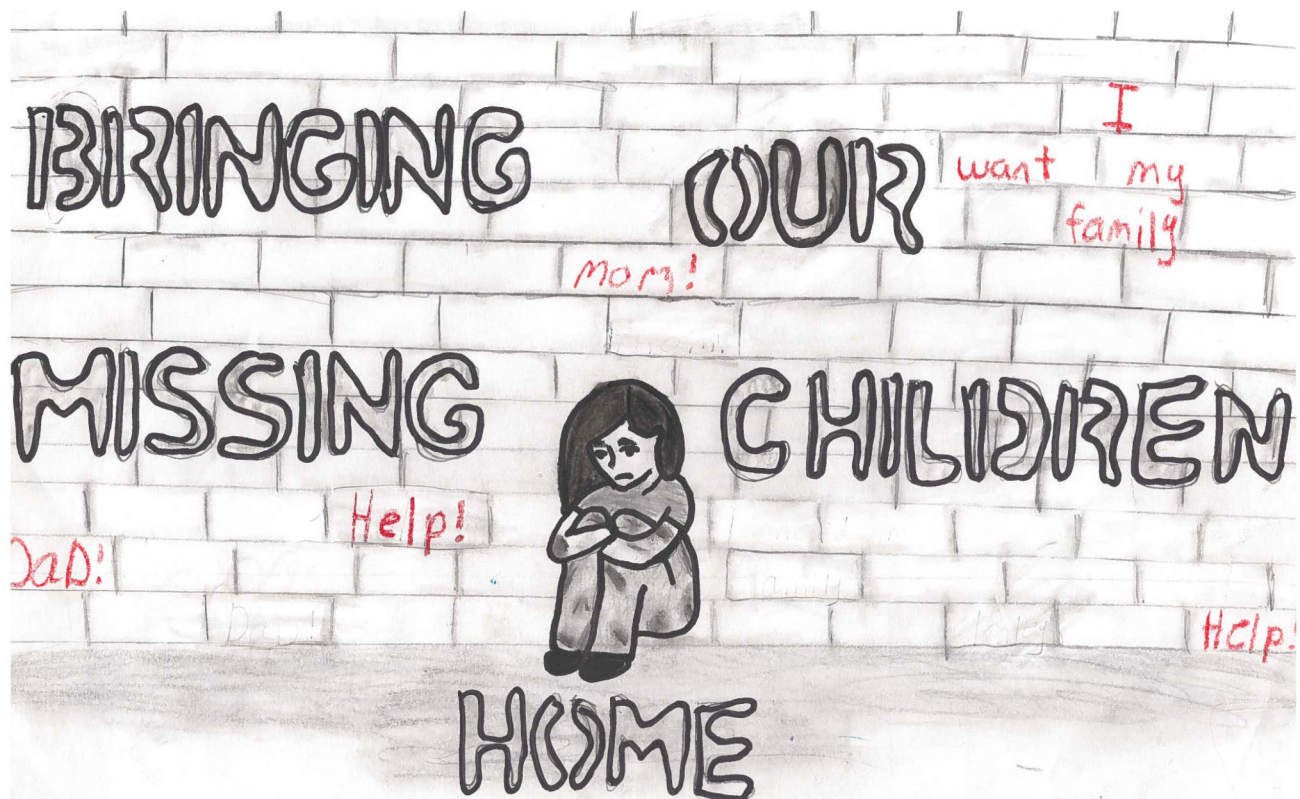
Contact with Law Enforcement was responsible for the resolution of another 18% of cases. The remaining circumstances of recovery are from a non-law enforcement agency or the circumstances of the child's recovery are not reported to law enforcement or the CBI.

MISSING CHILDREN'S DAY POSTER CONTEST

Since 1983, May 25 has been designated as National Missing Children's Day and every year the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) takes time to commemorate the valiant and unselfish acts of the many organizations and individuals who bring our missing children home.

In conjunction with this event the DOJ sponsors a national poster contest for fifth graders and announces the winner at the annual National Missing Children's Day Ceremony in Washington, DC. Each state submits one entry for the national contest.

Kacey from Cheraw Elementary was the winner for the 2021 Colorado contest and her poster is featured on the cover of this report. The second and third place winners are shown below.



2nd Place

Aliana

Holly School



3rd Place
Collins
Holly School

To learn more about the National Missing Children’s Day Poster Contest or to see previous submissions, please visit <https://ncjtc.fvtc.edu/programs/PR00005772/37th-annual-national-missing-childrens-day>

If you have questions about the Missing Children Program please contact the Colorado Bureau of Investigation at 303-239-4211 or visit <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cbi/missing-children>