



Lunenburg Police Department

Policy Number: 2.08	Subject: Missing Person
Issue Date: 11/03/2021 Revision Date(s): 2/3/2022 Effective Date: 11/03/2021	Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standards Referenced: 41.2.5
Issuing Authority: <i>Chief Thomas L. Gammel</i>	

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish responsibilities and guidelines for the investigation of missing persons. Many missing person reports involve individuals who have voluntarily left home for personal reasons, while other reports are often unfounded or quickly resolved. However, there are many instances in which persons disappear for unexplained reasons and under circumstances where they may be considered at risk. The roles of the complaint taker and initial responding officer are critical in identifying the circumstances surrounding missing persons and in identifying those persons at risk.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Lunenburg Police Department that all reports of missing persons be given full consideration and attention by members of this agency to include careful recording and investigation of factual circumstances surrounding the disappearance in accordance with this policy, and that particular care be exercised in instances involving missing children and those who may be mentally or physical impaired or others who are insufficiently prepared to take care of themselves.

III. PROCEDURES

A. Reporting/Classification of Missing Persons [41.2.5]

1. There is no waiting period for reporting a missing person. Missing person reports shall be taken in-person or by telephone in conformance with the criteria of this policy and the criticality of the incident.

2. A person may be declared “missing” when his/her whereabouts is unknown and unexplainable for a period of time that is regarded by knowledgeable parties as highly unusual or suspicious in consideration of the subject’s behavior patterns, plans or routines.
3. An individual may be considered “missing-critical” who meets the foregoing criteria and who, among other possible circumstances, including: [41.2.5(f)]
 - a. may be the subject of foul play,
 - b. because of age (young or old), may be unable to properly safeguard or care for themselves,
 - c. suffers from diminished mental capacity or medical conditions that are potentially life threatening if left untreated/unattended;
 - d. is a patient of a mental institution and is considered potentially dangerous to themselves or others;
 - e. has demonstrated the potential for suicide; or
 - f. may have been involved in a boating, swimming or other sporting accident or natural disaster.
4. Reports of juveniles who have voluntarily left home (i.e., “runaways”) should be classified as such only after thorough investigation.
5. Based on the outcome of initial inquiries, a decision may be made concerning the potential danger posed to the missing person and the urgency of police response.

B. Initial Report Taking [41.2.5 (a)]

1. The initial report taker must gather as much pertinent information as possible in order to properly classify a missing person report and initiate proper response. This includes the following information:
 - a. Name, age and physical description of the subject and relationship of the reporting party to the missing person.
 - b. Time and place of last known location and the identity of anyone accompanying the subject.
 - c. The extent of any search for the subject.
 - d. Whether the subject has been missing on prior occasions and the degree to which the absence departs from established behavior patterns, habits or plans.
 - e. Whether the individual has been involved recently in domestic incidents; suffered emotional trauma or life crises; demonstrated unusual, uncharacteristic or bizarre behavior; is dependent on drugs or alcohol or has a history of mental illness.

- f. The current physical condition of the subject and whether the person is currently on prescription medication.
- 2. If the missing person is a child, inquiry should also determine if the child
 - a. is or may be with any adult who could cause them harm;
 - b. may have been the subject of a parental abduction;
 - c. has previously run away from home, has threatened to do so or has a history of explainable or unexplainable absences for extended periods of time.
- 3. A supervisory officer shall be notified immediately upon classification of a report as “missing-critical.”

C. Preliminary Investigation

The preliminary investigation is intended to gather additional information and to take those steps that will aid in the search for and location of a missing person. This includes gathering the following types of information and materials:

- 1. Complete description of the subject and a recent photograph.
- 2. Details of any physical or emotional problems identified in items B-1-e and f of this policy.
- 3. Identity of the last person(s) to have seen the subject as well as friends, relatives, coworkers or associates who were or may have been in contact with the subject prior to disappearance.
- 4. Plans, habits, routines and personal interests of the subject including places frequented or locations of particular personal significance.
- 5. Indications of missing personal belongings, particularly money and other valuables.
- 6. Any suggestions of foul play or accident.
- 7. In the case of missing children, officers shall be particularly cognizant of information that may suggest the potential for parental abduction or the possibility of stranger abduction, as well as:
 - a. the presence of behavioral problems;
 - b. past instances of running away;
 - c. signs of an abusive home environment or dysfunctional family situation;
 - d. whether the child is believed to be with adults who may pose a danger; and

- e. the name and location of the school attended by the child and any persons who may be responsible for private transportation to and from the location.
 - 8. When possible, officers should gain permission to search a missing child's home and school locker, as appropriate.
 - 9. Upon verification of a missing person, a missing person report shall be completed and appropriate entries made in state and national information databases in accordance with established procedures (e.g.: NCIC and The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children). [41.2.5(c)]
- NOTE:** A Nashoba Valley Regional Dispatch District (NVRDD) Missing Person Report Form shall be completed, and submitted to NVRDD via FAX @ (978) 772-2050, or via any other medium necessary for distribution and entry in NCIC. [Appendix A]
- 10. The District Attorney's office (CPAC) may be notified.
 - 11. The Massachusetts Missing Persons Clearing House should be notified: Commonwealth Fusion Center, 124 Acton Street, Maynard, MA, 01754. Voice (978) 451-3700 / FAX: (978) 451-3707.
 - 12. In the case of persons designated as "missing- critical," a supervisory officer may direct that: [41.2.5(b)(e)]
 - a. the dispatcher broadcast to all persons on duty all information necessary to identify the missing person, and
 - b. request that the shift commander authorize mobilization of resources necessary for an area search.

D. Ongoing Investigation [41.2.5(d)(e)]

Ongoing investigations of missing persons should include but should not be limited to the following actions and activities:

- 1. Request release of dental records and any fingerprints available.
- 2. Contact hospitals and the Medical Examiner's office as appropriate for injured or deceased persons fitting the description of the missing person.
- 3. Thoroughly check the location at which the missing person was last seen and conduct interviews as appropriate with persons who were with the individual or who may work in or frequent the area.

4. Conduct interviews with any additional family, friends, work associates, schoolmates and teachers as well as school counselors and social case workers, as appropriate, to explore the potential for foul play, voluntary flight, or, in the case of juveniles, parental kidnapping or running away.
5. Provide identification and related information to all members of the Department, the MA State Police Missing Person Unit via Commonwealth Fusion Center, neighboring police agencies and, if parental or stranger-to-stranger abduction is suspected, the FBI.
6. Decisions to use local media to help locate missing persons shall be made with the approval of the Chief of Police, or the Lieutenant, and the missing person's family.
7. The lead investigator shall maintain routine on-going contact with the missing person's closest relative concerning progress of the investigation. These and other relevant individuals shall be informed that they must notify the lead investigator, and/or an Officer from the Department as soon as any contact is made with the missing person.

E. Recovery of Missing Persons and Case Closure

1. Competent adults, having left home for personal reasons, cannot be forced to return home. Officers locating such individuals shall
 - a. advise them that they are the subject of a missing person investigation;
 - b. ask if they desire the reporting party or next-of-kin to be notified of their whereabouts; and
 - c. make provisions to transmit this information to the reporting party or next-of-kin if permitted by the missing person.
2. In all cases, reporting parties shall be informed of the well-being of located missing persons. Unless criminal matters necessitate other action, desires of missing persons not to reveal their whereabouts shall be honored.
3. Missing persons shall be questioned to establish the circumstances surrounding their disappearance and whether criminal activity was involved.
4. In cases involving juveniles, officers shall ensure that
 - a. the juvenile receives medical attention if necessary in a timely manner;
 - b. initial questioning of the youth identifies the circumstances surrounding the child's disappearance, any individuals who may be criminally responsible and/ or whether an abusive or negligent home environment was a contributory factor, and

- c. that parents, guardians and/or the person reporting the missing youth are notified in a timely manner.
- 5. Upon location of a missing person, all agencies and information systems previously contacted for assistance will be notified or updated.
- 6. Where indicated, follow-up action shall include filing of an abuse and neglect report with the state youth service agency.
- 7. The case report shall include a complete report on the whereabouts, actions and activities of children while missing.
- 8. Where indicated, criminal charges shall be filed with the prosecutor's office.

APPENDIX A

MISSING PERSON REPORT

Date/Time Received: _____ OCA: _____
Officer: _____ NIC #: _____
Date Entered Into NCIC: _____ Operator: _____
Date Located/Cleared from NCIC: _____ Operator: _____
Person Making Report: _____ Telephone: _____
Address: _____ Relationship: _____

ITEMS IN BOLD ARE REQUIRED

***Name:** _____ DOB: _____
(Last, First, Middle)
***Race:** _____ ***Sex:** _____ ***Height:** _____ ***Weight:** _____
***Eye Color:** _____ ***Hair Color:** _____ Hair Style: _____
Facial Hair/Style (beard, etc.): _____
Clothing Last Seen Worn: _____
Eye Glasses: _____ Style: _____ Contact Lenses: _____
Any Mental/Physical Impairment: _____
***Last Contact Date:** _____ **Last Contact Time:** _____
Possibly Traveling With: _____
Possible Destination(s): _____
Person to Notify if Found: _____ Tel. #: _____

IF MISSING JUVENILE:

Deviation from Normal Behavior? _____
Name of Parent/Legal Guardian: _____
Address: _____ Tel. #: _____

MOTOR VEHICLE:

Year: _____ Make: _____ Model: _____
Color: _____ Style: _____ Registration: _____ State: _____

***Signature of Reporting Party:** _____
Reporting Officer Signature: _____

**OFFICERS ARE REQUIRED TO FAX COMPLETED DOCUMENT TO THE NVRECC @ (978)772-2050
PRIOR TO ENTRY INTO NCIC.**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Social Security Number: _____ Marital Status: _____

Cell Phone Number: _____ Carrier: _____

License #: _____ State: _____

Complexion: _____ Scars/Marks/Tattoos: _____

Condition of Teeth: _____ Jewelry Worn: _____

Describe any mental, emotional or physical problems: _____

Fingerprint Classification: _____

Does the missing person take any medication: _____
Yes No

If so, what kind: _____ When last taken: _____

When needed next: _____ Effects: _____

Additional description: _____

Employer/School: _____

Employer/School Address: _____

Work Phone: _____ Occupation: _____

Does the person have access to any kind of weapons: _____
Yes No

If so, what type: _____

Ever been missing before: _____ When/How Long: _____

Circumstances: _____

Names & Addresses of friend or relatives: _____

Places Frequented: _____

Extent to which friends/relatives have already searched: _____

Any additional information or remarks that may be helpful: _____

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MISSING PERSON AFFIDAVIT/VERIFICATION

Name: _____ DOB: _____
(Last, First, Middle of Missing Person)
Address: _____ SS#: _____

MISSING PERSON NCIC CATEGORIES

CHECK ONLY ONE:

- _____ D: DISABLED: A person of any age who is missing and under proven physical/mental disability or is senile, thereby subjecting him/herself or others to personal and immediate danger.
- _____ E: ENDANGERED: A person of any age who is missing under circumstances indicating that his/her physical safety may be in danger.
- _____ I: INVOLUNTARY: A person of any age who is missing under circumstances indicating that the disappearance may not have been voluntary (i.e. abduction or kidnapping).
- _____ J: JUVENILE: A person who is missing and not declared emancipated as defined by the laws of his/her state of residence is missing and does not meet any of the entry criteria in any other category.
- _____ C: CATASTROPHE: A person of any age who is missing after a catastrophe.
- _____ O: OTHER: A person not meeting the criteria for entry in any other category who is missing and 1) for whom there is a reasonable concern for his/her safety or 2) a person who is under age 21 and declared emancipated by the laws of his/her state of residence.

AFFIDAVIT

I solemnly swear and affirm that the individual named above is declared missing as indicated in the category checked; that his/her whereabouts are unknown; that upon their return, or of contact with the said missing person, I will immediately contact the Police Department in which this report is being made.

(Name of Complainant) (DOB)

(Address of Complainant)

Signature of Complainant: _____
Reporting Officer's Signature: _____

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