



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT


Office of Audits and Investigations


March 15, 2022

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

TO: Robert J. Williams, Jr.
Council Administrator

William M. Hunt
Deputy Council Administrator

THRU: Josh Hamlin 
Director of Budget and Policy Analysis

FROM: Kassandra Fields 
Legislative Budget and Policy Analyst

RE: Policy Analysis and Fiscal Impact Statement
CB-013-2022 Code Adam – Alerts in County Buildings

CB-013-2022 (*Proposed by: Chair Hawkins*)

Assigned to the Committee of the Whole

AN ACT CONCERNING Code Adam – Alerts in County Buildings, for the purpose of establishing County agency requirements and procedures for responding to missing, abducted and /or exploited children in County Buildings.

Fiscal Summary

Direct Impact:

Expenditures: Minimal additional expenditures likely.

Revenues: None.

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Indirect Impact:

None.

Legislative Summary:

CB-013-2022, sponsored by Chair Hawkins, was presented to the Council on March 1, 2022, and referred to the Committee of the Whole (COW). CB-013-2021 would require the County to implement a child abduction prevention program and develop a protocol used to locate lost children in each County building that is open to the public.

Current Law/Background:

The federal “Code Adam Act of 2003” was signed into law in April, of that year. It required the designated authority for a public building to establish procedures for a child missing in a federal facility¹. Code Adam was created in memory of 6-year-old Adam Walsh, who was abducted from a Florida department store and later found murdered. Code Adam is a program of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, a nonprofit co-founded by Adam’s parents, John and Revé Walsh². The U.S. General Services Administration, in conjunction with the Federal Protective Services, implemented the Code Adam Program and developed a strictly defined procedure for employees to follow when someone reports a lost or missing child. The program was originally created by Wal-Mart Stores in cooperation with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in 1994 and has since been implemented by many other stores and facilities throughout the United States. Its procedures train employees of various venues to systematically look for lost children in the crucial minutes following a suspected loss or abduction³.

Discussion/Policy Analysis:

Even though the specifics of the program vary, the Code Adam procedures generally include the following:

- (1) Obtain a detailed description of the child, to include: name, age, gender, race, weight, height, hair and eye color, description of what the child is wearing. The name is requested for identification purposes only and is never announced since it may provide a potential abductor with additional information to convince the child to accompany them⁴.

¹ <https://www.gsa.gov/real-estate/facilities-management/security/code-adam-alert-program>

² <https://www.missingkids.org/codeadam>

³ https://www.gsa.gov/cdnstatic/Code_Adam_Alert.ppt

⁴ https://www.gsa.gov/cdnstatic/Code_Adam_Poster.pdf

- (2) Report information about the missing child to the security on site, facility manager and/or police (911). An alert should be activated to notify all tenants/employees of the building of the situation⁵.
- (3) Designated employees monitor the entrances and exits while other employees assist in the search efforts, at the direction of the security/designated officials⁶.
- (4) If the child is found accompanied by someone other than the parent or guardian, individuals may be permitted to make reasonable efforts to delay their departure, provided it does not put the employee(s) or child at risk⁷.
- (5) If the child is found simply lost and unharmed they are reunited with the adult searching for them⁸.

The program has proven to be a powerful search tool for lost and potentially abducted children. It is designed to help businesses, parks, government buildings and other establishments ensure that they have safety protocols in place to respond quickly and effectively to situations involving a missing child.

CB-013-2020 would add Section 4-353, *Code Adam Alerts in County Buildings*, to the County Code, under Subtitle 4, *Building*, Division 5, *Administrative Provisions*. It requires that any County building open to the public have a Code Adam program (or similar protocol) in place as a preventative tool against child abductions and to assist with locating lost children. It directs the Office of Central Services (OCS) to develop a model program that would ensure each building would be prepared to activate and effectively participate in the Code Adam protocol. Lastly, it would require all County agencies to render assistance to the OCS to implementing a plan for their respective buildings.

Fiscal Impact:

Direct Impact:

At the time of this report, the Executive Branch staff had not indicated that there would be any additional costs or resources associated with implementation of this program. Based on Council staff's review, if there are any impacts, they would likely be minimal in nature.

Indirect Impact:

None likely.

⁵ https://www.gsa.gov/cdnstatic/Code_Adam_Poster.pdf

⁶ https://www.gsa.gov/cdnstatic/Code_Adam_Poster.pdf

⁷ https://www.gsa.gov/cdnstatic/Code_Adam_Alert.ppt

⁸ <https://definitions.uslegal.com/c/code-adam-program/>

Appropriated in the Current Fiscal Year Budget:

N/A.

Effective Date of Proposed Legislation

The proposed Act shall take effect forty-five (45) calendar days after it becomes law.

If you require additional information, or have questions about this fiscal impact statement, please call me.