

History

On May 25, 1979, 6-year-old Etan Patz disappeared from the streets of New York City while on his way to school. The massive search efforts and media attention that followed focused the nation's attention on the problem of child abduction and lack of plans to address it.

On July 27, 1981, 6-year-old Adam Walsh disappeared from a Florida shopping mall. His parents, John and Revé Walsh, immediately turned to law-enforcement agencies to help find their son. To their disappointment, there was no coordinated effort among law-enforcement to search for Adam on a state or national level, and no organization to help them in their desperation.

The momentum that began with the disappearance of Etan and Adam led to photographs of missing children on milk cartons and, ultimately, a nationwide movement. In 1984, President Reagan signed into law the Missing Children's Assistance Act, establishing a national clearinghouse of information about missing and exploited children. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC) is designated by the U.S. Congress to fulfill this role, and opened its doors in Washington, DC in 1984.

In 1999, the Charles B. Wang International Children's Building was dedicated to serve as the national headquarters for NCMEC and the "nerve center" for searching parents, law-enforcement, and missing and exploited children.

The Children's Building, in the 75-year-old George Mason Building in historic Old Town, Alexandria, Virginia, serves as a memorial to victimized children. With NCMEC's promise and commitment to its mission of finding missing children and preventing child victimization, the building is dedicated to their memory.

NCMEC also has branches in California, Florida, Kansas City, New York, South Carolina, and Texas.