



DEPT. OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT

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Administrative Order No. 55  
Series of 2003

SUBJECT: Guidelines in the Implementation of the Missing Children Program

**I. Introduction**

Committed to the welfare of the Filipino, their protection from pernicious effects of drugs, prostitution, child labor and others, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) banded together with the Intergate Browser Systems, Inc. (INTERGATE) to develop and implement a project for easier access for the location and rescue of missing children through the **sagipbata.com**.

The **sagipbata.com** is a community service dedicated to the missing children. This project aims to help in disseminating information in a faster and less complicated way by making the web its medium of distribution.

This guideline provides the implementation procedures and interventions for cases of missing children. It defines the cooperating agency's roles and functions for this particular project.

**II. Rationale**

Every year, hundreds of children disappear or are removed from the protection and care of their legal guardian under circumstances that place these children in grave danger. Many of these children are never reunited with their families and often there are no clues of their whereabouts. The separation of a child from his/her family or a legal guardian causes alarm not only for the parents, but most especially to the children. This may cause long term or even lifetime psychosocial effects on the children and on the other members of the family, if not properly handled and provided with appropriate interventions.

Generally, parents and local law enforcement agencies do not have the resources to mount efforts that require assistance from distant communities where missing children may be located. Assistance from an organization, such as the Intergate, will facilitate nationwide, as well as international, information dissemination because the web is utilized as the medium of communication. Through the web, a campaign to locate the missing child is called for, urging the community through those who visit the website to participate.

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## Descriptica of the Program

The Missing Children Program is the government's response to the growing number of children who are separated from their families due to disappearance or removal of a child from the protection of the family.

The Missing Children Program utilizes the **sagipbata.com** project, a website which serves as an information center for missing children where pictures of and information about missing children will be posted, to be viewed by internet users 24 hours a day. It also involves the use of a mobile messaging system with a designated number to receive reports of missing children.

Through the web, the community/public is urged to participate in the location of missing children by reporting to appropriate authorities once a missing child is found. The public is also encouraged to print copies of information sheets about missing children from the web and help post in conspicuous places in the community, for public viewing in the search of the missing children and eventually for their rescue.

Biopsychosocial interventions are provided to children who are recovered or found as well as their families. Family reunification is the end goal of the program, but if it is not possible, then the best possible placement for the child will be determined.

## Legal Bases

These guidelines draw its mandate from the following:

1. *RA 7610, Special Protection of Filipino Children*

Article I, Section 2,

The Department is mandated to provide protection to children from exploitation, trafficking, abuse and other conditions prejudicial to their development.

It is the policy of the State to protect and rehabilitate children gravely threatened by circumstances which affect or will affect their survival and normal development and over which they have no control.

*Rules and Regulations on the Reporting and Investigation of Child Abuse Cases*

Section 20

At the request of the victim or his representative, the name of the child shall be withheld by the Department until the court has acquired jurisdiction over the case.



Section 22

The prosecutor in a child abuse case shall, taking into consideration the age, psychological maturity and understanding of the child victim, the nature of the unlawful acts committed, the desire of the victim and the interests of the child's family, take the necessary steps to exclude the public during the giving of testimony of the child victim; to limit the publication of information, photographs or artistic renderings that may identify the victim; and to prevent the undue and sensationalized publicity of the case.

2. RA 8792, *Electronic Commerce Act*

Section 1

Declaration of Policy. The State recognizes the vital role of information and communication technology (ICT) in nation building.

Section 3, i.

Government as a Model User. Government shall utilize new electronic means to deliver core public service in order to demonstrate the benefits derived therefrom and to promote the use of such means.

Section 7

Legal Recognition of Electronic Data Messages and Electronic Documents. Information shall not be denied validity or enforceability solely on the ground that it is in the form of an electronic data message or electronic document, purporting to give rise to such legal effect. Electronic data messages or electronic documents shall have the legal effect, validity or enforceability as any other document or legal writing.

V. Objectives

*General:* To protect the rights and promote the welfare of missing children.

*Specific:*

1. To facilitate reporting of cases of missing children through the installation of a tracking system.
2. To provide a comprehensive program for missing children and their families.
3. To enable service providers have an understanding of the interventions for missing children and their families.
4. To provide for specific procedures in helping the missing children for their return to their families/relatives.
5. To define the roles and functions of service implementers with other agencies.



6. To strengthen coordination with government agencies with respect to the program implementation.
7. To foster social responsibility and encourage the public to participate in the program.
8. To help curb kidnapping and child trafficking.

## VI. Definition of Terms, Roles and Functions

For purposes of this Order, the following terms shall be defined as:

1. "Missing children" shall refer to persons below eighteen (18) years of age or those over but are unable to fully take care of themselves (those with mental retardation, cerebral palsy, etc.) whose whereabouts are unknown to such individual's parents or legal guardian for at least twenty-four (24) hours.
2. "Department" shall refer to a duly authorized officer or social worker of the Department of Social Welfare and Development or similar agency of a local government unit tasked to provide information regarding the circumstances surrounding the loss of the child, to promote awareness and coordinate programs to reunite missing children with their parents or legal guardian.
3. "Intergate" shall refer to the private corporation who had made contribution by hosting the web site [www.sagipbata.com](http://www.sagipbata.com) as an information distributor for missing children.
4. "Matching" shall refer to the process of validation of missing and foundling children in the web. If the identification of a missing child posted in the website are the same with that of a foundling child also posted in the website, then a match has been made. This means that a missing child has been located.

## VII. Implementing Guidelines

### A. Reporting and Verification

The first phase of the program includes the tasks of reporting, verification and posting of cases. A workflow diagram was developed to show the step-by-step procedures in relation to concerned agencies/offices (ANNEX A).

Children who have been missing for a long time can be reported to DSWD Central or Regional Offices. Any relative of the missing child shall fill-up an information sheet (ANNEX B). The information sheet contains all pertinent data surrounding the loss of the child.

With new communications technology existing today like the mobile messaging system the public can send in text or Short Messaging System reports of children who are missing recently. If there is no mobile phone available, one may go to the nearest barangay office or



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DSWD crisis intervention units located in the municipality or city. For SMART subscribers, the number is 0918-933-DSWD and for GLOBE subscribers it is 0917-898-JOST. The text message should contain the following information:

1. Name of missing child;
2. Circumstances of loss; (e.g. failed to come home, allegedly abducted for sexual abuse, kidnapped by housemaid, stow-away or left home for no reason, lost and mentally unstable etc.)
3. Name and e-mail address or any contact number of the sender

After receiving the text message, the Department will refer the case to the Philippine National Police (PNP) for verification and authentication and the conduct of search and rescue operations, if needed. Moreover, an automated response generated by the system upon receiving the text message report shall be forwarded back to the sender to provide further directions and procedures.

#### B. Posting of Cases

If the text message report was found to be true, PNP units shall secure from the missing child's parent or relative the filled-up information sheet and together with a signed waiver form (ANNEX C). This form states permission to allow posting of the missing child's picture and information on the *Sagip Bata* internet website. Upon completion of the necessary requirements, PNP will forward the information sheet to DSWD for uploading. The Department will assess whether the case is only that of a missing child. If the case is assessed to be a form of child abuse (RA 7610), then no posting on the web shall be made and the case will be treated with **strict confidentiality**. The following are excluded for posting:

1. Cases with security risk; e.g. sexual abuse, maltreatment, children involved in armed conflict;
2. Cases where the parent or legal guardian requested not to disclose any information about the child to the public; and
3. Cases where the child is a witness to a heinous crime.
4. Cases of kidnapped and / or trafficked child.

The Department may also post cases of children under its custody like the foundling or abandoned for relatives to file a claim. The public and non-government organizations (NGO's) shall be requested by the DSWD regional offices to submit cases of both missing and foundling children, which shall submit these to the Programs and Projects Bureau (PPB) for posting on the web. The following information for both missing and foundling or abandoned child are posted on the website:

1. Picture of the child;
2. Name of the child;
3. Date of Birth;



4. Age;
5. Description (height, weight, etc.)
6. Date missing
7. Location last seen
8. Contact number of family; and
9. Circumstance surrounding the lost of the child.

### C. Search and Recovery

The second phase of the program includes the tasks of search, recovery and case management. A workflow diagram is also created to show the step-by-step procedures in relation to concerned agencies and other partners (ANNEX D).

Since cases maybe viewed on the web site by everyone, the public can participate in locating the child by volunteering the printing and distribution of flyers and posters at barangay halls and city/municipal halls. If someone has spotted any missing child, he or she is encouraged to inform the DSWD Central Office or the Regional Offices through text message, telephone, e-mail or walk-in referrals. The DSWD shall forward these reports to PNP to recover the child. The PNP shall turn over the recovered child to DSWD for appropriate case management. Successful operations will be featured in the website upon approval or consent of the family showing the following highlights:

1. Circumstances on how the child got lost;
2. The agency where the report was filed;
3. How the child was recovered; and
4. What agency recovered the child

### D. Case Management

The foundling or recovered cases shall be immediately referred to the DSWD Crisis Intervention Unit of the Regional Offices for the social worker's assessment. Appropriate services shall be provided to the child and family. Reunification is immediately made possible. The regional office has to send a report to the DSWD Central Office for **matching** of cases in the list of missing children in the *Sagip Bata* website. Once a match has been made, the PPB shall inform the concerned regional office of the match made. The regional office shall now make appropriate actions to recover the child and provide the PPB with updates on the case. Success cases of matching and reunification of the child and the family shall be posted on the web. The matched case shall be deleted on the list of missing and/or foundling children on the web by the PPB.

While the family or relatives of the foundling or recovered child is being located, the child will be temporarily sheltered in a residential care facility of the Department or NGOs that provide residential care services. Case management, while in the DSWD residential care, shall be based on A. O. 148, series of 2001 or guidelines in the management of

residential care services. For cases referred to NGOs, case management shall be provided by the NGO with appropriate technical assistance from the DSWD regional office.

After care/follow-up counseling sessions shall be made before termination of the case. If the family is located, a thorough assessment and intervention, such as counseling, shall be made. If the assessment for reunification of the child and the family is positive, the child will be reunited back to his/her family. If the assessment does not encourage the return of the child, further intervention to the family shall be made. Coordination with the DSWD local government unit shall be made for the provision of community-based services to the family. However, after all efforts have been exerted and the family is not located within six (6) months of the foundling of the child, a declaration of abandonment will be applied in court. Once the abandonment has been declared, the social worker looks for options to permanently place the child under foster care or adoption. Other children may be hard to place, thus they are prepared for independent living.


## VIII. Institutional Arrangements

### A. DSWD Central Office

1. The Programs and Projects Bureau (PPB) is responsible in pilot testing the program for a period of six months upon signing of these guidelines. The program will be turned over to the National Operations Office (NOO) for nationwide implementation.
2. Once the program has been turned over to NOO, it shall conduct regular monitoring and technical assistance to Field Offices to ensure its effective implementation.
3. The DSWD Central Office, through the Policy Plans and Information Systems Bureau, is responsible in the preparation of the report on the incidence of children reported missing and recovered and the status of other reported cases.

### B. DSWD Field Office

1. The DSWD Field Offices shall maintain close coordination with PNP to ensure effective implementation of the program.
2. It shall provide technical assistance to national and local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and barangays in locating, recovering and case management of missing children.
3. It shall conduct advocacy activities through tri-media campaigns e.g. flyers, radio and TV plugs, etc.
4. It shall maintain its own data bank with regards to cases of missing children.

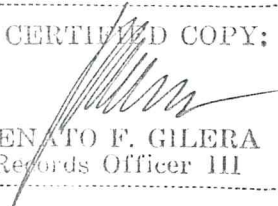
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C. Philippine National Police

1. The PNP verifies or authenticates reports and conducts search and rescue operations of missing children referred by DSWD.
2. The PNP forwards information (Sagip Bata Information Sheet and Waiver or Annex A and Annex B) to the DSWD regional office or direct to PPB for posting on the web.

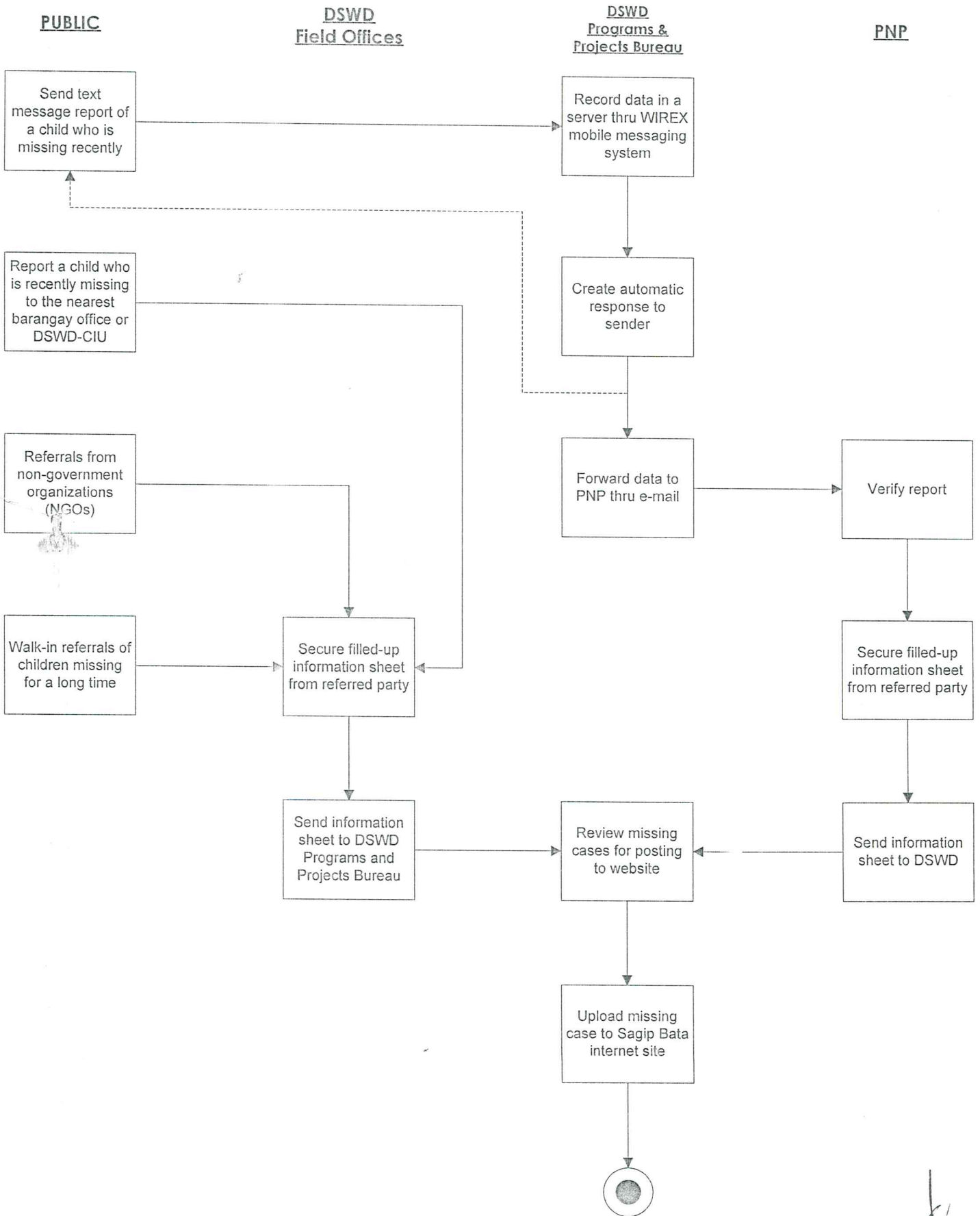
Issued in Quezon City, this 21<sup>st</sup> day of April 2003.

  
CORAZON JULIANO N. SOLIMAN  
Secretary  
Department of Social Welfare and Development

A CERTIFIED COPY:  
  
RENATO F. GILERA  
Records Officer III



# Missing Children Project Phase I - Reporting



## SAGIP BATA INFORMATION SHEET

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

REFERRING PARTYName: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex:  M  F Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Relation to missing child: \_\_\_\_\_

Residence Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information

Landline Phone/s: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile Phone/s: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

CHILD MISSINGName: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First Middle NicknameSex:  M  F Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

DescriptionColor of Eyes  Black  Dark Brown  Brown Others: \_\_\_\_\_Shape of Eyes  Round  Chinky  Almond Others: \_\_\_\_\_Color of Hair  Black  Brown  Light Brown Others: \_\_\_\_\_Length of Hair  Short  Long Others: \_\_\_\_\_Type of Hair  Straight  Curly Others: \_\_\_\_\_Shape of Nose  Pointed  Flat Others: \_\_\_\_\_Lips  Thick  Thin Others: \_\_\_\_\_Built  Small  Medium  LargeComplexion  Black  Brown  Fair

Height: \_\_\_\_\_ feet \_\_\_\_\_ inches = \_\_\_\_\_ meters

Weight: \_\_\_\_\_ pounds = \_\_\_\_\_ kilograms

Type and color of dress (last seen): \_\_\_\_\_

Distinguishing marks: \_\_\_\_\_

WAIVER

I, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ years old  
 single/married, with \_\_\_\_\_ residential/office address at  
 \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby formally declare  
 that I am furnishing all the necessary information in my declaration with the  
 DSWD or PNP, and with my consent and full support, I agree to the posting  
 on the website of Intergate Browser Systems, Inc., called Sagipbata.com all  
 the information I have furnished DSWD or PNP for the successful recovery  
 of the child or minor named \_\_\_\_\_ who is  
 my child, ward, relative or friend, and reported missing since  
 \_\_\_\_\_. I further certify that all information I gave  
 to the said government agencies or private entity is true and correct to the  
 best of my knowledge and belief.

I fully agree to the terms and conditions of the DSWD or PNP, with  
 regard to the procedures they adhere in reporting the loss of the said child or  
 minor to the website of Intergate and that I do not hold them responsible for  
 whatever information I have furnished them nor shall I make false  
 accusations against them in connection with the reportage.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I hereby affixed my signature this \_\_\_\_\_  
 day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2003 at \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Affiant

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 2003, affiant having exhibited to me his/her Community  
 Tax Certificate No. \_\_\_\_\_ issued on  
 \_\_\_\_\_ and issued at \_\_\_\_\_.

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