

Someone's Missing: What You Can Do

A Practical Guide for Those Facing a Missing Person Crisis

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1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This guide provides those facing a missing person crisis with practical, concise information about what they need to know and what they can do to support search efforts.

Information and advice is based on information and advice from people who have faced a missing person crisis firsthand and from knowledgeable law enforcement and missing persons organizations, including the Carole Sund/Carrington Memorial Reward Foundation, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the Washington State Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains Taskforce.

The Carole Sund/Carrington Memorial Reward Foundation provided much appreciated guidance and assistance in developing this guide.

Ron Laney, Associate Administrator, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, also reviewed and provided valuable feedback. Portions of content from the chapters on Best Practices and Mobilizing Help in particular are based on text from: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (2004). *When Your Child is Missing: A Family Survival Guide* (3rd edition). Washington, D.C. NCJ 204958. To get a free copy of this document, visit the National Criminal Justice Reference Center at <http://www.ncjrs.gov/> and enter NCJ 204958 in the site search tool to access an online copy or to order a printed copy. Other OJJDP publications on missing children are also available on this site.

2. INTRODUCTION: HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The unexplained and sudden disappearance of a loved one—whether a child, family member or friend—is an extremely frightening, stressful and difficult experience. Enduring a missing person crisis demands great strength, courage, and determination.

Real life cases prove that the actions of family and friends—in partnership with law enforcement, missing persons organizations, media and volunteers—can make all the difference to the recovery of a loved one.

The objective of this guide is to provide a reference guide for those facing the crisis of a loved one’s disappearance. You can learn:

- What are the top 10 things to know and do in a missing person’s case?
- What steps are most critical in the first 24 hours and 48 hours?
- What are best practices for quickly and effectively mobilizing support from law enforcement, media, missing persons organizations, volunteers and friends and family?
- What tools and resources are available?

3. BEST PRACTICES: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW, WHAT YOU CAN DO

Generally, a family member or close friend will be one of the first—and primary—persons involved in reporting a missing person.

Understanding what you can do can make all the difference in locating and helping a missing person. This guide is directed primarily to these persons although specific responsibilities may be delegated to others.

Time is of the essence. There is *no* required waiting period to report a missing person (child or adult). The sooner a missing person case is reported, the sooner law enforcement can act.

The first 48 hours following the disappearance of a person are the most critical. The checklists provided in this document summarize some of the key steps to take in the first 24 and 48 hours to mobilize and support search efforts. If more than 48 hours have passed since the disappearance, it’s not too late to make a difference by taking actions identified for the first 48 hours.

A) First 24 Hours—Top Things You Should Do When Someone Is First Missing

The number one priority and first call to action in the first 24 hours of a disappearance is to alert law enforcement and to mobilize broad-based support to find a missing person from media, missing persons organizations, friends, family, and volunteers. Following are the top 10 things to do in the first 24 hours:

1. *Call 9-1-1 to alert law enforcement organizations.*
 - Call 9-1-1 to report a missing person as soon as possible. Give local law enforcement investigators all the facts and circumstances related to the case. If the officer refuses to take a report, ask for reasons why and ask to speak to a supervisor.
 - Devote time to providing information to and answering questions from investigators.
 - Ask for the case number and the name, badge number and contact information of the law enforcement investigator assigned to the case.
 - In a disappearance, most of the initial searching will be focused where the missing person is believed to have been last. The case will be coordinated by local law enforcement—Federal, State or local, depending on the circumstances and location of the disappearance.

2. *Ask law enforcement to organize a search immediately.*
 - Ask about using tracking dogs (preferably bloodhounds).
 - Ask investigators to enter the missing person in to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Persons File. There is no waiting period for entry into NCIC for children under age 21.
 - Request that law enforcement put out a Be On the Look Out (BOLO) bulletin and involve the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).
 - Request that law enforcement issue an AMBER alert if this missing person is a child and the case fits the criteria requirement for an Amber alert (for more information, visit the website at www.amberalert.com). Amber alerts are only available in cases where a victim is 17 years old or younger, has been abducted, is in imminent danger, and has a mental or physical disability.
 - Ask law enforcement to help contact the media. Often, media will require that law enforcement issue a request as a way of confirming the validity of the case.

3. *Keep a written record of all contacts, actions, and relevant information and discussions.* Do not rely on your memory alone to keep track of all communications, information and activities. From the beginning, keep a log that accurately and completely captures details and contact information.

4. *Make a list of anyone who might have information or clues about the person's whereabouts.* Include contact information if available.

5. *Contact family and friends for assistance in spreading the alert.* Your goal is to mobilize as many people as you can to help broadcast the alert and support search efforts. To generate public awareness, ask for help to widely post missing persons fliers at prominent and appropriate locations and over the Internet. Resources for creating fliers are listed in the Appendix of this document.

6. *Recruit volunteers to partner with law enforcement in search efforts.* Your goal is to mobilize as many “feet on the street” to actively search for the missing person. Volunteer efforts should be coordinated with law enforcement personnel.

7. *Widely disseminate the missing person's personal identification information.* To help identify the missing person, it is important to quickly disseminate and give access to accurate personal identification data, including clothing, physical description including identifying marks, birthdate and name. Both black-and-white and color photographs are essential. The Internet is invaluable for broadly disseminating this information efficiently, quickly and widely to:
- Law enforcement
 - National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)
 - National Center for Missing Adults
 - State Missing Person's clearinghouse
 - Media
 - Friends, family, co-workers, local community and the public

For information on contacting organizations that can help you, please see the Appendix.

8. *Limit access to the home of and/or place where the missing person was last seen.* Law enforcement may want to collect possible evidence and clues.
9. *Set up a family "command post"* To better support search efforts in the midst of a very chaotic and traumatic situation, the family should set up a "command post." It's necessary to stay organized and to delegate key responsibilities. No one person can—or should—do it all. The best candidates to delegate command center responsibilities to will have strong communication, people, organizational and interpersonal skills.
- *Set up an office:* phone with ability to tape calls and accept messages, FAX machine and Internet access, as well as access to a copy machine, computer and printer are essential. Ideally, the office will be in a convenient location that will not disturb the family.
 - *Delegate key responsibilities:*
 - Designate responsibility for answering phones to a few people for 24/7 coverage. Keep a record of all inbound and outbound calls (names, telephone numbers, time of call and other relevant information). Keep a primary line free to receive phone calls relevant to the missing person. Make outgoing calls from other phones.
 - Designate a family informational representative who can act as a spokesperson for and liaison between the family and media, law enforcement, organizations and volunteers. Serving the family will be the first priority of this person. Generally, it's best for the family representative to be a family member who is impacted by the disappearance.
10. *Take care of yourself and your family.* Extreme stress and exhaustion can hinder decision making at this crucial time.

B) Second 24 Hours

In the second 24 hours of a disappearance, it is important to continue to cooperate with law enforcement. Other key priorities will be to maximize public awareness of the case, and to take steps to prepare yourself and volunteers to support search efforts. Following is a checklist of top 10 things to do in the second 24 hours of a missing person case.

1. *Support law enforcement efforts.*
 - Continue to provide information to and answer questions.
 - Keep lines of communication open by asking questions, making suggestions, and airing differences of opinion.
 - Be prepared to be treated like a suspect until cleared. Expect that you will be asked to take a polygraph test, which is standard procedure.
 - Discuss what steps are being taken. If not already done, request that your law enforcement agency take the steps identified in the first 24 hours. In addition,
 - In the case of a missing child under 18 years of age, you can request that the National Center for Missing and Endangered Children (NCMEC) issue a broadcast fax to law enforcement agencies around the country
 - If your law enforcement investigator is not experienced in missing persons cases, suggest that he or she contact the NCMEC at 800-THE-LOST (800-843-5678) to obtain a copy of “Missing and Abducted Children: A Law Enforcement Guide to Case Investigation and Program Management) or contact the Crimes Against Children Coordinator in the local FBI Field office and obtain a copy of the FBI’s “Child Abduction Response Plan.”
 - Provide medical and dental records, x rays, DNA samples and fingerprints for identification purposes if possible. Be aware that because of the privacy provisions of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA), many health care providers may be reluctant or refuse to make health information available, even to law enforcement to aid in a missing person investigation.
2. *Expand your list of people who may have information regarding the disappearance.*
3. *Work with your law enforcement agency to schedule press releases and media events.* You may ask someone close to you to serve as your media spokesperson. Additional information on engaging the media is included later in this guide.
4. *Continue to look for clues to identify who was in the vicinity of the disappearance and might be involved or a possible witness.* Search personal calendars, newspapers, notices of community events. Give this information to law enforcement.
5. *Consider offering reward money.* Discuss this concept with police.
6. *Improve communications at the family command post.*
 - Install a second telephone line with call forwarding, caller ID and call waiting.
 - Ask law enforcement to install a trap-and-trace feature on your phone if appropriate.

- If you do not have one, get a cellular phone and pager so you can be reached at all times.
7. *Set up a volunteer center command post.*
 - Designate a volunteer coordinator who is organized, capable, and a good leader. This person must be able to recruit, coordinate and motivate volunteers. Ideally, this person will have knowledge of local resources.
 - A volunteer center can be chaotic, disruptive, and visited by people not known to you. It's best to protect you and your family by locating a volunteer center away from your home.
 8. *Accept help and donations.*
 - Make a list of ways volunteers can help.
 - In most missing persons cases, the family is entitled to a Victim Advocate. A Victim Advocate is a trained and certified advocate who acts as a liaison between the State Attorney's Office and/or law enforcement agency and victims of crime and their families.
 9. *Continue to keep a written record of contacts, activities, action items and relevant information and discussions.*
 10. *Continue to take care of yourself and your family.*

C) Key Points About the First 48 hours of Missing Persons Cases

1. The actions of law enforcement, family and friends in the first 48 hours are critical.
2. Keep the case number and name and contact information of your law enforcement coordinator safe and accessible. Keep lines of communication open. Know that law enforcement can't tell the family everything in the best interest of the case.
3. Your initial role is to cooperate with law enforcement by providing information and answering questions.
4. Most of the initial search will take place where the person is believed to have been last. Efforts will be coordinated by law enforcement—either Federal, State or local, depending on the location and circumstances.
5. It is important to quickly make as many people aware of the disappearance as possible, and to effectively engage individuals and organizations in search efforts.
6. To guard against the involvement of misguided individuals, unknown volunteers should be required to show their driver's licenses and to list their name, address and organizational affiliation in a log book. Make a photocopy of volunteers' drivers license whenever possible.
7. Those closest to the missing person may be unable to make rational decisions. Be aware of the strain on yourself and family of the missing person, and get necessary support.

D) After the first 48 Hours: Long-term Search

Not everyone is able or willing to be actively involved in a long-term search. There are, however, a number of things family, friends and volunteers can do. Following is a checklist of key things to do to support long-term search efforts.

1. *Develop a plan and schedule for continuing the search.* Work with law enforcement to figure out what role you and others can play.
2. *Schedule regular meetings with the law enforcement investigator* for updates. Ask to review the case file periodically, if possible. You may recognize something meaningful that was overlooked or recall something significant.
3. *Maintain and review a notebook* to record facts and thoughts that might later trigger a memory or provide a clue.
4. *Promote public awareness of the case.*
 - Publicize new information, with approval from your law enforcement contact
 - Keep the media interested and involved. Ask NCMEC to develop an age-progressed picture if applicable
 - Consider offering a reward.
 - Contact NCMEC, the State missing person's clearinghouses and other missing person's organizations across the country. Ask for assistance in distributing fliers and find out what services are available to assist with long-term searches.
 - Solicit help from political figures in publicizing your case, engaging resources and getting permission to display missing person's posters in public places.
5. *Inquire about programs that can be used for crime tips and rewards.* Talk with your law enforcement agency about local State, regional or national programs. Contact Crime Stoppers if appropriate. This organization answers telephone calls 24 hours a day, knows how to accept tip information, promises anonymity to callers and maintains a good working relationship with law enforcement.
6. *Make a list of things that others can do to help.* There will be volunteers who want to help if you have specific tasks in mind.
7. *Carefully consider the value and implications of engaging unknown individuals.*
 - Private detectives: Hire only if convinced they'll do something better than law enforcement. Check references. In addition, contact the Better Business Bureau and the Consumer Protection Division of the Attorney General's Office and state Department of Licensing. Make sure you are paying a reasonable rate and beware of unfounded promises. Keep your law enforcement investigator informed.
 - Psychics: Use caution. If a lead is highly specific, follow up with law enforcement.
 - Overzealous individuals: Protect yourself from misguided individuals.

E) Differences between Missing Child and Adult Cases

Disappearing is not illegal per se and you may encounter concerns of "false alarms." In general, there are more resources available when the missing person is a child vs. an adult because children are assumed to be more vulnerable than adults.

This can lead to some key differences in responses and resources received in a missing child vs. missing adult cases.

	Children	Adults
AMBER alert	X	N/A
Waiting period requirement for filing NCIC Missing Persons Report	None	None
Victims Advocate assistance	X	X
FBI involvement	Depends on circumstances	Depends on circumstances
Media and public interest level	Generally high	Varies depending on circumstances

4. MOBILIZING HELP

Who should you contact for help?

What should you do to most quickly and effectively notify and enlist assistance?

How can you support search efforts?

It is key to engage multiple individuals and organizations in search efforts. Law enforcement, missing persons and anti-crime organizations, media, family and friends, and volunteers may all provide invaluable support. Following are suggestions for working with each.

A) Law Enforcement

Law enforcement is an essential partner in finding a missing person – it’s important to establish a relationship based on mutual respect, trust and honesty.

Most of the initial search will take place where the person is believed to have been last. Efforts will be coordinated by law enforcement—either Federal, State or local, depending on the location and circumstances of the case.

- Keep the case number and contact information of your primary law enforcement contact convenient. Designate one family representative to serve as liaison to investigators.
- Cooperate with law enforcement.
- In the beginning, be prepared for extensive law enforcement presence in your home if the missing person is a member of your household.
- Expect to be considered a suspect until cleared. Be prepared for hard, personal, repeated questions and a polygraph test—this is standard procedure.
- Keep lines of communication open and be honest, complete and forthcoming. Don’t feel guilty about asking questions or relaying suspicions concerning someone you know. Be aware that—in the best interest of the case—law enforcement personnel may not be able to tell you everything.

- Make sure investigators know that you wish to be updated by them about significant developments. Choose a specific time when your primary law enforcement contact will call you with information, realizing that there will be days when there is nothing to report.
- Because an abductor is often known by the family, insist that everyone close to the missing person be interviewed by law enforcement. Doing so can yield important clues to the investigation. Do not question your children yourself.
- Most law enforcement officers do not have firsthand experience working on missing persons cases. If you have concerns with how the case has been classified and/or handled, speak to the officer's supervisor.

B) Media

Media exposure is extremely powerful in generating and maintaining awareness of and interest in a missing person case. It's critical to conduct media interviews as early as possible to engage media.

- Before you begin contacting the media, it's important to first check with the law enforcement investigator to make sure media coverage will not imperil the missing person or impede the investigation. Television, radio and magazine coverage can help generate public awareness and clues that can help in a case. Some media organizations will require that law enforcement issue and/or authorize a request for media coverage.
- Prepare and distribute a media package that contains the following:
 - Complete, detailed description of the missing person, including clothing worn at the time of disappearance
 - Description of place last seen
 - Pertinent information that can help in the recovery, including suspect and vehicle descriptions.
 - Several current copies of photos (both black-and-white and color).
 - Video clip showing the person speaking and acting "normally."
 - Contact information for people to call with possible leads.
 - Reward details if one is being offered.
- Select one person to function as a media spokesperson and liaison.
- It's best to ask your law enforcement contact to contact the media. A law enforcement agency will have established contacts and credibility in approaching the media to generate publicity. If you do choose to proactively approach media, consider obtaining the help of a media expert if possible. You should not have to pay for this service.
- Devise news angles to stimulate and maintain media and public interest in the case.
 - Post reward money.
 - Emphasize the impact on the community.
 - Create human interest.
- To identify specific media organizations to contact, you may consider utilizing wire services. These organizations will have the ability to quickly disseminate

information to a number of media according to geographical and other specifications. The AP newswire at http://www.ap.org/pages/contact/contact_pr.html is a key newswire service. In the United States alone, AP serves 1,700 newspapers and 5,000 radio and television stations. Add to that the more than 8,500 newspaper, radio and television subscribers in 121 countries. There is no fee for submitting a release, but it is at the discretion of an AP editor whether to distribute the release. There are also a number of newswire services that, for a fee, will distribute a release according to your specifications.

- You can monitor media coverage of your case by setting up an alert through Google. You identify the key search terms—for example, the name of the missing person—and then are automatically notified by Google whenever those terms are mentioned.
- One website that identifies media organizations is MondoTimes, a worldwide media guide, at <http://www.mondotimes.com>
- Tips for conducting media interviews:
 - To articulate the most crucial information in every interview, prepare and distribute a media package in advance.
 - Organize and limit the number of points you want to make and keep it simple.
 - Cover the most important points first. Short answers of 10- to 20-second “sound bites” are most likely to be used.
 - Ask that a photo be included in every media coverage
 - Law enforcement will discuss case details. The family spokesperson discusses the impact. To personalize your plea for help, make the person “real” by sharing stories that show his or her personality and interests.
 - Target various time slots of all networks, radio and print media.
- Establish a positive working relationship with the media.
 - Schedule press conferences and interviews around media deadlines.
 - Be patient with reporters.
 - Always be accurate. If you are caught in a lie or even an exaggeration, reporters will never trust you again.
 - Keep control of the story. Be prepared for difficult questions. Remember that you don’t have to answer every question. If you believe a question is insensitive or irrelevant, either say so and decline to answer or else give the information you want to present regardless of the question asked.
 - Don’t give “off the record” comments.
- Never publicly criticize law enforcement or disclose information that law enforcement has told you to keep confidential. You don’t want to risk alienating law enforcement or impeding search efforts.

C. Organizations

A number of government and non-profit organizations provide assistance in missing persons cases. They will have experience and, in some cases, resources to assist you. You will find a list of some of these organizations in the appendix.

D. Volunteers

Volunteers can contribute in many ways, including generating public awareness, assisting in search efforts and supporting the family of a missing person. It's important to note, however, that recruiting, coordinating and managing volunteers can be time-consuming and difficult. The following are suggestions for directing volunteer efforts.

1. *Set up a volunteer center command post.*
 - Designate a volunteer coordinator who is organized, capable, and a good leader. This person must be able to recruit, coordinate and motivate volunteers. Ideally, this person will have knowledge of local resources.
 - A volunteer center can be chaotic, disruptive, and visited by people not known to you. It's best to protect you and your family by locating a volunteer center away from your home.
 - The volunteer center should be equipped with phone, fax, and photocopy equipment, as well as internet service.
2. *Recruit established missing persons search groups.* Established missing persons search groups—unlike friends and family—are desirable because they are organized, trained and can act quickly. Members' character and capabilities have already been screened.
3. *Screen and keep track of volunteers.* To guard against the involvement of misguided individuals, unknown volunteers should be required to show their driver's licenses and to list their name, address and organizational affiliation in a log book.
4. *Keep a list of ways volunteers can help the family of the missing person and/or ongoing search efforts.* People will want to know what they can specifically do so it's best to be prepared to let them know. Following are some ideas:
 - Participate in search
 - Distribute fliers and posters on the Internet and at prominent locations within a wide area of the disappearance.
 - Contact non-profit organizations, businesses and community groups for donations and/or assistance. Keep track of all donated items and write thank-you notes.
 - Answer home telephone 24 hours a day and maintain a telephone log.
 - Arrange for meals and help with household chores for the family.
 - Notify and recruit volunteers to assist with the search.

A guide to setting up a volunteer center can be obtained from the Carole Sund/Carrington Memorial Reward Foundation (www.carolesundfoundation.com).

E. Rewards

Offering a reward for information leading to the recovery of a missing person can generate public interest and clues. The Carole Sund/Carrington Memorial Reward Foundation www.carolesundfoundation.com is one organization that offers support and

resources to families of missing persons. Under qualifying circumstances, the Foundation posts rewards for families of victims who lack the financial means to do so themselves. These rewards provide a tool to help law enforcement find missing persons and bring perpetrators to justice

5. FAMILY SUPPORT

It's difficult for people to know what to do and say when assisting the family of a missing person.

Do's and Don'ts for Supporting Families of Missing Persons

Do's

- Treat missing persons and their families with respect
- Notify families of new developments
- Designate a family spokesperson and liaison to media
- Understand that family members' lives have been turned upside down and are at a complete standstill. Prepare them for feeling unorganized and fearful.
- Expect them to ask questions. It is their right.
- Recognize that family members may not be able to think rationally or make decisions at this time.
- Remind them to eat, drink and rest
- Recognize that the families cannot begin the grieving process.
- Encourage them to cooperate fully with law enforcement.
- Prepare family members to be treated like suspects until they are cleared.
- In most missing person cases, the family is entitled to a Victim Advocate, a trained professional with a district attorney or law enforcement office who represents the rights and interests of crime victims. A family may benefit from help in locating a family advocate.
- Accept offers of assistance to the family.

Don'ts

- Don't forget that family members have a right to information. Recognize, however, that in the best interest of the case, law enforcement may not tell them everything.
- Don't force them to hear information from the media first.
- Don't use the word "closure"; instead use "answers"
- Don't discount their fears.

6. TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Involvement in a missing person's case takes an extreme toll on one's emotional and physical state. You must remember to take care of yourself and your family. Be prepared to take care of yourself.

Do's

- Treat yourself and others as kindly as you can.
- Force yourself to eat, sleep and exercise. Realize that your ability to be strong and to help in the search requires that you take care of yourself. If you have trouble sleeping at night or coping during the day, ask your physician for help.
- Stay away from alcohol, drugs and harmful medications which can prevent you from being an effective member of the search team.
- Find productive ways to release emotions
- Stay united with your spouse and family.
- Establish different routines for daily life.
- If appropriate, allow your children to participate in the search.
- Accept assistance from extended family members and friends.
- Bring callers up to date on the progress of the search by recording simple messages on your answering machine and/or posting updates to a website or blog.
- Figure out how to pay your bills.

Don'ts

- Don't blame yourself or shoulder blame of others.
- Don't feel guilty if you need to return to work
- Don't allow the absence of the missing person and your sense of loss become taboo subjects.
- Don't be surprised if your children's behavior changes drastically in response to the crisis. Help them return to some type of normalcy.
- Don't try to provide emotional support to everyone.

7. SUMMARY

Every missing person case is unique and so, too, are the needs, resources and responses of the close family members and friends of the missing adult or child.

This guide may be read in a time of need, or well in advance. The important thing is to be prepared should you ever face a missing person crisis. You may choose to share this guide with others and to delegate some responsibilities. Not all of the information and advice may apply in every case.

Key messages of this guide:

1. Steps taken in the first 24 and 48 hours and beyond can make a critical difference to the safety and recovery of a missing person. This guide is intended to help you be most effective.
2. Facing a missing person crisis is extremely stressful and terrible. There is no one "right" way to think or feel and you should be prepared to feel very uncertain and anxious about your role and response, as well overcome by concern for your loved one. Do accept assistance from people, organizations and other resources to get the support you need to be most effective in assisting search efforts.

8. APPENDICES:

A) Resources for Information and Assistance

Information and assistance is available from a number of government agencies and non-profit organizations. Services vary and more resources are available in cases of missing children than adults. Currently, there is no single point of contact for obtaining support in a missing persons case. Below is a partial list of established organizations that provide support to individuals in missing persons cases.

Amber Alert System

Provides: Information on requirements for issuing an Amber Alert in the case of a missing minor

Websites: <http://Amberalert.gov/>

Association of Missing and Exploited Children's Organizations (AMECO)

Provides: AMECO is an association of missing and exploited children's organizations in the U.S. and Canada. Available services vary by AMECO member agency but include case management, volunteer search resources and alert systems, and public awareness and education. The AMECO website provides a list of member non-profit organizations, including contact information, location and a brief description of these organizations. AMECO is funded by the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). Members meet established guidelines.

Address: P.O. Box 19668, Alexandria, VA 22320-0688

Phone: 703-838-8379, 800-263-2620

Website: www.amecoinc.org

E-mail: info@amecoinc.org

BeyondMissing, Inc.

Provides: Information and resources related to missing children cases, including an online tool for parents to create missing child flyers

Address: P.O. Box 1185, Sausalito, CA 94966

Phone: 415-461-FIND (3463) (24-hour support and business phone)

Website: www.beyondmissing.com

E-mail: info@beyondmissing.com

Carole Sund/Carrington Memorial Reward Foundation

Provides: Support and resources to families of missing persons. Under qualifying circumstances, posts rewards for families of victims who lack the financial means to do so themselves.

Address: 301 Downey Avenue, Modesto, CA 95354

Phone: 888-813-8389, 209-567-1059

Website: www.carolesundfoundation.com

E-mail: info@carolesundfoundation.com

The Laura Recovery Center

Provides: Information and assistance to parents of missing children

Address: 603 West Edgewood, Friendswood, TX 77546

Phone: 281-482-LRCF (5723), 866-898-5723

Website: www.LRCF.org

Missing Persons Units/Clearinghouses

Provides: Missing persons clearinghouses are State government agencies that assist law enforcement and criminal justice agencies in locating and identifying missing persons. Services vary substantially by state, and may include hotlines set up to receive tips, searchable databases of missing persons, and distribution of missing person information. You should first contact the state in which the person has disappeared. You may then call other State clearinghouses to find out what services are available.

National Center for Missing Adults (NCMA)

Provides: National clearinghouse for missing adults and provides services, information and coordination between government agencies, law enforcement, media and families of missing adults. NCMA also maintains a national database of missing adults determined to be “endangered” or otherwise at risk.

Address: 4641 N. 12th Street, Suite 100, Phoenix, AZ 85014

Phone: hotline: 800-690-FIND (-3463) direct: 602-749-2000 Website:

www.theyaremissed.org

E-mail: info@missingadults.org

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

Provides: National resource center and clearinghouse that helps locate and recover missing children and prevent abduction, molestation, sexual exploitation and victimization of children. Services include operation of a 24-hour hotline, distribution of pictures and posters of missing children nationwide, referrals to non-profit service providers and state clearinghouses about missing persons cases, and other resources, information and assistance.

Address: 699 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-3175

Phone: 800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678), 703-274-3900 (direct)

Website: www.missingkids.com

The Polly Klaas Foundation

Provides: Information, resources and assistance in reporting and finding missing children. Also provides safety kits and information.

Address: P. O. Box 800, Petaluma, CA 94953

Phone: 800-587-4357

Website: www.pollyklaas.org

E-mail: info@pollyklaas.org

Team H.O.P.E.

Provides: Team H.O.P.E. is a part of the National Center for Missing and Endangered Children's Family Advocacy Division. This volunteer organization is dedicated to assisting families with missing children by offering counsel, resources, empowerment and emotional support, matching searching families with trained volunteers who have had or still have a missing child. The Team H.O.P.E. Contact information for organizations belonging to the Association of Missing and Endangered Children's Organization (AMECO) as well as State Missing Children Clearinghouses can be found at the Team H.O.P.E. website.

Address: 310 Pensdale Street, Philadelphia, PA 19128

Phone: 866-305-HOPE

Website: www.teamhope.com

B) Tools & Templates

1. **Missing Person Posters:** Two organizations that provide templates and information on creating missing persons posters are: **BeyondMissing, Inc.** (www.beyondmissing.com) and the **Polly Klaas Foundation** (www.pollyklaas.com).
2. **Press release template.** Press releases are a standard means of communicating article ideas to the media. Your objective is to generate media awareness of and interest in your missing person case. By providing compelling and important information related to the case in an easy-to-use format, you increase the odds that media representatives will create a story publicizing the case.
3. **Guidelines for Setting Up a Volunteer Center:** The **Carole Sund/Carrington Memorial Reward Foundation** (www.carolesundfoundation.com) provides guidelines for setting up and managing a volunteer center to support search efforts.

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ATTN: NEWS DESK

FROM:

PHONE:

FAX :

E-MAIL:

RE:

DATE:

TIME:

LOCATION:

DETAILS:

- Identify who is missing (name, personal ID including age, gender, and physical description). Include a few personal details along with photos and/or video clips that will help people personally identify with the case and relate to a real person.
- Briefly explain circumstances of case, e.g. what is known to have happened, when and where. Details such as vehicle or people involved.
- News “hook” – unusual or interesting aspects about the case which will attract media and public attention.
- Call to action: e.g. what should someone do if they have information regarding the case? Provide contact information for law enforcement.
- Identify who media should contact for further information regarding case.

C) Telecommunications, Technology and the Internet

You can leverage technology to quickly and efficiently disseminate and share information related to search efforts.

Telecommunications

- Your home office and/or volunteer “command center” should be equipped with 2 phone lines with caller ID, an answering machine, fax, photocopier and internet access.
- Designate someone to answer the phone and keep a log of calls in a notebook.
- Do not tie up the primary phone line with outbound calls.
- Bring callers up to date on current status of search efforts by recording simple messages on your home answering machine.
- Get a cell phone if you do not already have one so that you can always be reached.
- Equip yourself with the ability to send voice messages to and initiate conference calls with groups of people.

Technology and the Internet

The Internet is a powerful tool for quickly and efficiently distributing missing person information, fliers and updates quickly and efficiently to law enforcement, non-profit organizations, missing person organizations, the public and volunteers.

- Recruit someone proficient in using the Internet, e-mail and websites to provide technical support and set up an email group and/or website to facilitate communications.
- Designate a facilitator/gatekeeper to ensure the accuracy and relevance of content. If you set up a website or blog, clearly separate “official” information and updates from updates and comments contributed at large so that online visitors can easily find the information they need.
- Post personal identification data and photographs of the missing person, as well as key information related to the case and search efforts so that people can easily access and share this information, and print fliers.

D) REFERENCES

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- Petersen, Kim and Smandra, Laurie. “Working with Families of Missing Persons.” Presentation to NOVA Conference. Sacramento: Kim Petersen and Laurie Smandra, 2004.
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- U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (2004). *When Your Child is Missing: A Family Survival Guide* (3rd edition). Washington, D.C. NCJ 204958. To get a free copy of this document, visit the National Criminal Justice Reference Center at <http://www.ncjrs.gov/> and enter NCJ 204958 in the site search tool to access an online copy or to order a printed copy. Other OJJDP publications on missing children are also available on this site.