

What To Do and Expect, if a Loved One Goes Missing

Compiled from info by

<http://www.missingpersonshelp.org/>

<http://www.wikihow.com/Find-a-Missing-Person>

<http://crimefeed.com/2016/04/someone-love-goes-missing/>

<http://www.qcmpn.com/basic-steps-on-how-to-find-a-missing-person.html>

<http://nampn.org/mpchecklist.pdf>

and John Lordan.

Decide who is the point person for the investigation.

Get a notebook and pen as you need to record everything you can.

Determine if they are truly missing. Sometimes a suspected missing adult is discovered to be in hiding.

Ask yourself and others, is the missing person's lack of communications a behavior that is new or has it been done sporadically in the past?

If you determine NO and your gut tells you, "something is wrong", then you want to start a process of eliminating possibilities and look for any sort of event or communication that corroborates your suspicions and enhances your plea for help.

Call their cell phone, office, home, etc and see if they have an updated message or anything that might indicate where they went.

If their cell phone is ringing, call it regularly. Create a "ping trail."

Call their job, hospitals, police stations, coroners, frequent hangouts and usual transportation methods (cab companies, trains, etc.) Possibly also reach out to local psychiatric units, and homeless shelters if appropriate.

Check their social media to see who they were talking to and what they were talking about leading up to their disappearance. Print out correspondence and activity that seems as though it could lead to the missing person's location.

Check their home. NOTE: If you do not live in the area of the home, try asking a neighbor or friend in that area to go to the home for you. Or contact the police in that area and ask them to perform "A well being check"

If the home shows signs of forced entry or violence call the police immediately and do not enter the premises.

Do look at photos that contain the missing persons possessions in the back ground. Are the items still there? Ask other relatives to help determine what might be missing.

Do look at records and recent receipts for items purchased and are those items still there?

If that is not the situation proceed with CAUTION and enter the home: DO NOT touch anything or move items. Use your thumb and index finger to open the door rather than grasping the whole knob, and don't touch the interior side of the door. The police might be able to get a finger print. Keep track of what you did touch and your observations in your notebook.

Look for calendars or notes and any other item that might confirm where your missing loved one might be.

Try to find recent photos of them if you don't already have some.

Note any found info on their friends or acquaintances and reach out to them (leave messages, send texts). Do they know when the missing person was last seen, what were they wearing, and did they mention additional plans for that day or night?

Ask to speak to one or more of their coworkers that sat next to them or near them or even their supervisor. Did they overhear anything or know about any travel plans? When did they last see the missing person? What were they wearing?

Record the time and context of the calls in your notebook, and encourage people to call you back if they find out more information from another source.

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.

Using your notebook, put a timeline together on their last known activities and communication.

Have a written list of the missing person's friends and enemies with notes about each one. How long they have known each other, why they are enemies, contact info, etc.

Call police and insist on filing a missing person report. You may hear different stories about their rules (24 or 48 hours), these are usually not true. Escalate if you have to, but get the report filed immediately.

For adults the police will most likely try to pass it off as there is nothing wrong and may not want to investigate. If you do not agree with the police, you need others to support suspicions or have some "evidence" to persuade them. With children, especially preteens, that sentiment goes away as children typically do not have the independence or means to disappear on their own.

When you call law enforcement, provide missing persons name, any known nicknames or aliases, their date of birth, height, weight, hair color, eye color and any other unique identifiers such as eyeglasses, braces, scars, tattoos and any medical conditions you are aware of. Also tell them about any notable jewelry (wedding ring, bracelets, earrings, necklaces) or other objects they may be carrying (cell phone, purse). Tell them when the person was noticed to be missing, when they were last seen and what clothing he or she was wearing if known.

Give the police THREE recent photos of the missing person.

MAKE COPIES of everything you hand over to the police. There's a very good chance you'll never get it back.

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.

Make sure you obtain a case number for your missing person's report. Write down the name and badge number of the police officer who took your report, as well as a telephone number where you can reach the department.

If you suspect the person was abducted from their home or car **INSIST ON FINGER PRINTING THE HOUSE** or car. They may try to tell you that since you and or others have been in the house that finger printing would be a waste of time. **INSIST** that they do it, or immediately find and pay a private detective with police connections to do it for you.

NOTE: Private Investigators aka PI - Some PIs really want to help, others simply want billable hours. There are reputable firms and there are less ethical firms. Ask the police for recommendations, check references, check the Better Business Bureau. Ask about the fees and be sure that you and the PI have a written understanding of the services to be provided and the associated cost.

If they suspect foul play, they will come looking for suspects. **The first suspect will be you**, family members, or other persons who knew them closely. Statistically speaking most cases of foul play are committed by a family member or someone close, so be ready. Lie detector test and interrogation techniques can be very unsettling, but it is necessary.

Keep up with the police - Ask the police what their plans are and how you can help? Do your best to keep this relationship healthy, and effective. Be helpful but do not be a hindrance.

Ask if they have other departments or agencies assisting. Press them hard to get as many agencies to help as you can.

Ask for regular updates and be respectful. Do not tell the police how to do their job.

Be clear with the police about what you know to be a fact verses what is an opinion or hunch.

If the missing person is a child, request that your child's name and identifying information be immediately entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File.

Ask about issuing an AMBER ALERT.

After you have reported your child missing to law enforcement, call the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, NCMEC on their toll-free telephone number: 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678).

If your elderly loved one has gone missing, many states now offer the assistance of a Silver Alert. It is very similar to a child Amber Alert.

Go to NAMUS.GOV and create a profile for the missing person. The US Department of Justice operates this system, and info posted to it is publicly available.

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.

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 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).

If the case is more than 30 days old, the state police says you can offer up dental records or DNA. The information gathered will be entered into the CODIS databank and could be cross-referenced to prior remains found in the awful event that something more serious has happened. This info can also be shared with NAMUS.

Consider having the case escalated to the FBI IF you suspect that your loved one has been abducted and possibly taken across state lines.

In other countries, look for any national agencies or databases that you can submit the info to.

Make up posters and flyers – Sometimes a local printer or copy shop will give you a discount.

Be sure to include a recent, clear photograph of the missing person. Include the person's age, a physical description, and the date he or she went missing. Include contact information as well, but DO NOT put your personal contact information (phone/home address) on the flyer. This could put you in a vulnerable situation.

Hang your fliers in prominent locations. Gas stations, grocery stores, post offices, banks, drug stores, local libraries, churches, hospitals, homeless shelters, parks and hiking trails will all work well.

E-mail the flyer to everyone in your email address book. Ask friends and family to post and email the flyer also.

Create a Facebook and/or Twitter page to help get out the word about the missing loved one. This provides one targeted place to post updated articles, search information and general updates, and is a great way to get more attention to your case.

Be prepared as you are going to be pulled in multiple directions. Part of you will want to shut down and be left alone. Another part of you will be frustrated because it seems like you just can't do enough. Another part of you will feel like the police and others don't care and that they are not doing enough. Seek help from friends and professionals when you need it.

Get the word out - Try to get the local press to run a story about your missing loved one. By press I mean the radio, paper, and TV. Call them and ask to speak to the head of the news dept for TV and radio. For the papers ask the editor. Talk to your coworkers and friends, they can help spread the word and ask them if they have any connections with the press. Leverage your relationships to help get the word out. Call stations that are not just in your immediate area. Use Email and Websites, contact blogs and YouTubers.

Organize Volunteers and searches - Try to get help from friends, family, etc. There are also organizations that might be able to help you. Again get someone you know to help you with finding volunteers and help.

Search the web for help. There are some good sites with tips and advice ranging from your well being to assistance with locating a missing person.

Caution: There are those that would prey on your vulnerability. Be cautious!!

Sometimes reward money is needed. You may be able to have a fund raiser. If you do have a fund raiser, you will need to have a separate account set aside for the money raised and the tracking of money into and out of the account. Ask your local bank, attorney, accountant, etc for their advice.

Money may become an issue. You will have extra expenses like, food, maybe hotel, phone, printing for flyers, gas, etc. Keep track of your expenses closely ask a tax professional or accountant for help in knowing what expenses might be deductible.

Some organizations like your church, your friends, etc might be able to help with donations of various types. If you're in need...it never hurts to ask.

Marriages, friendships, faith, trust, will all be tested and taken to extremes like never before and never again. You need to find a counselor or best friend to help you through this.

Simple little things can trigger a range of emotions in you and others. Songs, comments, pictures, may spark tears and or uncontrollable crying.

Anger will flare up as your feelings of hopelessness set in.

Your job performance and or school work may suffer. Let your boss and teachers know what's going on. Try not to take on new assignments or big life changes for at least six months.

Searches do four basic things .

- 1 Searches provide you with a sense of action and possible hope.
- 2 Searches help find the missing person(s)
- 3 Searches help find helpful clues
- 4 Even if a search that does not turn up a new clue or find the missing. The press coverage helps others to be informed and get may get others involved or at least aware of the situation.

You do not have to organize searches by yourself. Let the authorities help you figure out where and when to search as well as how to conduct the search.

Ask the authorities how you can get volunteers to help with the search.

Ask search and rescue K-9 units to assist if you have a certain area that needs to be searched.

Organize events to keep the case alive in the media and with the public (loved one's birthday, missing date anniversary).

Notify LE of any address, phone or email changes if you move.

Don't give-up – Hope the best, prepare for the worst.

Do's and Don'ts

Some things that seem like a good idea might actually make finding your loved one more difficult. What works in one situation may not work in another and thus the do's and don'ts are meant to be a guidance verses a hard and fast rule.

The DON'Ts

Don't clean – if there is a mess or things out of place, make a note of it and give those notes to the investigators. Cleaning could destroy finger prints or other evidence.

Don't call a private investigator right away. There may come a time for them but often they can impede the investigation and they may also not have your interest at heart and feed you what you want to hear rather than the facts.

Don't make up things – If you're not sure about something preface your comment with “I am not 100% sure but I think

Don't allow others to make up things. Many people will sincerely want to help. But if they are not sure about something it could lead the investigation in the wrong direction and waste valuable time.

Don't freak-out or get upset when you're identified as a suspect.

Don't be quick to accuse others, even if the media or the authorities accuse them. Sometimes the authorities use false accusations and information as they try to flush out the truth.

Don't do nothing. Don't isolate yourself. Your help is needed! Plus, for your mental health and welfare you need to stay involved.

Do not quit your job. Most employers are very understanding ask for some time off. Ask for a temporary reduction in your hours and responsibility if you need to. It is amazing how bills accumulate and you can get behind when you are in distress.

Do not make major or life altering decisions while you're still in distress.

Do not fill the void left by the missing loved one with a poor or destructive behavior. Do not write checks for the missing persons account without getting advice from a lawyer and/or an accountant. Do not deposit or cash the missing persons checks.

Don't go it alone. Find a close friend to lean on, get counseling, see your minister.

Do not lose hope!!!! Keep hoping for the truth.

The Do's

Do pray, meditate and take care of your health and well being. Start a second journal about how you're feeling and dealing with everything.

Do ask others to pray and to tell as many others as possible. The more people that know about your missing loved one the better.

Do buy lots of tissues. Tears and emotions will hit you in waves. It's OK. Let it out.

Do be aware that the authorities, in order to find your missing loved one, may not tell you everything they know or suspect.

Do stay busy. Not just with the activities around the missing person, stay busy with some of your normal routines.

Do make and distribute posters and flyers. Have the authorities help you with the layout of the material.

Do get some legal and financial advice if the missing loved one is an adult and the investigation begins going into weeks. Expenses will add up very quickly. Mortgage, rent, car payments, etc. will need a plan for being handled within 30 days of the persons disappearance.

Do grieve - whether it has been a day, week, or month you have experienced a loss. Grieving is a vital part of healing and keeping **your** life together.

Do Search the web for help. There are some good sites with tips and advice ranging from your well being to assistance with locating a missing person.

Caution: There are those that would prey on your vulnerability. Be cautious!!

Do get legal advice before signing any contracts OR posting notices with rewards. If you explain the situation you should be able to find a lawyer who will help you at a discounted rate.

Do stay connected to friends and family.

Do seek professional help if you feel depressed.

Do everything you can to hold on to hope.