



Approved:  
*Chief Marcia Harnden*

Subject:

# 510. Missing Persons

Effective:  
April 18, 2018

Revised:  
December 22, 2022

CALEA Standards: 41.2.5, 41.2.6

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## 510.1: PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for handling missing persons investigations.

### 510.1.1: DEFINITIONS

a. **At Risk** – This includes persons who are:

- 1) Are 13 years of age or younger.
- 2) Regardless of age, are believed or determined to be experiencing one or more of the following circumstances:
  - A. Out of the zone of safety for his/her chronological age and developmental stage.
  - B. Mentally or behaviorally disabled.
  - C. Drug dependent, including prescribed medication and/or illegal substances, and the dependency is potentially life-threatening.
  - D. Absent from home for more than 24 hours before being reported to law enforcement as missing.
  - E. In a life-threatening situation.
  - F. In the company of others who could endanger his/her welfare.
  - G. Absent in a way that is inconsistent with established patterns of behavior and cannot be readily explained. Most children have an established and reasonably predictable routine.
  - H. Involved in a situation that would cause a reasonable person to conclude the person should be considered at risk.

- I. Intellectual or developmental disability, or an impaired mental condition such as dementia or brain injury ([ORS 181A.320](#)).
  - J. A victim of first- or second-degree custodial interference or kidnapping ([ORS 181A.310](#)).
- b. **Missing Person** – Any person who is reported missing to law enforcement when that person’s location is unknown.
- c. **Missing Person Networks** – Databases or computer networks which are available to law enforcement and are suitable for obtaining/sharing information related to missing persons investigations. These include the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), the Oregon Law Enforcement Data System (LEDS), the Oregon State Missing Children Clearinghouse and the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children \(NCMEC\)](#). A missing person entry in LEDS/NCIC automatically notifies the Oregon State Missing Children Clearing House.

### 510.2: POLICY

**It is the policy of the Albany Police Department to consider each report of a missing person as though the person is in need of immediate assistance until an investigation reveals otherwise. The Albany Police Department gives missing persons cases priority over property-related cases and does not require a specific amount of time to have passed before initiating a missing person investigation.**

### 510.3 ACCEPTANCE OF REPORTS

- a. Any member encountering a person who wishes to report a missing person shall render assistance without delay.
- b. If a member is unable to give immediate assistance, they shall promptly dispatch or alert another member who can initiate the investigation. This can be accomplished by accepting the initial report via telephone or in-person.
- c. A report shall be accepted in all cases and regardless of where the person was last seen, where the person resides, or any other question of jurisdiction.

### 510.4 INITIAL INVESTIGATION

Members of this department conducting the initial investigation of a missing person should take the following investigative actions, as applicable:

- a. Respond to the dispatched call as soon as practical;
- b. Interview the reporting party and any witnesses to determine whether the person qualifies as a missing person and, if so, whether the missing person is at risk;
- c. Notify a supervisor immediately if there is evidence that a missing person is either at risk or may qualify for a public alert;

- d. Initiate a search as applicable under the circumstances presented;
- e. Ensure that entries are made into the LEDS/NCIC, under the following criteria:
  - 1) If the person is at risk, they shall be entered into LEDS/NCIC immediately.
  - 2) In all other cases, the missing person shall be entered into LEDS/NCIC as soon as practical, but no later than 2 hours from the time of the initial report ([42 USC 5780](#)).
- f. Complete the appropriate report forms accurately and completely;
- g. Collect and review:
  - 1) A photograph and fingerprint card of the missing person, if available;
  - 2) A voluntary biological sample of the missing person, if available (e.g., toothbrush, hairbrush);
  - 3) Any documents which may assist in the investigation (e.g., court orders, personal writings, etc.);
  - 4) Any other evidence which may assist in the investigation (e.g., cell phones, computers);
  - 5) When circumstances permit and if appropriate, attempt to locate the missing person via their cellular communications carrier.
- h. If the missing person report is a case which would ordinarily fall outside of Albany Police jurisdiction, ensure that the agency having jurisdiction is notified as follows:
  - 1) Notification regarding at-risk missing persons should be made without delay so that the appropriate jurisdiction may take over the investigation as appropriate.
  - 2) Notification of other missing person cases should be made via report routing.

### 510.5 REPORTS AND ROUTING

Members should complete all missing person reports and forms promptly and advise the appropriate supervisor as soon as a missing person report is ready for review.

#### 510.5.1 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. The supervisor shall review missing person reports upon receipt and ensure resources are deployed for a search as appropriate, initiating a command post as necessary.
- b. The supervisor shall ensure that applicable notifications and public alerts are made and documented and that records have been entered into appropriate missing person networks.

- c. The supervisor should take reasonable steps to identify and address any jurisdictional issues to ensure cooperation among agencies. If the case falls within the jurisdiction of another agency, the supervisor should facilitate transfer of the case to the agency of jurisdiction.

### 510.5.2 RECORDS SECTION RESPONSIBILITIES

Any member assigned to the Records Section who receives a missing person report through routing shall:

- a. Notify and forward a copy of the missing person report to the agency of jurisdiction for the missing person's residence in cases where the missing person resides in another jurisdiction;
- b. Notify and forward a copy of the report to the agency of jurisdiction where the missing person was last seen;
- c. Notify and forward a copy of the report to the agency of jurisdiction for the missing person's destination, if known;
- d. Forward a copy of the report to the Detective Unit;
- e. Coordinate with the NCIC Terminal Contractor for Oregon to have the missing person record in NCIC updated with additional information obtained from missing person investigations (42 USC 5780).

### 510.6 DETECTIVE UNIT RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to completing or continuing any actions listed in Section 510.4 or 510.5, the investigator assigned to a missing person investigation:

- a. Should ensure that the missing person's school is notified as applicable.
  - 1) The notice should be in writing and should also include a photograph if possible.
  - 2) The investigator should meet with school officials as appropriate to stress the importance of including the notice in the students file, along with the investigator's contact information, in the event the school receives a request to transfer the student to another school.
- b. Should re-contact the reporting person and/or other witnesses to determine if any further information is available.
- c. Shall ensure that a biological sample (DNA), if available, is forwarded to the Oregon State Police ([ORS 146.187](#)). For unidentified persons cases (UP) and missing persons cases (MP), DNA samples will be submitted to the **Oregon State Police Forensic Services Division**. The following documents should be completed prior to submission:
  - 1) [Reference Sample Submission Form](#)

- d. Should contact any other agencies involved in the case to determine if any additional information is available.
- e. Shall verify and update the Oregon LEDS, the Oregon State Police Missing Person Clearinghouse, NCIC, and any other applicable missing person networks within 60 days of the original entry into the networks (42 USC 5780).
- f. Should continue to make reasonable efforts to locate the missing person and document those efforts with follow-up reports in accordance with the [Case Management: Policy 505](#). However, Missing Persons reports should remain open until they are located or identified.
- g. Shall maintain a liaison with the state and local child welfare systems and the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children \(NCMEC\)](#) if the missing person is under age 21 and shall promptly notify NCMEC when the person is missing from a foster care family home or child care institution (42 USC 5780).
- h. Should make appropriate inquiry with the Medical Examiner's Office.
- i. Should, within 60 days, obtain and forward medical and dental records, photos, X-rays, and biological samples to the Oregon State Police Forensic Laboratory utilizing their [OSP Forensic Services Request: Form 49](#) and Family Reference Sample Submission Form (42 USC 5780).
- j. Should consider making appropriate entries and searches in the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs).
- k. Should consult with a supervisor regarding seeking federal assistance from the FBI and U.S. Marshal's Service when an at-risk missing person has been missing for an extended period of time.

### 510.7 MISSING PERSON LOCATES

When any person reported missing is found, the assigned investigator shall document the location of the missing person in the appropriate report, notify the relatives and/or reporting party and other involved agencies and refer the case for additional investigation if warranted.

The **Records and Systems Supervisor** shall ensure that, upon receipt of information that a missing person has been located; the following occurs:

- a. Notification is made to Oregon State Police via LEDS/NCIC;
- b. Missing child's school is notified;
- c. Entries are made into appropriate missing person networks;
- d. Notification is made to any other law enforcement agency which took the report or participated in the investigation;

- e. Destruction of all information and materials obtained for the purpose of identify the missing person if they are found alive or sealing of the information and materials if they are found deceased ([ORS 146.189\(2\)](#)).

### 510.7.1 UNIDENTIFIED PERSONS

Department members investigating a case of an unidentified person who is deceased, or a living person who cannot assist in identifying themselves should:

- a. Obtain a complete description of the person;
- b. Enter the unidentified person's description into the NCIC Unidentified Person File.
- c. Use available resources, such as those related to missing persons, to identify the person.

### 510.8 CASE CLOSURE

The Detective Unit supervisor may authorize the closure of a missing person case after considering the following:

- a. The missing person is confirmed to have returned or evidence matches an unidentified person or body.
- b. Exhaustion of leads in the investigation should not be the reason for closing a case. Missing persons who are residents of Albany or cases in which this department is the lead agency should be kept under active investigation for as long as the person may still be alive.
- c. In cases where this department is not the lead agency, and the lead agency has been notified and all entries have been made into appropriate missing person networks, the case may be designated as inactive.
- d. Missing person cases should not be closed or reclassified simply because a person would have reached a particular age or the age of majority, or because the person is now the subject of a criminal or civil warrant.

### 510.9 TRAINING

Subject to available resources, the Administrative Lieutenant should ensure that members of this department whose duties include missing person investigations and reports receive training that minimally includes the following components:

- a. The initial investigation:
  - 1) Assessments and interviews;
  - 2) Use of current resources;

- 3) Confirmation of missing status and custody status of minors;
  - 4) Evaluation of the need for a heightened response;
  - 5) Identification of the zone of safety based on age and developmental stage.
- b. Interaction with individuals with cognitive impairment, including dementia, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and brain injuries;
  - c. Briefing of additional department members or other resources at the scene;
  - d. Identification of NCIC Missing Person File categories (e.g., disability, endangered, involuntary, juvenile, and catastrophe);
  - e. Verification of accuracy of all descriptive information;
  - f. Initiation of neighborhood investigation/canvass;
  - g. Investigation of recent family dynamics;
  - h. Addressing conflicting information;
  - i. Key investigative and coordination steps;
  - j. Management of missing person cases;
  - k. Identification of resources and specialized services;
  - l. Update procedures for case information and descriptions;
  - m. Preservation of scenes and social media accounts;
  - n. Internet and technology issues;
  - o. Media relations.