

MISSING PERSONS CHECKLIST

(UNITED STATES)



You know your loved one better than anyone. If you feel something is amiss, you may have to convince law enforcement. Also keep in mind that if foul play is suspected, a family has to be cleared first.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER SUSPECTING A LOVED ONE OF MISSING:

	Look around the home, property in case your loved one is hiding, has fallen or is hurt. Keep an eye out for any notes or clues.
	Contact family, friends, work and/or school to verify person is actually missing.



Keep a journal or notebook from the very beginning to include – every phone conversation, names, dates, times, what was discussed, points of contacts, what has been done, searches conducted, family and friends involved, and anything that seems out of the ordinary or suspicious.



A trusted family member or friend can help you with these tasks.

THE FIRST 24 HOURS *(THERE IS NO 24 HOUR WAITING PERIOD!)*

	File a missing persons report by contacting local, county OR state law enforcement (LE). Or you may call 9-1-1. When speaking to LE it is important to be completely honest regarding the circumstances involving your loved one's disappearance. If your loved one was involved in illegal activities, drugs, etc., it is very important that detectives be made aware. Despite some public opinion, this does not make the case less important to detectives.
	Keep a copy of the case number and name/phone number of detective assigned to the case.
	Request information to be entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database and keep a copy of the NCIC number - starts with "M" followed by nine numbers (ex: M-123456789). (NOTE: Some LE are reluctant to give out the NCIC number – just make sure your loved one has been entered.)
	Contact local hospitals including psychiatric wards, drug rehabilitation centers, and short-term emergency clinics. Include surrounding county and city hospitals (including ones in larger cities around your area). Consider covering a 50-mile radius. (Note, hospitals may not release patient information due to HIPAA laws, so consider faxing fliers to the hospital and request they put them in their emergency room.)

	Contact local jails or juvenile detention centers, homeless shelters, and area motels.
	Contact the state (and surrounding state) medical examiner's (ME) office or coroner to inquire about any unidentified persons they may have. (Note: Some ME/Coroner's Offices are too large to accept individual missing person's flyers so you may have to simply contact them periodically to inquire about unidentified persons.)
	If your loved one's car is also missing, check with local towing yards and impound lots within a 50-mile radius. Also, check the department of motor vehicle to see if tags have been turned in, any moving violations have occurred, and if the car is under a suspension.
	Contact the Red Cross in the event there was an accident and they have had contact with your loved one.
	Contact the Salvation Army in the event your loved one has been staying in their shelters.
	Contact the local Search and Rescue (SAR) team. Depending upon the circumstances of disappearance, a man tracker can locate someone whom may have left on foot. He/she should be one of the first on the scene as the scene is likely to become degraded as more people/dogs are around. Texas EquuSearch is also an excellent resource. Their website is www.texasequusearch.org . Organize family, friends and community to conduct subsequent searches. (Note: Most police agencies have to authorize searches__
	Drive and/or walk the areas your loved one frequents. If your loved one was driving, be on the lookout for areas that appear to be places where a car may have left the road. Some vehicle accidents may be hidden by brush.
	Make a list of contacts for Law Enforcement. The list should include friends and places frequented by the missing person. Include full names, phone numbers, home addresses, and work numbers and work addresses.

THE FIRST WEEK:

	Gather recent photos of your loved one (head shots are best – smiling and not smiling, profiles, frontal views). If recent photos are not available, be sure to clarify the year of the picture being used and what the physical differences are. You can also obtain a copy of your loved one's driver's license or ID photo through your state's Department of Public Safety, but this can be a time consuming task. You may also consider having the photo age-progressed to better represent what your loved one now looks like. This service may be provided by various missing persons' clearinghouses, LE or Project EDAN at www.projectedan.us at no charge.
	Create flyers using the photos chosen. Write a description to include: the color of hair and eyes, height, weight, date of birth, race, and gender. Include identifiers such as eyeglasses, braces, marks, blemishes, scars, hair texture, tattoos (include description, color, location and photos if available), piercings, any unusual characteristics, clothing/shoe/jewelry description. Include anything that sets your loved one apart from other missing persons within the same age group, physical characteristics and time frame. List all known medical problems (Asthma, depression, glasses/contacts, hearing aids, heart problems, medications, disabilities, psychological problems, previous broken bones/fractures, etc.). Did they take any money, a purse/wallet or extra clothing? NOTE: DO NOT put your personal contact information (phone/home address) on the flyer. This could put you in a vulnerable situation.
	Post flyers in allowable, high traffic public locations: homeless shelters, hospital emergency rooms, convenience stores, local coffee shops, grocery stores, gas stations, bus stations/taxi cab services, churches, social services office, drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers, local media (news stations and newspapers), tattoo parlors, salvation army, etc.

	E-mail the flyer to everyone in your email address book. Ask friends and family to post and email the flyer also.
	Contact your loved one's dentist and obtain a copy of the records. Provide police with the dentist's name and number. Verify that a copy of the dental records have been picked up. Know which database dental information will be kept (i.e., NCIC, CODIS, with LE, with ME, etc.)
	Contact your loved one's doctors and obtain copies of x-rays and medical records. Provide police with the doctor's name(s) and phone number(s). Provide medical information and verify where it will be kept (LE, ME etc.)
	Find out if fingerprints are available (or footprints). These may be obtained from previous ID/Safety initiatives, military records, previous arrest records, etc.
	Contact your local media; Inquire about doing a Public Service Announcement (PSA).
	Contact your local cable company; Inquire about doing a Public Service Announcement (PSA)
	Contact your local/county crime stoppers organization. Note: Allow time for board approval. If foul play is suspected they may offer a reward, which families can add to.
	Contact your local assemblyperson and/or senator for your voting district. Ask for their help in getting the flyer and information out to the public.
	List your loved one's case with the state's missing persons clearinghouse (usually within the Department of Public Safety) from which your loved one disappeared. If LE is to take care of this, verify that it has been done and that the information is correct.
	For children under 18, list the case with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) at missingkids.com or 1-800-THE-LOST. If the missing person is 18 or older, list the case with the National Center for Missing Adults (NMCA) at theyarermisssed.org or 1-800-690-FIND.
	List the case with other missing persons' websites such as North American Missing Persons Network (NAMPN) at www.nampn.org , Help Find The Missing at http://www.helpfindthemissing.org/missing_database/ , or Doe Network (for cases older than 9 years) at www.doenetwork.org . There are several other sites. Any of the above should have links to take you to other sources.
	Maintain a good working relationship with LE and don't be afraid to ask for updates. Keep in mind that a detective may not share information that could jeopardize the case.
	Ask the detective how you can help (posting approved flyers, contacting other organizations, conducting personal searches.)
	Give LE notes, computer files, etc. anything that may help with the investigation.
	Consider having the case escalated to the FBI IF you suspect that your loved one has been abducted and possibly taken across state lines.

THE MONTHS AHEAD:

	Consider offering a reward if you haven't already.
	Organize events to keep the case alive in the media and with the public (loved one's birthday, missing date anniversary).
	Provide LE with any updates or leads that you may have. Let them know if your loved one has been located or heard from.
	Provide updates to the missing persons sites you've listed the case. Let them know if your loved one has been located so that the case can be removed.
	Notify LE of any address, phone or email changes if you move.
	Submit a DNA sample to be entered into the database for comparison with unidentified remains. There is no cost for you. Your local LE will be able to collect the sample.

	NOTE: The DNA sample can only be used to cross reference Missing Persons and Unidentified Persons. It is not cross-referenced with the criminal DNA database.
	Find out your state's laws on victim's rights because you may be entitled to certain privileges as the family member of a missing loved one.
	Verify that your loved one is still listed in NCIC about every 6 months.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS:

	Contact crime shows such as America's Most Wanted, 48 Hours, etc. about profiling your loved one's case.
	Have a dedicated phone line installed complete with CallerID and a recorder. Designate someone to answer the phone.
	Create a website that includes a dedicated email address and phone number (DO NOT USE YOUR PERSONAL PHONE NUMBER)
	Find support groups for people who have missing loved ones. Some suggestions: Help Find the Missing at http://www.helpfindthemissing.org/missing_database/ has a forum where family members can discuss their loved one's case. Compassionate Friends at http://www.compassionatefriends.org/ . Parents of Murdered Children (this organization deals with any kind of loss, not just children) at http://www.pomc.org/ .

For information regarding other countries, please contact the Doe Network Administration Team at doenetadminteam@gmail.com

Maryland Missing: <http://www.marylandmissing.com/whattodo.html>

National Center For Missing Adults: www.missingadults.org

"What To Do" Missing Persons Pamphlet by Robert Cooke

Lonnette Brawner: Family member of missing man Bo Brawner

Jade Melindez: Doe Network AZ Area Director

Doe Network Administration Team