

# **BLOOMINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT**

## **STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**

### **RUNAWAY/MISSING PERSONS**

Reviewed by: Lt. James B. Clesson	Effective Date: March 15, 1999
Authorized by: Chief Jamal A. Simington	Revision Date: February 4, 2025

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this SOP is to establish a procedure for handling runaway and missing person reports and to establish a procedure for handling persons apprehended for the status offense of runaway.

#### **PROCEDURE**

The Illinois Missing Persons Identification Act (50 ILCS 722) requires all Illinois law enforcement agencies to accept reports of missing persons without delay (there is no waiting period). Acceptance of a missing person report may not be refused on any ground.

Officers need to be aware of Suzanne's Law, which requires law enforcement agencies to enter each case of a missing person under the age of 21 into LEADS/NCIS immediately, regardless of the circumstances. See the LEADS Operating Manual - Missing Person Chapter for additional information on reporting requirements.

#### **RUNAWAY**

When a person 17 years of age or younger is reported as a runaway, a general report shall be taken.

Bloomington Police shall handle runaway reporting in the following manner:

- A general report shall be taken.
- This report shall include a complete physical and clothing description of the runaway and all circumstances of the incident.
- A copy of the report will be provided to the Bloomington Communications Center so the runaway can be entered into LEADS immediately (typically, within two hours) upon receipt.
- Bloomington Communications Center personnel will provide a LEADS number and NCIC number, which the officer will include in the general report. The investigating officer (police officer or Community Service Officer [CSO]) shall contact the reporting person within twenty-four hours and provide them with the LEADS number and NCIC number. This contact shall be noted in the report.

- The reporting officer shall provide the reporting person with the contact number for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 1-800-843-5678. If the child is reported missing from a foster care family home or childcare institution, the officer shall notify the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and document this notification in their report.

## **MISSING PERSONS**

Missing persons may be reported in person to any law enforcement agency (see 20 ILCS 2605/2605-375).

Any missing person, age 18 or older, reported to Bloomington Police shall be handled in the following manner:

- The general report will include a complete physical description of the missing person and the last known clothing description.
- A copy of the report will be provided to the Bloomington Communications Center so the runaway can be entered into LEADS immediately (typically, within two hours) upon receipt.
- Bloomington Communications Center personnel will provide a LEADS number and NCIC number, which the officer will include in the general report.
- The investigating officer (police officer or CSO) shall contact the reporting person within twenty-four hours and provide them with the LEADS number and the NCIC number. This contact shall be noted in the report.
- The reporting officer shall provide the reporting person with the website for the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System: <https://namus.nij.ojp.gov>.

## **HIGH-RISK MISSING PERSONS**

By definition (50 ILCS 722/10), a "High-risk missing person" means a person whose whereabouts are not currently known and whose circumstances indicate the person may be at risk of injury or death. The circumstances that may indicate that a person is a high-risk missing person include, but are not limited to, any of the following:

- The person is missing as a result of a stranger abduction.
- The person is missing under suspicious circumstances.
- The person is missing under unknown circumstances.
- The person is missing under known dangerous circumstances.
- The person is missing for more than 30 days.
- The person has already been designated as a high-risk missing person by another law enforcement agency.
- There is evidence that the person is at risk because:
  - The person is in need of medical attention, including but not limited to persons with dementia-like symptoms, or prescription medication.
  - The person does not have a pattern of running away or disappearing.
  - The person may have been abducted by a non-custodial parent.
  - The person is mentally impaired.
  - The person is under the age of 21.
  - The person has been the subject of past threats or acts of violence.

- The person has eloped from a nursing home.
- The person is a veteran or active-duty member of the United States Armed Forces, the National Guard, or any reserve component of the United States Armed Forces who is believed to have a physical or mental health condition that is related to their service.
- Any other factor that may, in the judgment of the law enforcement official, indicate that the missing person may be at risk.

## **FOLLOW-UP INVESTIGATION**

The report for the runaway/missing person shall be submitted to the officer's immediate supervisor. The supervisor will review the report and determine whether exigent or special circumstances require immediate investigation by CID. Barring exigent or special circumstances, the report shall be assigned for follow-up investigation to the police officer or CSO who initially took the report. That police officer or CSO shall be responsible for all follow-up investigative activities for ten days and shall document all investigative efforts in supplemental reports. After ten days, if the runaway/missing person has not returned home, the police officer or CSO shall write a final supplemental report documenting all contacts with the parents, family, guardians, or institution(s) that initially made the report. Once submitted, the report shall be reviewed by a CID supervisor for assignment to a detective.

Follow-up investigative activities might include, but are not limited to:

- Conducting an area check by a police officer (a CSO may request a police officer to conduct this check) in the vicinity near where the runaway/missing person was last seen or known to frequent.
- Contacting the family, parent, guardian, reporting person, or institution that made the initial report to determine if any additional information is available.
- The police officer or CSO should check the current RMS to attempt to locate additional information that might aid in locating the runaway/missing person. This information could include, but is not limited to:
  - Known associates or in the case of youths who have run away previously, locations from where the runaway had been previously recovered.

When requested by a CSO, police officers shall assist with the CSO's efforts to locate the runaway/missing person.

Special or exigent circumstances must clearly be noted in the initial report. For example, a runaway/missing person who is in need of medication that, if not administered, could result in a serious adverse health consequence, or a runaway who left a suicide note, are both exigent and special circumstances. In the event of special or exigent circumstances, the CID supervisor shall carefully review the case to determine the investigative activity most likely to recover the runaway. This might include assigning the case to a detective in some situations. It is mandatory that the family, parent, guardian, reporting person, or institution that made the runaway/missing person report be contacted within twenty-four hours by the police officer or CSO, or their designee. The purpose of this contact will be to determine if the runaway/missing person has returned, if additional information about the situation is now known, and to ensure the family, parent,

guardian, reporting person, or institution that the Bloomington Police Department is concerned and making efforts to locate the runaway/missing person.

If an officer or CSO who has taken a runaway/missing person report is going to be absent from work immediately after taking the report, that officer or CSO is directed to notify their immediate supervisor of this absence. An absence might be attributed to a regularly scheduled day off, vacation, or other similar allowed leave. If the officer or CSO calls in sick immediately after taking a runaway/missing person report, or while a report is assigned to said officer or CSO, the supervisor of said employee must be notified by the person requesting the sick leave. The supervisor or CSO supervisor shall then make necessary temporary arrangements to have the case handled by another officer or CSO during the absence of the original officer or CSO. The temporarily assigned officer should be from the shift on which the report was taken.

### **RUNAWAY/MISSING PERSON LOCATED OR RETURNING HOME**

If the runaway/missing person returns on their own, an officer shall verify that they have returned and supplement the general report documenting the information, thereby clearing the report.

If the runaway/missing person is apprehended, an officer shall complete a supplemental report of the circumstances of the apprehension and disposition of the runaway/missing person, clearing the report.

A copy of the report locating the runaway/missing person will be provided to the Bloomington Communications Center so the runaway/missing person can be taken out of the LEADS system. The officer removing the runaway/missing person from LEADS must notify the Bloomington Communications Center to remove the runaway/missing person from LEADS. The first name of the Bloomington Communications Center employee that the notification was made to must be included in the supplemental report.

When an officer apprehends a runaway/missing person, the officer may bring the runaway/missing person to the Bloomington Police Department and contact the appropriate person(s) concerned with the runaway/missing person. Arrangements may be made for the runaway/missing person to be picked up at the Bloomington Police Department. The officer may choose to return the runaway/missing person to the appropriate person(s) at their location. For example, the officer may release a runaway to the parent at work if the parent cannot arrive at the police station at a reasonable time or to the Children's Foundation if a childcare worker cannot respond to the police station in a reasonable time. If a parent or guardian refuses to take the runaway, Project OZ will be contacted to take custody and arrange housing and referrals.

An adult missing person for whom there exists no exigent circumstance requiring other police intervention may be released to their own care.

In any case, if a runaway or missing person has not been located within 30 days of the report, the CID personnel assigned to the case will attempt to obtain dental records of the runaway/missing person, or other means of physically identifying the person. This information will be documented in a supplemental report, and the dental records will be sent to the Bloomington Police Department LEADS coordinator for appropriate entry into the LEADS system.

If dental records or other means of identification are not available, that will be documented in a supplemental report and a copy will be sent to the Bloomington Police Department LEADS coordinator for appropriate notification.

If more than one person is reported as runaway or missing at the same time, a separate report will be generated for each runaway/missing person, and a separate LEADS number will be issued for each person reported as runaway/missing.

It would be appropriate to cross-reference related reports in the narrative of the report. An example would be when a group of runaways/missing persons is reported as all having left together. Each report generated should be cross-referenced to the other reports.

### **USE OF MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA FOR HIGH-RISK MISSING PERSONS**

The Bloomington Police Department recognizes the ability of traditional media and social media to reach a broad audience. The police department also understands that oversaturation of these resources can result in diminished effectiveness.

In addition to the aforementioned reporting requirements, if a runaway or missing person is determined to be high-risk (utilizing the criteria listed in this SOP), the investigating officer shall also attempt to obtain a photograph of the runaway or missing person. This photograph will be used in a press release. For juveniles, verbal consent from a juvenile's guardian must be obtained for a press release and photograph to be distributed. This consent or refusal shall be documented in the incident report.

The patrol supervisor approving the initial report will be responsible for ensuring the press release with the photo (if available) is sent to traditional media and social media outlets at the time the report is taken. Additionally, at the time the missing person is located, the responding officer shall immediately notify the patrol supervisor via phone or radio that the missing person has been located. The patrol supervisor receiving notice from the responding officer will issue a missing person retraction to all outlets. The Public Information Officer or other designated employees will make further updates as needed.

Nothing precludes an officer from attempting to obtain a photograph of a runaway or missing person for dissemination to the media or use in the investigation in cases not determined to involve a "High-risk missing person."