

whatever we can to help parents in these situations find their children.

Every year, approximately 300 children are abducted by strangers. Just yesterday, we heard news of a terrible tragedy in Texas, where a young girl was found murdered, after she had been missing for 5 days. We must do everything we can to stop this from happening again. Time is the enemy in abduction cases—and the most important tool we have against it is making sure information gets out to the public.

The Federal Government, through the FBI and other law enforcement agencies, is doing its part to help State and local law enforcement investigate these cases and disseminate information as quickly as possible. But it is critical that the FBI be notified within 48 hours of the abduction. In 6 out of 10 recent cases, the FBI learned of the abduction from TV reports. We've got to do better. And we will.

Nearly all 16,000 police departments around the country have the capacity, through a state-of-the-art computer system, to report missing persons to the FBI. I have asked the Attorney General to make it the highest priority to make sure this system works as quickly as possible.

The Federal Government already works with States to establish clearinghouses for information on missing children. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, funded by the Justice Department, has helped establish clearinghouses in 47 States plus the District of Columbia. The Center also funds Project Alert, which uses the expertise of volunteer retired police officers to help search for missing children.

Now it is time to do more to help families beat the race against time in searching for their missing children. Federal offices come into contact with thousands of citizens and workers every day. That gives the Federal Government a unique role to play in the search for missing children.

Today I will sign an executive memorandum directing all agency heads to take the necessary actions to allow the posting of photos of missing children in Federal buildings. This Presidential action also directs agencies to appoint an action officer to maintain the space for these notices.

This memorandum is just one step, but it's a step in the right direction. There is more we can do—and we will.

The Federal Government is doing its part. But we know that the key to finding missing children is within their own communities. When these terrifying abductions occur, we have seen communities band together to distribute flyers, interview potential witnesses, and support the families. Unfortunately, sometimes a terrible tragedy brings out the very best in our communities and our country.

If we love our children, then we must do everything we can to help when they are in harm's way. Every one of us must take responsibility to do what they can to help find our missing children. Please look twice at the photos of missing children you see in the mail, on your milk cartons, and now, in Federal buildings across the country. Everyone can make a difference, and everyone has an obligation to try.

## Memorandum on Missing Persons and Missing Children

January 19, 1996

*Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies*

*Subject:* Missing Persons or Children Notices in Federal Facilities

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and in order to provide for the posting of missing persons or children notices in buildings owned or controlled by the Federal Government, I hereby direct as follows:

*Section 1. Posting of Missing Persons or Children Notices in Federal Facilities.* Executive departments and agencies possessing custody or control over buildings or facilities occupied by Federal employees shall take such actions as are reasonable, necessary, and appropriate to provide for the posting of missing persons or children notices in public and other appropriate areas of such domestic buildings or facilities, as determined by the Federal official having pri-