



Fitchburg State University Police Department

Subject: Missing Persons		General Order <h1>9.2.4</h1>
Reference: IACLEA: 9.2.4, 9.2.5 MPAC: 41.2.5, 41.2.6		
Effective Date: July 9, 2020	Review Date: March 29, 2022	
By Order of: Michael J Cloutier, Chief of Police		

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures for the investigation of missing persons that are suspected to be missing from the Fitchburg State University campus and property where the Fitchburg State University Police Department has primary jurisdiction.

POLICY:

The policy of the Fitchburg State University Police Department is that all reports of missing persons are given full consideration and attention by department personnel, including; careful recording and investigation of factual circumstances surrounding the disappearance in accordance with this order. Department personnel shall exercise particular care in instances involving missing children and those who may be unable to take care of themselves. **Upon receiving a report of a missing person, there will be no waiting period before initiating an investigation.** Department personnel shall make a concerted effort to locate the missing person.

IACLEA 9.2.4 a

PROCEDURE:

A. REPORTING AND CLASSIFICATION OF MISSING PERSONS

1. **There is no waiting period for reporting a missing person.** Missing person reports are a priority shall be taken in person, by a police officer, in conformance with the criteria of this order and the criticality of the incident. A person may be considered "missing critical" or "at-risk" if he or she meets the foregoing criteria and who, among other possible circumstances:

- a. Maybe the subject of foul play.
- b. Because of age (young or old), may be unable to properly safeguard or care for him or herself.
- c. Suffers from diminished mental capacity or medical conditions that are potentially life-threatening if left untreated/unattended such as Alzheimer's or diabetes.
- d. Is a patient of a mental institution and is considered potentially dangerous to himself or others.
- e. Has demonstrated the potential for suicide.
- f. May have been involved in a boating, swimming, or other sporting accident or natural disaster.

IACLEA 9.2.4 e

2. Reports of juveniles who have voluntarily left home (i.e., runaways) should be classified as such only after a thorough investigation. See **General Order 8.4.1 Juvenile Operations** for more information on Juvenile runaways, and Children in Need of Services.
3. Based on the outcome of initial inquiries, a decision may be made concerning the potential danger posed to the missing person, the urgency of police response, and the potential need for further resource allocation.
4. Individuals reported to the Fitchburg State University Police Department, but have or may have been presumed missing off-campus shall immediately be forwarded to the City of Fitchburg Police Department or agency of jurisdiction.
5. If the Missing Person is a student, the Fitchburg State University Police Department will follow these procedures:
 - a. Fitchburg State University Police **will not wait 24 hours to make a determination if a resident student is missing**, but will act upon all known information immediately to determine a reported missing resident student's potential whereabouts. All attempts to contact a student such as checking the class schedule, door access, etc. should be used.
 - b. If a reported missing student resides in on-campus housing, the shift supervisor will notify the on-call/on-duty Housing and Residential Service staff. Housing

should be directed to contact neighbors and friends in the immediate vicinity of the student's room and report any findings to the Department.

- c. If the resident student has been reported missing, the Department will notify the student's designated **"missing person contact" which is maintained in the Housing database**. This can be obtained by calling Housing and requesting the information. *IACLEA 9.2.5 b*
- d. The FSUPD Supervisor, upon confirmation that any student is missing, and cannot be located, shall notify the on-call Lieutenant and ensure the missing student entered into NCIC. *IACLEA 9.2.4 b*
- e. If the student is **under 18 years old** and not emancipated, FSUPD will immediately notify a custodial parent or legal guardian. *IACLEA 9.2.5 a*
- f. If a student **over 18 years old has not designated an emergency contact**, the law enforcement agency where the student's primary residence is located will be notified by this department. *IACLEA 9.2.5 c*
- g. For international students, the shift supervisor will contact the Office of International Education for assistance.
- h. Fitchburg State University Police Department will also check hospital admissions and the adjoining police agencies for further information regarding the missing person.
- i. If a **commuter student** is reported missing, the officer shall contact the local law enforcement agency of the student's home address. *IACLEA 9.2.4 c*

B. DISPATCHER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Upon receiving a report of a missing person, the dispatcher shall obtain the following information:
 - a. The address, names, and telephone number of the caller.
 - b. The missing person's name, age, sex, and a complete physical description, including clothing.
 - c. The location and time at which the victim was last seen.

- d. Any other information that may be pertinent to investigating officers, including associates, possible suspects, vehicles used, and usual destinations or hangouts.

MPAC 4.1.2 a

2. A police officer shall be immediately dispatched to the location of the call for service. After the officer has been dispatched, the dispatcher shall relay a missing person radio broadcast to all police units with a complete description of the missing person.
3. If it is known or suspected that the person is "missing critical," the dispatcher shall also send a supervisor to the location of the call for service. The shift supervisor or officer in charge will also notify the on-call Lieutenant.
4. Upon receiving a written missing person report, the dispatcher shall immediately enter the missing person's data into NCIC and CJIS databases. *IACLEA 9.2.4 b*
5. At the direction of a supervisor or investigating officer, a dispatcher may contact a cell carrier for Cell Site Location Information (CSLI) otherwise known as "ping a phone" to obtain the current location of a missing or at-risk individual for up to six-hour of location.

Comm V. Estabrook, 472 Mass. 852 (2015)

IACLEA 9.2.4 d

C. INVESTIGATING OFFICER/SUPERVISORY OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The investigating officer shall obtain as much pertinent information as possible in order to properly classify the missing person. This information includes:
 - a. The name, age, and physical description of the missing person and relationship of the reporting party to the missing person.
 - b. The time and last known location of the missing person 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, the officer's inquiry should also determine if the child:
 - a. Is the child or could the child be with any adult who could cause him/her any harm.
 - b. May have been the target of a parental or stranger 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.
 - d. If a child is missing from the McKay Arts Academy, the officer shall immediately notify the City of Fitchburg Police Department.
3. If the officer determines that the person is "missing critical," he/she shall request a supervisor to respond to the location. The officer or supervisor may request additional units to respond.
 - a. The supervisor shall assume the role of Incident Commander and shall establish a command post.
 - b. The supervisor shall organize police units into a search party at the command post. Vital data, including a recent photo (if possible), shall be disseminated to the search party.
 - c. The supervisor shall establish a coordinated search effort by assigning zones or areas for each officer to search. The search should start at the original location and extend outward from that point.
 - d. The supervisor shall ensure that outside police agencies, as necessary, are notified of the missing person.
 - e. The supervisor may request, through the shift supervisor, the mobilization of additional resources (including outside agencies) necessary for an area search.
 - f. If the search has continued for a reasonable amount of time without locating the subject, the shift supervisor shall determine what additional efforts shall be made to locate the missing person.

MPAC 41.2.5 f

4. While conducting a search of the original location, officers shall also determine if any **physical evidence** is present which would provide leads in the investigation. Officers shall take every precaution to preserve articles of evidence as they are discovered.
5. If the missing person is classified as kidnapped/abducted (or kidnap/abduction is considered a possibility), the on-call Lieutenant will be notified. Officers shall preserve the location of the abduction as a crime scene, and shall not allow access except to necessary investigators. The Chief of Police will be notified by the on-call Lieutenant.
6. Upon verification of a missing person, the officer shall complete a missing person report as soon as possible. In addition to the required data for the descriptor boxes, the officer shall include the following information in the narrative:
 - a. The location and time at which the victim was last seen.
 - b. The identity of people last seen with the victim.
 - c. The identity of any acquaintance of the victim.
 - d. Has the victim been missing on prior occasions?
 - e. Plans, habits, routines, and personal interests of the subject and places frequented.
 - f. The nature of any problems that may have affected the victim emotionally.
 - g. Any motivation for the person to leave of his/her own volition.
 - h. Any indications of missing personal belongings.
 - i. Evidence of foul play or accident.
 - j. The extent of any search prior to police response.
 - k. If the victim is a child, the location of the school and the names of any persons who may be responsible for transportation to and from school.

MPAC 41.2.5 a

7. Upon receiving a written missing person report, the shift supervisor shall ensure that the dispatcher enters the missing person's information into the NCIC and CJIS databases immediately. The shift supervisor shall distribute a copy of the missing

person report (or an informational bulletin) to roll call for dissemination by subsequent supervisors.

IACLEA 9.2.4 d / MPAC 41.2.5 b

D. FOLLOW-UP INVESTIGATION

1. All missing person incidents requiring follow-up investigation shall be assigned to the Detective.
2. A detective shall be assigned as the primary investigator in the case. The detective shall be responsible for the following investigative tasks, which include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Requesting release of dental, medical, and fingerprint records, as necessary.
 - b. Contacting hospitals or the MA State Medical Examiner's Office, as necessary, to possibly locate the victim.
 - c. Conduct a subsequent search of the location of the victim's disappearance and conduct interviews as appropriate with the reporting person and persons who were with the victim or who may have frequented the area of disappearance.
 - d. Conduct interviews with any additional family, friends, work associates, schoolmates, and teachers as well as school counselors and social workers, as appropriate, to explore the potential for foul play, voluntary flight, or, in the case of juveniles, parental kidnapping or running away.
 - e. Provide identification and related information to all divisions of the department, neighboring police agencies, and if parental or stranger abduction is suspected, the FBI.
3. Detectives may consider contacting the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)/Project Alert (1-800-843-5678) should the matter involve a child who is endangered/missing or the child has been abducted. Authorization from the Chief of Police is required prior to contacting NCMEC/Project Alert.
4. Detectives may consider contacting the Massachusetts State Police should the matter involve a child who is 17 years of age or younger, has been abducted, in danger of serious bodily harm, injury, or death, and There is enough descriptive information to believe that an **AMBER Alert** may help locate the child. Authorization from the Chief of Police is required prior to contacting the Massachusetts State Police for an Amber Alert.

IACLEA 9.2.4 f / MPAC 41.2.6 d

5. Detectives may consider the use of local or national media to help locate missing persons. This decision shall be made with the approval of the Chief of Police and the victim's family members.
6. The primary detective shall maintain periodic contact with the missing person's family to keep them informed of progress in the investigation. The detective shall also advise the family (or other relevant individuals) to notify the department if contact is made with the missing person or if additional information is developed.
7. The primary detective shall complete a supplemental report every week (five) days until the subject is located. The report shall document any efforts made and results obtained in the investigation.

MPAC 41.2.5 d & e / MPAC 41.2.6 f

E. MISSING PERSON RECOVERY 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 the person that he/she is the subject of a missing person investigation.
 - b. Ask the person if he/she desires the reporting person or family members to be notified of his/her whereabouts and relay this information if permitted by the missing person.
2. In all cases, reporting persons, family members, or other relevant persons shall be informed of the wellbeing of recovered missing persons. Unless criminal matters necessitate other action, or if the subject is a juvenile or incompetent adult, **the 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 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.
 - c. That parent, guardians and/or the reporting person are notified as soon as possible.

d. Under no circumstances will a juvenile be held in the booking room pending notification and response of the proper guardian.

5. Upon recovery of a missing person, a member of the Fitchburg State University Police Department shall ensure that all agencies previously contacted for assistance will be notified or updated and that NCIC and CJIS databases are updated. Dispatchers shall be instructed to remove the missing person entry from all databases in which entry was made.

IACLEA 9.2.4 b

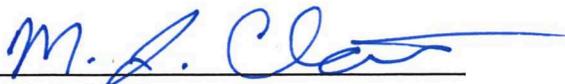
6. If necessary, follow-up action (by officers or detectives) shall include filing of an abuse and neglect complaint with the State of Massachusetts Department of Children and Families.

7. Department personnel will be notified of the recovered missing person via roll call briefings.

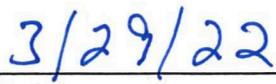
8. Officers or detectives shall complete a supplemental report indicating where the missing person was located, where he/she was residing, and the names of persons who had involvement with the subject while missing.

9. If necessary, criminal charges will be investigated and charges filed where appropriate.

Approval:



Chief of Police



Date