

# Hamden Police Department

## General Orders

**Policy Number:** 024-015

**Section:** Patrol Division

**Title:** Missing Person

**Effective Date:** March 13, 2013

**Rescinds:** November 05, 2008

**Approved By:** Police Commission

**Approval Date:** March 13, 2013

### PURPOSE

To assist in the locating and determination of the well-being of the missing person and to support the person initiating the report and other family members or friends.

### POLICY

This is a guide for the initial acceptance of reports, the Officers initial contact at the scene, report responsibilities and the subsequent closure of the missing person report-case.

### Procedures

#### A. Acceptance of Initial Call.

1. Determination of missing person case and sensitivity to the reporting party:
  - a. Officers, dispatchers or other designated personnel who take the initial call, by telephone, in person, or by electronic media, shall determine if the call is a missing person case according to the definition of a missing person-see Appendix: Missing Persons Terms Definitions.
  - b. Reporting parties and families of missing persons often experience feelings of helplessness and anxiety. Dispatchers, officers or other designated personnel dealing with these persons should be sensitive to those feelings and respond appropriately. There are two dimensions to a missing person investigation:
    - I. Locating and determining the well-being of the missing person.
    - II. Supporting the person initiating the report and the loved ones who were left behind.
  - c. Officers need to act in a swift, organized and efficient manner. In cases of child abductions, studies show the majority of children are killed within the first three hours of the abduction.

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2. Confirmation of responsibility for acceptance of report, priority in handling and agency notification:
  - a. It is the duty of officer of the Hamden Police Department to immediately assist any person who is attempting to make a report of a missing person or runaway and a report shall be accepted regardless of jurisdiction.
  - b. This Department shall accept without delay any report of a missing adult person.
3. When a report of a missing child under the age of 18 is received the responding officer shall immediately accept such report for filing and inform all on-duty police officers of the existence of the missing child report and communicate the report to other appropriate law enforcement agencies. (Sec. 7-282c CGS).
  - a. The issuance of a SILVER ALERT will meet the section 7-282c CGS.
4. When dealing with missing person \*or adult missing persons jurisdictional issues, it is not uncommon for multiple agencies to be involved in the same case. It is essential that agencies work closely together in order to enhance, and not impede, the investigation of the case. This policy requires that the law enforcement unit taking the initial missing person or adult missing person report “promptly notify,” and send copies of the report to, the law enforcement unit that has jurisdiction over the missing person’s or adult missing persons resident address and to the law enforcement unit where the missing person or adult missing person was last seen. It may also be appropriate to notify the law enforcement unit having jurisdiction of the missing person or adult missing persons intended destination.
5. The intent of this policy is to ensure that missing person or adult missing person cases are given appropriate priority over property related cases. Special attention should be given to reports of missing children or for persons with physical or mental limitations. These persons are at greater risk of harm.
6. Each law enforcement unit receiving notification of jurisdiction over any aspect of a missing person or adult missing person investigation should promptly give appropriate assistance in the active investigation, follow-up as requested by the law enforcement unit making the request, provide all reports, records and assistance appropriate to the investigation.

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- B. Responding officer's initial contact and making an assessment at the scene.
1. Responding Officer's or other designated personnel shall interview, with sensitivity, the reporting party and any witnesses to determine:
    - a. That this is a missing person or adult missing person case.
    - b. If the person may be at risk or the existence of any suspicious circumstances.
    - c. If there are any potential crime scene areas and/or potential witnesses.
  2. Many times, parents or guardians are anxious to assist law enforcement in the initial phase of the investigation and they will want to provide additional documents to assist in the location of their loved one. Besides obtaining photographs of the missing person, additional items such as fingerprint cards obtained through community fair projects, items containing DNA samples of the missing person, or other related documents may be offered voluntarily by the family.
  3. The responding officer shall accept these items and properly document their collection in their reports. These items shall be treated, submitted and stored as evidence. Officers shall also inform the follow-up investigators that these items have been collected.
  4. The following information be obtained to aid in the search for the person and completion of the reports:
    - a. Name, age and physical description of the missing person.
    - b. Relationship of the reporting person to the missing person.
    - c. Time and place last seen.
    - d. The identity of anyone accompanying the missing person.
    - e. The extent of any search already conducted for the missing person.

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- f. Whether the missing person has been reported missing before and the degree to which the absence departs from established behavior patterns, habits or plans.
  - g. Whether the missing person has been involved recently in domestic problems; suffered emotional trauma or life crises; demonstrated unusual, uncharacteristic or bizarre behavior; has talked about running away or committing suicide; is dependent on drugs or alcohol; or has a history of mental illness.
  - h. The physical condition of the missing person and whether the person is currently on prescription medication. Find out if the person took the needed medication with them.
  - i. Any information about a vehicle or other form of transportation.
  - j. Whether or not the missing person has taken anything with them (e.g., food, clothing, money, weapons, and/or personal items).
  - k. If they have bank accounts, charge cards or debit cards, check them for recent activity.
  - l. If at the missing person's home, check for notes, travel folders, newspaper articles or like items in the person's room. If there is a computer, try to view his/her social networking sites and consider appropriate safeguards for later analysis.
5. At the earliest possible moment, notify all on-duty dispatchers and officers.
- a. Whether or not the missing person has a cellphone, other communication or tracking devices.
  - b. Determine the cell phone carrier and consider their Law Enforcement assistance department for help. Record and call the number. Leave a message if voice mail picks up.
  - c. Whether the missing person has relatives, friends or neighbors whom he/she may visit or otherwise contact.

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- d. Whether the missing person has failed to perform some important task (e.g., pick-up children, feed pets?)
6. When a child is reported missing, regardless of reason, the responding officer will immediately notify a supervisor.
  7. Make a further assessment to determine what reasonable steps should be taken to locate the missing person. Appropriate actions minimally include:
    - a. Obtaining a complete description of the missing person, notifying all on-duty dispatchers and officers.
    - b. Broadcasting a "Be On the Look-Out (BOLO) bulletin within its jurisdiction if:
      - i. The missing person is under 18 years of age.
      - ii. If there is evidence that the missing person regardless of age is at risk.
    - c. Enter information into the Connecticut On-Line Law Enforcement Communication Teleprocessing (COLLECT) and N.C.I.C.
    - d. Lay groundwork for neighborhood or area canvass. Determine what personnel and resources are required for the search.
    - e. Determine if there is any area or property to be protected as a crime scene.
    - f. The investigating officer shall determine if the missing person fits the mandatory criteria for an **AMBER ALERT**. The criteria are:
      - i. The missing person must be under the age of 18 or of proven mental or physical disability.
      - ii. Belief that the missing child is in imminent danger of bodily injury or death.
      - iii. Must have accurate information on at least one of the following:
        1. Description of child
        2. Description of suspect
        3. Description of vehicle

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- g. If the above criteria are met, and there is no extenuating investigative need that dictates otherwise, the Emergency Alert System should be activated.
  - h. If the missing person does NOT fit the above criteria, officers should continue to exercise discretion in determining which of the many other tools available would be the most appropriate for transmitting information and photographs to other officers, the media and the public. Determine if the missing person fits the mandatory criteria for a **SILVER ALERT**. The Criteria are:
    - i. Applies to any missing person under the age of 18 years old.
    - ii. Is 18 years of age or older and has a mental impairment.
    - iii. Who is 65 years of age or older.
8. Both **AMBER ALERT** and **SILVER ALERT** systems create an emergency notification procedure for law enforcement agencies to broadcast local, regional, or statewide public alerts via radio, television and electronic highway signs.
- a. The Silver Alert system mandates that law enforcement immediately begin searching for missing individuals who are under the age of 18, or 18 and over if mentally impaired and ages 65 or older.
  - b. Once the police receive a missing person's report and a description of the missing person, the information is broadcast via radio, television, and electronic highway signs through the Emergency Alert System (EAS).
  - c. The plan alerts the public as quickly as possible to the disappearance so everyone may assist in the search for the safe return of the individual.
9. Consider calling a supervisor and/or investigator to the location. Ask the supervisor to assist in determining the scope and area of search operations.
10. Call for any other assistance or support required. Protect all crime scenes. Identified search areas should have restricted access. Set up staging areas to control and organize a large number of searchers.

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11. Thoroughly search the immediate and surrounding area in a logical and systematic manner.
12. For Children, **search the house first** (even if the parents said they already have done so).
13. Process any potential crime scene for evidence.
14. Identify and interview potential witnesses.
15. Consider using a standardized search checklist which should include the last known location of the missing person and any likely locations where the person may have gone.
16. Consider using additional resources to assist in the search:
  - a. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).
  - b. Department of Justice (DOJ).
  - c. Critical Reach, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC),
  - d. National Center for Missing Adults (NCMA), and others.
17. Examine court orders regarding custody matters, if applicable.
18. Consider notifying other agencies for assistance in locating the missing person in their related jurisdiction, the agency where the missing person was last seen may initiate the investigation. It is essential that agencies work together to enhance the success of the investigation.
19. Request voluntary assistance from the family or reporting party in obtaining initial items of evidence belonging to the missing person such as:
  - a. Recent photograph(s) of missing person, (Also try to obtain photos depicting the person smiling with their teeth showing. This is beneficial for assisting in dental comparison and identification.
  - b. Personal electronic devices (cell phones, or cell phone number for tracking purposes, pagers, credit cards, ATM cards, toll passes, computers and any

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online resources such as: screen names, email sources websites they may frequent, etc.)

20. In high risk, at risk or high priority cases where canine assistance will be requested, officers should identify but not touch any “scent article.” Allow the dog handler to take possession of the article. (Vehicles can be scent articles in a search). Suggested items include hat, comb/brush, sock, razor, toothbrushes, under garments, etc., that were recently worn by the missing person and not handled by anyone else. Such “scent articles” should be placed in a clean paper bag using a clean glove or a clean stick. Items taken from a family laundry hamper, containing a mix if family member’s clothing, will not be beneficial.
  21. Personal clothing, bedding, personal hygiene items, etc., that may contain DNA with evidentiary value (direct all questions about DNA collection to the State Forensic Laboratory, biology).
  22. Any personal items that contain the missing person’s scent for search dogs.
  23. Obtain a list of persons known by the missing person’s friends, co-workers, acquaintances, associates, etc.
  24. Obtain a list of locations frequented by the missing person, hobbies, interests, preferences and predilections.
- C. A missing persons case **SHALL** be entered into NamUs after the individual has been missing for (30) days.
1. Anyone can enter a case, after becoming a registered NamUs user. You may submit a registration request following the registration link:
    - a. [https://www.findthemissing.org/users/new\\_confirm](https://www.findthemissing.org/users/new_confirm), or by selecting the “Register” button on the left navigation bar of the [www.findthemissing.org](http://www.findthemissing.org) Web site.
  2. A National Crime Information Center (NCIC) number or law enforcement case number must be in place before the case is published on the NamUs site (both are preferred).



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3. This will require the LEO to register in the system (see #1 above). Registration allows the LEO to have direct involvement with the case and the assigned NamUs Regional Services Specialist (RSS) to obtain case details and biometric data.
  
  4. Once the case is entered in NamUS, the submitting Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) should request to be included as a local contact on the case, if they are not already. The RSS will facilitate obtaining the biometric data, which includes dental records for the NamUs Forensic Odontologist to code and upload to NamUs case file. Additionally, the RSS will facilitate a fingerprint classification request and a request for DNA on a Family Reference Sample (FRS).
  
  5. NamUS offers a MP to UP case-matching feature that should be monitored by the LEO for potential matches. When a match of interest is discovered, the officer should bring it to the attention of the RSS for expediting the comparison.
- D. Death scene investigation when homicide is suspected of an unidentified, unknown body.
1. After performing any death scene investigation when homicide is suspected, the official with custody of the human remains shall ensure that the human remains are delivered to the office of the Chief Medical Examiner.
  
  2. The Chief Medical Examiner shall obtain from the human remains (a) samples of tissue suitable for DNA typing, or (b) samples of whose bone or hair suitable for DNA typing. The Chief Medical Examiner shall immediately submit the samples obtained to the Division of Scientific Services within the Department of Public Safety.
- E. Interaction with Complainants and Others.
1. It is important that officers remain in open contact with the family of all missing persons and with any other associated person.
  
  2. In missing person or adult missing persons investigations, law enforcement units should consider appointing and assigning an officer as “family liaison” to keep families updated on the progress of the investigation, to assist with the preparation and distribution of missing person(s) posters, to provide support and coordination with all missing person organizations, and to focus the point of contact for communications.

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3. All officers, investigators and supervisors involved in missing person investigations need to be particularly sensitive to the interests, concerns and needs of the family or other reporting persons and, to the fullest extent possible, continually communicate relevant and appropriate information on the handling of the case. It is not uncommon for the reporting persons or those left behind to experience significant emotional responses. They are dealing with a situation which is at the very highest stress level possible. Medical support, including consultation with a therapist is advisable, however law enforcement should advise the reporting party of two clearing houses to which they may also report a missing person:

- a. For missing person under the age of 18, contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.
- b. For a missing person over the age of 18, contact the National Center for Missing Adults.

F. Initiate follow-up contacts within 30 days.

1. Officers or other designated personnel should re-contact the reporting party within 30 days of the initial report to determine if any additional information may have become available.
2. Other agencies involved in this case should also be contacted to determine if any additional information is available.
3. When a missing person is found, the law enforcement unit must report this event through all formal channels:
  - a. When any person reported missing is found, the officer, dispatcher or other designated personnel shall prepare a formal report of that event.
  - b. The reporting party and other involved agencies shall be notified and the notification recorded on the law enforcement unit's reporting forms.
  - c. Any automated systems entries shall be cancelled.
  - d. Information regarding any found, unidentified persons, alive or deceased, should be entered into the Connecticut On-line Law Enforcement Communication Teleprocessing (COLLECT) system and NCIC.

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- e. In the event that a missing person is found before being reported missing to the Connecticut On-line Law Enforcement Communication Teleprocessing (COLLECT) system, a missing person report, followed by a cancellation, must still be made into the system.
- f. Interviews on the return can reveal valuable information about the reasons for going missing, where the missing person has been, with who they have been and what they have been doing. In many cases, the missing person will refuse to cooperate.
- g. It must be borne in mind that sometimes the reason for running away is to escape abuse by a family member or care giver. If the interview is conducted in their presence, the aggrieved is unlikely to reveal that and the person will simply have returned to the place of abuse.

G. Closure of Missing Person Investigation. Consideration for closure of missing person investigation. Careful consideration should be made concerning clearing a missing person investigation.

- 1. Closure is obviously appropriate when the missing person is confirmed returned or evidence has matched an unidentified person or body.
- 2. Inability to move forward in the investigation should not be a reason for closing a case.
- 3. By closing a case in such a manner, all evidence may be lost for the future identification of a deceased person.
- 4. An unidentified body may be discovered several years later, after the missing person report had been filed and prematurely closed. In such a case, there may be no relevant evidence that may assist in identifying the body, further hindering a death investigation.
- 5. When the reported missing person is under the age of eighteen (18), the missing person should remain classified under their actual age as when originally reported missing, regardless of their current age. A missing child report should not be cancelled and re-entered simply because the child has reached adulthood. The missing child report should not be removed or cancelled from any automated system due to emancipation or reaching adulthood.

H. Limitation.

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1. A common myth that 24 hours (or any other time frame) must pass before law enforcement will accept a missing person \*or adult missing persons report is incorrect. A delay in reporting may indicate the existence of neglect or abuse within the family.
2. Reporting persons must also know that for adults, being a missing person is not a crime. Once the person is located and found not to be at risk, police cannot divulge information about them without the person's consent.

### **I. Other limiting circumstances.**

1. "Missing/Not AT-Risk Adult" means an adult will NOT be considered AT-Risk if any of the following criteria are met:
  - a. "Absent Spouse": An absent spouse has committed no crime and is legally free to come and go. (Caution should be exercised both in preserving the privacy rights of the spouse in their wish to keep their whereabouts unknown and in making sure that the "absent spouse" is not, in fact, the victim of foul play related to domestic abuse.)
  - b. An adult who has left a note and/or told a credible person that they are intentionally absent. (An exception would be a suicide note.)
  - c. An adult who simply has not been in touch with the reporting party for an extended period of time, unless extenuating circumstances exist.
  - d. Fugitives from justice including AWOL service personnel.
  - e. Adult who is being sought for business or social purposes such as debt collections or school reunions.

### **J. Forms and Reports.**

1. Reporting Responsibilities:
  - a. This Department shall accept without delay any report of a missing adult person.
  - b. This Department shall submit to the Missing Children Information Clearinghouse all missing child reports received by any such agency CGS 29-1e(d).

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- c. Any Officer who receives a report of a missing child under 18 years of age shall immediately accept such report for filing and inform all on-duty police officers of the existence of the missing child report and communicate the report to other appropriate law enforcement agencies. (Sec. 7-282c CGS).
  - i. At the earliest convenience the reporting officer will respond to communications with report.
  - ii. Dispatcher will then enter missing child in (COLLECT) and NCIC, as well as the issuance of a **SILVER ALERT**.
- d. This Department shall submit appropriate information into the Connecticut On-Line Law Enforcement Communication Teleprocessing (COLLECT) system.
- e. All written reports to be completed by investigating officers in missing person or \*missing adult person cases will be reviewed by immediate supervisors.
  - i. Missing person reports will then be reviewed by the Special Victims Unit as soon as possible for follow up investigation.
- f. Information regarding missing persons under 18 years of age, or where there is evidence that the missing person is “at risk,” shall be entered into the Connecticut On-line Law Enforcement Communication Teleprocessing (COLLECT) system within four (4) hours by the law enforcement unit taking the report.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** A report of a missing person under the age of 21 must be reported to the U.S. Department of Justice National Crime Information Center (NCIC) per Federal Law.