

THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT HEALTH CENTER
JOHN DEMPSEY HOSPITAL
ADMINISTRATIVE MANUAL

SECTION: PATIENT CARE NUMBER: 08-078

SUBJECT: Code Pink Infant or Child Abduction PAGE: 1 of 5

PURPOSE: To outline the procedure to be followed in the event of an abduction of a child from John Dempsey Hospital.

Based on its analysis of cases of child abduction, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children has listed the following characteristics of the “typical” abductor:

1. Female of “childbearing” age (range 12 to 50), often overweight.
2. Most likely compulsive, most often relies on manipulation, lying and deception.
3. Frequently indicates that she has lost a baby or is incapable of having one.
4. Often married or cohabitating; companion’s desire for a child or the abductor’s desire to provide her companion with “his” child may be the motivation for the abduction.
5. Usually lives in the community where the abduction takes place.
6. Frequently initially visits the nursery and the maternity units at more than one healthcare facility prior to the abduction; asks detailed questions about procedures and the maternity floor layout; frequently uses a fire stairwell for her escape and may also try to abduct from the home setting.
7. Usually plans the abduction but does not necessarily target a specific Child; frequently seizes any opportunity present.
8. Frequently impersonates a nurse or other allied healthcare personnel – may obtain hospital scrubs or equipment.
9. Often becomes familiar with healthcare staff, staff work routines, and victim parents.
10. Demonstrates a capability to provide “good” care to the baby once the abduction occurs.

The maternal/newborn units at JDH have implemented a number of security measures in order to protect hospitalized Childs. (Refer to protocol “Safety and Security of Newborns” in the NICU/NBN/OB-GYN/MFICU Unit Practice Manual.) **However, it is recognized that a vigilant and well-trained work force and families that are educated about child security are the best defense against Child abduction.**

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ADMINISTRATIVE MANUAL

SECTION: PATIENT CARE NUMBER: 08-078

SUBJECT: Code Pink Infant or Child Abduction PAGE: 2 of 5

POLICY:

1. "Code Pink" designates an infant or child abduction.
2. All John Dempsey Hospital employees are responsible for the safety and security of infants or children in our care.
3. All JDH and Health Center employees are educated about their responsibilities in the event that a Code Pink is called.
4. Code Pink drills will be conducted on a regular basis.
5. The Department of Public Safety should be informed immediately about a suspected or confirmed infant or child abduction.
6. The Department of Public Safety should be informed of circumstances that may increase potential likelihood of abduction, for example when there is an existing restraining order involving a hospitalized patient or when an infant or child is being placed in the custody of the Department of Children and Families (DCF).
7. All calls from the media related to a Code Pink are to be referred to Clinical Operations Administration who will collaborate with Public Safety and the Office of Communications regarding the release of information in order to avoid jeopardizing the investigation. Other JDH and Health Center employees are not to talk to the media.

PROCEDURE:

1. Responsibilities of **all JDH/Health Center staff** on hearing a code pink called:
 - a. Look for suspicious persons walking through or exiting the hospital. Be aware of persons in laboratory or other non-public areas without Health Center ID badges.
 - b. Pay close attention to exits.
 - c. Watch for persons that are hand-carrying an infant or accompanying a child. Abductors may carry infants in plain view or in large containers such as gym bags or tote bags.
 - d. If you observe a suspicious person, attempt to engage in conversation to slow her/him down while having a co-worker call the police. Do not get into a physical confrontation. Please note that physical violence has not generally been used in abductions from health care facilities but violence is common in abductions from the home. If it is possible and safe to do so, follow the person and note her direction of travel.
 - e. If the suspect has already left the building get a good physical description, direction of flight and other information such as vehicle make and registration and contact Health Center police immediately.

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JOHN DEMPSEY HOSPITAL
ADMINISTRATIVE MANUAL

SECTION: PATIENT CARE

NUMBER: 08-078

SUBJECT: Code Pink Infant or Child Abduction

PAGE: 3 of 5

2. Responsibilities of **Unit/Department Staff** in the event of a suspected or identified infant or child abduction
 - a. Immediately dial x7777 and report a Code Pink
 - b. Immediately and simultaneously search the entire unit including storage areas, closets, call rooms, etc
 - c. Notify the immediate supervisor of events that are known. The immediate supervisor will contact hospital administration. In the off shifts, the administrator on call should be notified.
 - d. Secure and protect the area until relieved by public safety – this will be treated as a crime scene and a potential source of forensic evidence.
 - e. Limit entry to the area to necessary personnel and law enforcement personnel. A written record will need to be made of all persons allowed entry to the area after the incident occurred
 - f. Do not permit staff, patients, or visitors to leave the area until their identity is known and they are excused by the police department.
 - g. Escort the parents of the abducted infant and child to a private area – assign a staff member to accompany the parents at all times.
 - h. Secure all medical records of the mother and infant or child if applicable.
 - i. For a newborn, notify the lab and place a hold on any blood specimens (including cord blood that was obtained at birth).
 - j. Offer emotional and spiritual support to the family – contact social work, pastoral services, or the psychiatric liaison service. Contact supportive family members and provide an area for these individuals.
 - k. Provide regular, ongoing, information updates to the family in collaboration with the health center police department.
 - l. If on the perinatal units:
 - i. Perform a head count of all infants and compare to unit census).
 - ii. Leave all Childs in their existing locations (e.g. newborn nursery or mother’s room) until the area is secured.
 - iii. Remove all Childs from family rooms and return them to their designated bed spaces
 - iv. If the mother is an in-patient, she should be transferred to a private room off the OB-GYN unit. Leave her belongings in the room. Nursing staff from the perinatal units should care for her on the unit.
 - v. The nursing manager/designee should brief all unit staff about the events that occurred and the actions that were taken.

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ADMINISTRATIVE MANUAL

SECTION: PATIENT CARE

NUMBER: 08-078

SUBJECT: Code Pink Infant or Child Abduction

PAGE: 4 of 5

If the event occurred in the nurseries, nursing staff will communicate with all obstetric patients/families about the incident and actions that are being taken. Every effort should be made to contact the families of all Newborn boarders and infants in the NICU and Special Care Nursery (SCN) whose families are not in house. The goal is that families not hear about this event from the media.

3. Responsibilities of **Managers/Department Heads**:

- a. Keep staff informed about the events and the course and progress of the investigation
- b. Act as a liaison between unit staff and hospital administration
- c. Act as a liaison between the Department of Public Safety and Unit staff
- d. Assign a single liaison between the parents and the facility after discharge of the mother.
- e. Arrange for debriefing sessions for staff with qualified professional staff to discuss the event and the impact on the staff. These sessions should be held as soon as possible and all staff directly involved should be required to attend. It is possible that staff may experience post-traumatic stress disorder after an infant or child abduction. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children also provides support services to staff.
- f. Notify other area hospitals whenever abductions are attempted or when persons are identified who demonstrate behaviors of potential abductors.

4. Responsibilities of the **Department of Public Safety**:

- a. Upon notification of a Code Pink, the Police Department Officer-in-Charge will immediately dispatch an Officer to the scene
 - i. This Officer is responsible for obtaining all initial information available and for security of the scene and evidence. This includes questioning the infant or child's parent(s) about their interactions with staff and others and about other possible locations of the Child within the facility.
 - ii. This officer will implement lockdown of the perinatal areas (if applicable) so that all non-staff access would be restricted through the use of the intercom.
 - iii. No one will be allowed to leave the scene without their being identified.

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ADMINISTRATIVE MANUAL

SECTION: PATIENT CARE NUMBER: 08-078
SUBJECT: Code Pink Infant or Child Abduction PAGE: 5 of 5

- b. The Police Department Officer-in-Charge will immediately implement the Lock Down Plan for the Upper Campus if abduction occurred at JDH. If abduction occurred at other campus locations, lock down of the building will be implemented.
- c. If applicable and upon authorization of the Director of Public Safety or in his absence, the Assistant Chief of the Police Department would activate the Amber Alert Plan.
- d. If applicable and as soon as practical, all videotapes from any monitoring cameras shall be secured as evidence.
- e. At some point, Contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) at 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678). The NCMEC may also be helpful in recovery efforts and for staff support.

APPROVAL: Department of Public Safety

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