



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
Missing Persons Investigative Checklist



Officer (First Responder) Checklist:

- ☐ If circumstances warrant, activate patrol-vehicle-mounted video camera when approaching the scene to record vehicles, people, and anything else of note for later investigative review.
- ☐ Interview spouse/parent(s)/guardian(s)/person who made the initial report.
- ☐ Confirm the person is in fact missing.
- ☐ Contact a Supervisor.
- ☐ Verify the person's custody status. (Court Order, Power of Attorney, etc.)
- ☐ Determine when, where, and by whom the missing person was last seen.
- ☐ Interview the individual(s) who last had contact with the person.
- ☐ Identify the person's zone of safety for his or her age and developmental stage.
- ☐ Based on the available information, make an **initial** determination of the type of incident whether non-family abduction, parental abduction, runaway, lost, or otherwise missing.
- ☐ Have juvenile/incident records searched for previous incidents related to the missing person and prior law-enforcement activity in the area including prowlers, indecent exposure, and attempted abductions.
- ☐ Obtain a **detailed** description of the missing person, abductor, and any vehicles used.
- ☐ Secure photographs/videotapes of the missing person/abductor.
- ☐ Is the missing person in possession of a firearm or any other weapon?
- ☐ What are the mental/physical/developmental characteristics of the person?
- ☐ Evaluate whether the circumstance of the person's disappearance meet **AMBER/SILVER/BRITTANY Alert** criteria and/or other immediate community-notification protocol. Discuss plan activation with supervisor, who will then contact on-call PIO immediately.
- ☐ Relay detailed descriptive information to communications unit for broadcast updates.
- ☐ Determine need for additional personnel including investigative and supervisory staff.
- ☐ Brief and bring up-to-date all additional responding personnel.
- ☐ Identify and separately interview everyone at the scene. Make sure their interview and identifying information is properly recorded. To aid in this process, if possible, take pictures or record video images of everyone present. Video cameras affixed to patrol vehicles may be helpful with task:
 - Note name, address, home/business telephone numbers of each person.
 - Determine each person's relationship to the missing person.
 - Note information each person may have about the person's disappearance.
 - Determine when/where each person last saw the missing person.
 - Ask each one, "What do you think happened to the person?"
 - Obtain names/addresses/telephone numbers of the person's friends and/or associates and other relatives and friends of the family.



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- ☐ Continue to keep communications unit apprised of all appropriate developing information for broadcast updates.
- ☐ Obtain and note permission to search home or building where incident took place.
- ☐ Conduct an immediate, thorough search of the missing person's home, **even if the person was reported missing from a different location.**
- ☐ Seal/protect scene and area of the person's home, including the person's personal articles, such as hairbrush, diary, photographs, and items with the person's fingerprints/footprints/teeth impressions, so evidence is not destroyed during or after the initial search and to help ensure items which could help in the search for and/or to identify the person are preserved. Determine if any of the person's personal items are missing. If possible, photograph/videotape these areas.
- ☐ Evaluate the contents and appearance of the person's room/residence.
- ☐ Inquire if the person has access to the Internet and evaluate its role in the disappearance.
- ☐ Ascertain if the person has a cellular telephone or other electronic communication device.
- ☐ Ask if the person may have been experiencing psychiatric problems, suicide threats, relationship problems, drug/alcohol problems, school/work problems, or physical illness.
- ☐ Extend search to surrounding areas including vehicles and other places of concealment.
- ☐ Treat areas of interest as potential crime scenes.
- ☐ Determine if surveillance or security cameras in the vicinity may have captured information about the person's disappearance.
- ☐ Interview other family members, friends/associates of the person, and friends of the family to determine:
 - When each last saw the person;
 - What they think happened to the person
- ☐ Review sex-offender registries to determine if individuals designated as sexual predators live, work, or might otherwise be associated with area of the person's disappearance.
- ☐ Ensure information regarding the missing person is immediately entered into the National Crime Information Center's (NCIC) Missing Person File and any information about a suspected abductor is entered into the NCIC Wanted Person File.
- ☐ Prepare flier/bulletin with the person/abductor's photograph and descriptive information (Missing Person Clearinghouse will assist officer with flier/bulletin) and distribute in appropriate geographic regions.
- ☐ Prepare reports/make all required notifications.



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Supervisory Checklist:

- ☐ Obtain briefing and written reports from the first responding officer and other personnel at the scene.
- ☐ Decide if circumstances of the person's disappearance meet the protocol in place for activation of an **AMBER/SILVER/BRITTANY Alert** and/or other immediate community-notification systems.
- ☐ Contact on-call PIO for notification to media.
- ☐ Determine if additional personnel are needed to assist in the investigation.
- ☐ Establish a command post away from the person's residence.
- ☐ Determine if additional assistance is necessary from:
 - Missing Person Clearinghouse.
 - FBI.
 - Specialized Units.
 - Victim-Witness Services.
 - Confirm all the required resources, equipment, and assistance necessary to conduct an efficient investigation have been requested and expedite their availability.
 - Ensure coordination/cooperation among all law-enforcement personnel involved in the investigation and search effort.
 - Verify all required notifications are made.
 - Ensure all agency policies and procedures are in compliance.
 - Be available to make any decisions or determinations as they develop.
 - Use media including radio, television, and newspapers to assist in the search throughout the duration of the case.
 - Give family members the Missing Person Hotline at (800) 457-3463 for liaison assistance.



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Criminal Investigator Checklist:

- ☐ Obtain briefing from the first responding officer and other on-scene personnel.
- ☐ Verify the accuracy of all descriptive information and other details developed during the preliminary investigation.
- ☐ Initiate a neighborhood canvass.
- ☐ Obtain a brief, recent history of family dynamics.
- ☐ Correct and investigate the reasons for conflicting information offered by witnesses and other individuals.
- ☐ Collect article(s) of the person's clothing for scent-tracking purposes.
- ☐ Review and evaluate all available information and evidence collected.
- ☐ Secure the person's latest medical and dental records by completing appropriate forms.
- ☐ Contact landfill management and request they segregate garbage and dumping containers from key investigative areas in cases where it is suspected there may be imminent danger to the missing person.
- ☐ Develop and execute an investigative plan.
- ☐ Conduct a criminal-history check on all principal suspects and participants in the investigation.
- ☐ Determine what additional resources and specialized services are required.
- ☐ Ensure details of the case have been reported to National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).
- ☐ Prepare and update bulletins for local law-enforcement agencies, missing children clearinghouse, the FBI, and other appropriate agencies.
- ☐ Establish a telephone hotline for receipt of tips and leads.
- ☐ Establish a leads-management system to prioritize leads and help ensure each one is reviewed and followed up on.