



Homicide Investigation Tracking System
(800) 345-2793



CASE MANAGEMENT for Missing Children Homicide Investigation

May 2006

Rob McKenna
Attorney General of Washington

&

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Juvenile Justice and
Delinquency Prevention

Katherine M. Brown
Robert D. Keppel
Joseph G. Weis
Marvin E. Skeen

INVESTIGATIVE CASE MANAGEMENT FOR MISSING CHILDREN HOMICIDES: REPORT II

ROB MCKENNA
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF WASHINGTON

&

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
OFFICE OF JUVENILE JUSTICE AND
DELINQUENCY PREVENTION

2006
Cooperative Agreement
98-MC-CX-0001

Katherine M. Brown,¹ Robert D. Keppel,²
Joseph G. Weis,³ & Marvin E. Skeen⁴

¹ Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas, USA

² Seattle University, Seattle, Washington, USA

³ University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, USA

⁴ Washington State Attorney General's Office, Seattle, Washington, USA

The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice.

This project was supported by Grant No. 98-MC-CX-0001 awarded by the grantor agency's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors wish to recognize and thank John Scott Blonien, Division Chief of the Criminal Justice Division, Washington State Attorney General's Office, and the members of the Homicide Investigation Tracking System of the Washington State Attorney General's Office for their assistance in this research: Chief Criminal Investigators John Turner, Lockheed Reader, and Darryl Roosendaal; Investigators George Fox, Robert Gebo, Kenneth Hanfland, James Hansen, Robert LaMoria, Darrell Noble, Richard Steiner, Frank Tennison, and Gary Trent; and staff Nicole Siver and Victoria Woods. In particular, the help of Investigator/Analyst Tamara Matheny was invaluable. We also want to thank the individuals who provided data input: Carolyn Brooks, Inge A. Fordham, Janusz Springer and Allan Womac. We are grateful to Kc L. Wendler Deaver for her assistance in data result verification.

The following organizations were instrumental in the primary data collection for this project:

- ◆ The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).
- ◆ The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).
- ◆ NCMEC's Project Alert and Project Alert Volunteer John Hamilton.

We want to acknowledge Governor Christine Gregoire, who was the Attorney General of the state of Washington at the inception of this grant project.

We also wish to thank the detectives who investigated the murders of abducted or missing children and the agencies that provided data.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF TABLES	vi
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	ix
CHAPTERS	
I INTRODUCTION	1
Missing and Abducted Children Statistics	2
Definitions	3
II METHODOLOGY	5
Introduction	5
Child Abduction Murder Data	5
Case Criteria	6
Data Collection Instrument	7
Data Integrity	8
Resulting Data	8
Definitions	8
Purpose of the Study	10
Data Analysis	11
III VICTIMS	12
Introduction	12
Initial Police Involvement	12
When an Abducted Child is Killed	13
Victims Overview	14
Victim's Race and Gender	15

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

	Victim's Age	16
	Lifestyle of Victims	17
IV	KILLERS	18
	Introduction	18
	Killer Attributes	18
	Killer's Age	18
	Killer's Race	19
	Killer's Gender	20
	Killer's Marital Status	20
	Killer's Residential Status	21
	Killer's Employment and Occupation Status	22
	Killer's Lifestyles	22
	Killer's Past Behavior	23
	Killer's Prior Crimes	24
	Custody Status	25
V	VICTIM-KILLER RELATIONSHIP	26
	Introduction	26
	Victim-Killer Relationship	26
	Victim-Killer Relationship by Age and Gender	27

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

VI	KILLER MOTIVATION AND VICTIM SELECTION.....	30
	Introduction.....	30
	Sexual Motivation.....	31
	Pornography.....	32
	Crises and Stressors.....	32
	Choosing and Controlling the Victim.....	33
	Binding of Victim.....	36
	Cause of Death.....	37
	Unusual Acts.....	38
	Body Disposal/Recovery.....	38
	Post Offense Behavior.....	40
VII	INVESTIGATION.....	43
	Introduction.....	43
	Police Refusal to Accept a Missing or Runaway Child Report.....	43
	Multiple Police Agencies.....	43
	Unknowing Witnesses.....	44
	Neighborhood Canvass.....	44
	Area Search.....	46
	Who Discovered the Body of the Victim.....	47
	Investigative Steps in the First 48 Hours.....	48
	Police Contact with Killer.....	49
	Physical Evidence.....	50

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

Discarded Evidence..... 51

Polygraph..... 52

News Media..... 53

Outside Forces That Created Problems for the Investigators..... 54

Red Herrings..... 55

VIII MURDER INCIDENT SITES..... 56

 Introduction..... 56

 Components of the Murder Incident..... 56

 Separation of Components by Time and Distance..... 57

 Investigative Implications..... 58

 Separation of Components in Child Abduction Murders..... 59

 When Time is Known..... 59

 When Place is Known..... 60

 When Time or Place is Known..... 61

 When Both Time and Place are Known..... 61

 Time Interval Between Incidents..... 62

 Distance Between Sites..... 67

 Analysis of Distance by Murder Incident Component..... 72

 Victim Last Seen Site..... 72

 Initial Contact Site..... 72

 Murder Site..... 74

 Body Recovery Site..... 74

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

IX	SERIES CASES.....	76
	Introduction.....	76
	Comparison of Series and Non-Series Cases.....	76
	Victims' Gender.....	77
	Victim-Killer Relationship.....	77
	Killers' Personal Problems.....	78
	Prior Crimes Against Children.....	79
	Linking Cases.....	79
X	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	81
	Introduction.....	81
	How Can We Protect Our Children?.....	83
	REFERENCES.....	85
	PROJECT STAFF.....	87

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1	CAM Data Set.....	21
2	Percentage of Missing Children Reports within Time Periods.....	23
3	When an Abducted Child is Killed.....	24
4	Victim Race.....	25
5	Victim Gender.....	25
6	Distribution of Victims by Age Groups.....	26
7	Distribution of Killers by Age Groups.....	29
8	Killer Race.....	30
9	Marital Status of Killer.....	31
10	Living Arrangements of Killer.....	31
11	Killer Occupations.....	32
12	Perceived Lifestyle of Killer.....	33
13	Personal Problems of the Killer.....	34
14	Prior Crimes Against Children by Killer.....	34
15	Victim-Killer Relationship.....	36
16	Female Victim-Killer Relationship, By Age Group.....	37
17	Male Victim-Killer Relationship, By Age Group.....	38
18	Victim-Killer Relationship by Victim Gender.....	38
19	Modus Operandi (MO) Similarities Between Other Crimes and Child Abduction Murder.....	41
20	How Killer Chose Victim.....	43

LIST OF TABLES (Continued)

21	How Killer Initiated Contact with Victim.....	44
22	Area of Initial Victim-Killer Contact.....	44
23	Area of Initial Victim-Killer Contact by Type of Murder.....	45
24	Why Killer Was at the Victim Contact Site.....	45
25	How Killer Gained Control of Victim.....	46
26	Cause of Death.....	47
27	Cause of Death by Type of Murder.....	48
28	Area of Body Recovery.....	49
29	Area of Body Recovery by Type of Murder.....	49
30	How Killer Selected Body Disposal Site.....	50
31	How Killer Disposed of Body.....	50
32	Post Offense Behavior of Killers.....	51
33	Who Discovered Victim's Body.....	58
34	Major Investigative Steps in the First 48 Hours.....	59
35	Physical Evidence Related to Killer.....	61
36	Relationship of Persons Polygraphed to Victim.....	62
37	Effect of Media Coverage on the Investigation.....	64
38	Problems Caused by Outside Forces.....	65
39	Murder Incident Component Time Known.....	70
40	Murder Incident Component Place Known.....	70
41	Murder Incident Component Time or Place Known.....	71
42	Murder Incident Component Time and Place Known.....	72

LIST OF TABLES (Continued)

43	Time Span Between Victim Last Seen and Initial Contact.....	73
44	Time Span Between Victim Last Seen and Murder.....	74
45	Time Span Between Victim Last Seen and Body Recovery.....	75
46	Time Span Between Initial Contact and Murder.....	75
47	Time Span Between Initial Contact and Body Recovery.....	76
48	Time Span Between Murder and Body Recovery.....	77
49	Distance Between Victim Last Seen Site and Initial Contact Site.....	78
50	Distance Between Victim Last Seen Site and Murder Site.....	78
51	Distance Between Victim Last Seen Site and Body Recovery Site.....	79
52	Distance Between Initial Contact Site and Murder Site.....	79
53	Distance Between Initial Contact Site and Body Recovery Site.....	80
54	Distance Between Murder Site and Body Recovery Site.....	80
55	Distance Between Murder Incident Component Sites.....	81
56	Victim Gender by Series and Non-Series Cases.....	87
57	Victim-Killer Relationship by Series and Non-Series Cases.....	88
58	Personal Problems of Killers by Series and Non-Series Cases.....	88

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cases of abducted and missing children found murdered continue to traumatize victims' families and friends and the public. While these cases are still quite rare, with the amount of national and international media attention they are given, we too quickly recognize the victims' names.

Our first research into this subject was “undertaken in an effort to better understand these types of murders and to identify investigative techniques and strategies that will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal investigations and the apprehension rate of murderers who abduct children.” This follow-up research continues that effort.

We collected 175 solved cases and added them to the original data set. We obtained the new cases from agencies of all sizes in the United States and even went to some states not included in the original survey.

The additional cases are reflective and supportive of the original report with several significant and definite differences between the first study and this one. With more killers identified, we find that the relationships between them and their victims change from strangers to an almost equal likelihood of being friends/acquaintances. The probability of the killer's name coming up during the first week of the investigation decreases. Another significant change is the increase of the use of pornography by killers as a trigger. This should not be surprising, given the overwhelming sexual motivation of killers in these cases.

Victims continue to be females slightly over 11 years of age, leading normal lives and living with normal families – typical low-risk victims. The initial contact between the victim and killer is still within ¼ mile of the victim’s residence.

The killers remain around 27 years old and are predominately unmarried, with half of them living either alone or with their parents. Half of them are unemployed, and those who are employed work in unskilled or semi-skilled occupations.

More than half of these cases are initially reported to a law enforcement agency as a “missing child.” Fast action is necessary since there is typically over a two-hour delay in making the initial missing child report, and the vast majority of the abducted children *who are murdered* are dead within three hours of the abduction.

One question answered by this research is this: What can we tell parents to help them protect their children? Even though child abduction murders are rare, parents must eliminate, or minimize, the opportunity for their children to become victims. We need to tell parents that if their child is unaccounted for, *call the police immediately.*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Child abduction murder is every parent's worst nightmare. To compound the problem, child abduction murders are incredibly difficult to solve and deeply impact law enforcement officials involved in the investigation. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), abductions resulting in a child's death present many investigative and emotional obstacles for law enforcement officers (National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2000). Hanfland, Keppel, and Weis (1997) state that the rarity of child abduction murders, even among criminal homicides, and their complex, emotion-laden, high profiles, make them extremely difficult to investigate.

The 1979 abduction of seven-year-old Etan Patz and the 1981 abduction and murder of six-year-old Adam Walsh terrified parents throughout the nation. As a result of the notoriety of these cases, inflated and unsubstantiated numbers of missing children were widely reported to be over 2 million per year. The number of children who were abducted and then murdered was erroneously reported to be as high as 5,000 per year (National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2000).

The public outcry over concern for the safety of America's children contributed to the establishment of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children by the United States Congress. To the contrary, careful research has shown that between 40 and 150 incidents of child abduction murder occur each year, which is less than one half of one percent of the murders committed nationally. On average, there is one child abduction murder for every 10,000 reports of a missing child (Finklehor, Hotaling, & Sedlak, 1992).

