



# C A L I F O R N I A C h i l d A b d u c t i o n T A S K F O R C E

## Tips on Identifying Credible Missing Children Non-profit Organization

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There are numerous missing and exploited children's non-profit organizations in this country. Most provide excellent services to parents, children and communities.

The checklist below may assist law enforcement and other professionals in identifying credible organizations.

- Set up appointment to visit the non-profit organization and meet with the organization's executive director or assistant director.
- Inquire when and how the organization was started, as well as who started it.
- Ascertain the educational and professional backgrounds of the directors.
- If the director or directors are victim parents, inquire about the status of their cases. Determine where each person is in their grieving and healing process.
- Determine what services the organization offers, who are the clients and what are the geographic areas served.
- Inquire about fees for service.
- Review the organization's literature.
- Request a copy of the organization's 501(c)3 letter granting the organization a federal tax exemption/non-profit status.
- Check with the state attorney general's office to determine if the organization is in good standing.
- Talk to someone you know and trust who has had experience with the non-profit community and is knowledgeable about missing children organizations.
- Attend a speaking engagement of a director or other key personnel.
- Ask what the directors believe the role of law enforcement or your profession should be in missing children cases. Also ask what they believe the collaborative role between your agency and the non-profit should be.
- If law enforcement, conduct a criminal background check on key personnel of the organization.
- Research if there are any civil judgments against any key staff.
- Ask for references from law enforcement and clients. Check them out.
- Check with the local, state, and national Better Business Bureau.
- Determine the size of the staff and how many offices they have, if any.
- Inquire about the role of volunteers within the agency. Determine how they recruitment, screen, train and monitor their volunteers.
- Assess the size of their case load. Determine if this information can be authenticated.
- Ask about the criteria for registering or handling a case.
- Identify what methods are utilized to located children and determine of these means are legal and ethical.

- Request what information they will share with you on common cases as well as how sightings and leads are handled.
- Evaluate the knowledge of key staff regarding the missing children's issue.
- Consider how the organization promotes itself. Do they ever exploit families, children, or relationships with the other service providers? Are their statements to the press reasonable or overly self-serving?
- Conduct Internet searches on the organization and key personnel.
- Ask for a copy of the agency's federal tax returns (their 990's) and a copy of their annual report. Determine their funding sources.
- Ask for a list, including titles, addresses, and telephone numbers of their Board of Directors. Call the ones with the most prestigious titles and ask about their involvement with, and opinion of, the organization.
- Proceed cautiously. With each new positive experience, trust is built and the working relationship expanded.

With careful planning, assessment, and review a credible non-profit missing children's organization can prove to be an invaluable source to you and the clients you serve.