



## Missing Persons Information

Time is of the essence when you learn your friend or family member is missing. Before you start searching, call 911 and start the report process. Local Law Enforcement (LE) has access to State and Federal programs/services and they can disseminate this information quickly. The more information you have the greater your chance is to locate your loved one. **IMPORTANT:** Before you start calling friends, family, or even your Private Investigator, CALL 911 first.

### Information Needed

- Full name to include, aliases, maiden names, and nicknames.
- Date of birth
- Current photos/Video.
- Vehicle with license plate number & any distinguishing feature (i.e. gray car with red bumper).
- Detailed physical description (tattoos, piercings etc.) and last known clothing. On some occasions depending on the circumstances, LE may wish to do a search with a dog. Every LE agency has their own policies regarding deploying a tracking dog for a missing person. **NOT ALL LE AGENCIES WILL DEPLOY A TRACKING DOG ON A MISSING PERSON.** Before LE arrives, find an article of clothing or pillowcase your family member/friend recently wore or slept with in bed. Put the article of clothing in a paper bag and keep away from other clothing items as it may interfere with the scent. This will help the dog establish a scent, if they choose the search with the dog. Lastly, follow all orders from LE and do your best to stay calm and focused. It is expected and understood you may be frantic. Pick the calmest family/friend to be the representative and have them speak with LE.
- Before LE arrives look at the missing persons social media (Facebook, Instagram or X(Twitter)). In the event they made a recent post this may help locate where they were last at and the approximate timeline.
- If you share a cell phone account with the missing person, check with your provider, the phone may be able to be tracked.
- Establishments or locations they frequent.
- Any known history of depression or threats/attempts to commit suicide (methods). Access to drugs or weapons.
- While another family member/friend is working with LE, everybody else starts calling friends, family, and anyone else you think may know or have seen the missing person.

- For missing children, after you have called 911 and LE is en route to your location, **check** your home and I mean **check everywhere**. I can't tell you how many times, I have investigated missing children's complaints, and after an hour of searching, a family member finds the child hiding in a garage cabinet nobody would ever think to check, so **CHECK** the house.
- If you have surveillance cameras check them. This may give you a direction of travel and time line. Did they leave in a car, were they picked up etc. Also, check with neighbors who may have surveillance cameras and have them check their cameras.
- For both missing adults (Alzheimer's or Dementia) and Children who you know are on foot. After you've completed your report with LE and you have thoroughly checked the house, start calling friends, neighbors, and other family members. I suggest, one family member or friend remain at the home of the missing person in the event they return home, everyone else starts searching! The number of searchers available determines how and where to search. For 2 or more searchers establish a grid (1 of you works away from the house, the other works towards the house. How far away from the house you start depends on the age, medical condition and how long they have been missing. If you know the missing person took a car change your strategy. Start checking known locations the missing person has frequented previously as well as parks, stores, bars, etc. Often the searching LE will stay in communication with you so coordinate your search with LE.
- Communication with LE and family and friends will be critical. Get the information disseminated as quickly as you can.

NOTE: Over my 30 years in LE, I have investigated hundreds of missing persons cases. The information listed here, are suggestions and ideas. **EVERY MISSING PERSON CASE IS DIFFERENT**. As a private investigator, these are questions I would ask. I am not Law Enforcement so always defer to your local LE.

Additional resources may be available through the following organizations.

- [Washington State Patrol Missing Persons Unit](https://www.wsp.wa.gov/crime/alerts-missing-persons/): (800) 543-5678
- <https://www.wsp.wa.gov/crime/alerts-missing-persons/>
- [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](https://www.fbi.gov/missing-and-exploited-children): (800) 843-5678 or (800) THE-LOST
- <https://amberalert.ojp.gov/> Amber Alert System
- [National Missing and Unidentified Persons System \(NamUs\)](https://nam.us/): (855) 626-7600
- RCW 13.60.020 - Entry of information on missing children or endangered persons into missing person computer network—Access.  
<https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=13.60.020>