

# **Community Guide to Report a Person Missing**



**Toronto Police Service**

**April 2025**

# Letter from the Chief

Dear Family Members, Friends, and Loved Ones,

Having a friend or loved one go missing is frightening and confusing.

On behalf of the Toronto Police Service, I extend our support to you and your family during this incredibly difficult time.

The “Community Guide to Report a Person Missing” is for anyone impacted by a missing person case. It was co-designed by the Community Representatives of the Missing and Missed Implementation Team (MMIT), community agencies and the Toronto Police Service. The Community Representatives of the MMIT are a diverse group of dedicated external interest-holders with expertise in working with or lived experience of 2SLGBTQIA+, Indigenous, racialized, and/or historically marginalized persons. They have partnered with the Service to help us continuously improve all aspects of our response to missing persons cases.

This guide will help to: provide clarity on what to expect, including our investigative processes; inform you of available resources and community support services; and share additional information that you may need.

Please know that the members of the Toronto Police Service are deeply committed to finding your friend or loved one. We will investigate their disappearance with the utmost urgency, respect, diligence, and care, while doing everything possible to support you, and communicate with you, throughout this process.

If you have any questions, concerns, or additional information regarding your loved one, we encourage you to reach out to the Missing Persons Unit at 416-808-7411 or [MissingPersons@tps.ca](mailto:MissingPersons@tps.ca)

Myron Demkiw, M.O.M.  
Chief of Police

## Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge this guide was created on the traditional territory of many nations, including the Wendat, the Anishinabeg, the Haudenosaunee, and, most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, Toronto (Tkaronto) is home to many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, and we recognize their ongoing presence, contributions, and stewardship of this land.

We also acknowledge the historical and ongoing impacts of colonial systems, including the disproportionate number of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people (MMIWG2S), as well as the systemic barriers faced by Black, racialized, and marginalized communities in accessing justice and support.

This guide is intended to provide clear, accessible, and compassionate information for families, friends, communities and anyone impacted by a missing person. In partnership with the communities we serve, the Toronto Police Service is committed to fostering trust, improving responses to missing person cases, and ensuring all reports are treated with urgency, respect and care.

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# Introduction

When someone goes missing, it can be overwhelming to know where to start or who to turn to. The “Community Guide to Report a Person Missing” was created by the Toronto Police Service (Service) in consultation with the community representatives of the Missing and Missed Implementation Team (MMIT), external community agencies representing a wide range of social, cultural and religious groups, representatives from several Community Consultative Committees and members of the Service.

In this section, find definitions of key terms and facts that will clarify some of the most common misconceptions in missing person cases.

## Why This Guide?

This guide draws on research that includes Canadian and international resources. Notably, two key references in its development were “Missing People: A Guide for Family Members and Service Providers” (Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit, New South Wales Department of Justice, 2014), and the “Community Resource Guide” (Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2012).

We extend our sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed their expertise and lived experience to ensure this guide serves as a meaningful resource for those affected by a missing person.

This guide is designed to provide clear, accessible information about the process of reporting a missing person, guidance on supporting search efforts, and resources to assist individuals and the communities we serve.

We recognize that some of the topics covered in this guide may be distressing. If you or someone you know is impacted, we encourage you to seek support from the resources mentioned in the guide.

The guide also aims to dispel common myths surrounding missing persons cases and includes information on unidentified remains investigations.

At the time of printing, the guide is available only in English with plans for future translations to ensure greater accessibility. This is the first edition of the “Community Guide to Report a Person Missing” and we welcome community feedback.

For an accessible plain text version of this guide, email [MissingPersons@tps.ca](mailto:MissingPersons@tps.ca)

## Definitions

**AMBER Alert** refers to a co-operative effort between police, the media and the Ministry of Transportation to provide early notification to the public where a person under 18 years of age is believed to have been abducted and where circumstances lead police to believe that the abducted person is in danger of serious bodily harm or death and there is enough descriptive information about the abducted person, and/or the abductor, and/or the abductor's vehicle to believe an immediate broadcast alert will help in locating the person. An AMBER Alert will have a duration of five hours following activation, unless cancelled or extended.

**Bona Fide Reasons** include:

- A victim or witness who may possibly require or may seek admission into the Provincial Witness Protection Program
- A Crown Attorney is requesting information for disclosure purposes
- The information is necessary to prove essential elements of an offence, or
- Investigations where the circumstances make it clear that it is essential to public or officer safety and security to ascertain the immigration status of a victim or witness

**Missing Person** (under the Missing Persons Act, 2018) means

- A person is a missing person for the purposes of this Act if both of the following circumstances exist with respect to the person:
- 1) The person's whereabouts are unknown and,
  - the person has not been in contact with people who would likely be in contact with the person, or
  - it is reasonable in the circumstances to fear for the person's safety because of the circumstances surrounding the person's absence or because of any other prescribed considerations
- 2) A member of a police force is unable to locate the person after making reasonable efforts to do so

**Missing Person Coordinator** refers to the member assigned to the Missing Persons Unit that provides assistance to lead investigators and divisional officers assigned to missing persons and unidentified remains investigations.

The Missing Person Coordinator will:

- Examine all missing person occurrences to ensure quality control, case continuity, consistency and compliance with related procedures
- Evaluate the risk and response assessments of missing person investigations
- Connect officers with community resources to assist with investigations
- Act as a liaison between investigators and the reportees and/or families in missing person investigations
- Liaise with the Office of the Chief Coroner / Ontario Forensic Pathology Service on issues relating to unidentified remains, as required;

- Build relationships and develop contacts with social services, public health and community organizations/agencies
- Maintain a list of community resources to assist with investigations
- Plan and deliver training as required

**Missing Person Support Worker** refers to a person who is a victim support advocate, within the Missing Persons Unit, specializing in supporting families and individuals affected by a missing person. The Missing Person Support Worker will:

- Provide essential assistance, guidance, and emotional support to those navigating the complex and distressing experience of having a loved one disappear
- Support clients through the traumatic process of navigating the criminal justice system and grieving the loss of a loved one to a homicide
- Deliver trauma-informed care, practical assistance, and advocacy services to address the unique needs of the affected party while bridging the gap between law enforcement and victim supports
- Understand and respond to how a person's background—such as culture, race, gender, or disability—may affect their experience, and provide support that respects those differences

**Neurodivergent** refers to a non-medical term used to recognize the diverse ways in which individuals' brains develop and function, leading to unique strengths and challenges compared to societal norm. While some neurodivergent individuals may have medical diagnoses, others may not. This definition has been adapted from the Cleveland Clinic, in consultation with the Missing and Missed Implementation Team.

#### **Did You Know?**

- If you are concerned with someone's immediate safety, call 9-1-1. In less urgent situations, please contact the non-emergency number: 416-808-2222.
- Investigators will not close the missing person's file until they have verified the location and identity of the missing person.

## Dispelling Common Myths

It is important to understand the difference between the myths related to missing persons investigations and the facts. Let's debunk some of these myths and share the facts.

Myth: Most missing persons reported to police will never be found.

Fact: Over **90%** of people are located after being reported missing.

Myth: You should not call 9-1-1 to report someone missing.

Fact: If you are concerned about someone's immediate safety, call 9-1-1. In less urgent situations, please call the non-emergency number 416-808-2222.

Myth: If the missing person is an adult with a history of mental health or substance misuse the police may not take the case seriously.

Fact: Every missing person case is taken seriously.

Myth: Photos used for missing persons investigations can be used for criminal investigations.

Fact: Photos provided for missing persons investigations **cannot** be used for criminal investigations.

Myth: You have to wait 24 hours to report a person missing.

Fact: Waiting can delay the investigation; report immediately.

Myth: People who run away frequently are deemed to be runaways by police.

Fact: Toronto Police only uses the term "missing person" regardless of the number of times someone has gone missing.

Myth: Only family members can report a person missing.

Fact: Anyone can report a person missing.

Myth: The police won't start looking for a missing person right away.

Fact: Police investigate immediately; prompt reporting is crucial.

Myth: Only adults can be reported missing.

Fact: Anyone can be reported missing.

Myth: The police won't investigate if the person missing is an adult with a history of going missing.

Fact: Every missing person case is taken seriously.

Myth: Reporting someone missing is an inconvenience to the police.

Fact: Reporting is critical; police rely on public assistance.

Myth: DNA samples provided for a missing person investigation can be kept and used for medical research.

Fact: DNA samples provided for a missing person investigation **must be destroyed** once the person is located and **cannot** be used for medical research.

## When is Someone Considered Missing?

In this section, we go over what it actually means to be missing.

Understanding how a missing person is defined helps clarify when and how to get help.

A **missing person** is someone whose whereabouts are unknown, and there is either no contact with their usual networks or there is concern for their safety. This definition applies to anyone, regardless of age, race, or personal circumstances- when their absence causes concern.

A person's living situation or life circumstances, such as being unhoused, living in an encampment, having no fixed address, experiencing mental health challenges, using substances, or living with a disability, **do not** change the definition of a missing person.

Every person reported missing is taken seriously. Each individual's case is investigated with care, compassion, and consistency, no matter someone's background.

We understand that every situation is different, and this guide may not cover every possibility. If you're ever unsure whether someone should be reported as a missing person, please reach out to your local police division. Officers are available to listen, assess the situation, and help determine the most appropriate next steps.

You'll find contact information for all Toronto Police Service divisions in the **Resources** section of this guide (page 40).

## What to Do When Someone Goes Missing

When someone disappears, it can be an incredibly distressing and uncertain time. You may feel overwhelmed, unsure where to turn, or afraid of doing the wrong thing. This section walks you through the first important steps: how to check in with others, what information to gather, how and when to contact police, and what to expect when officers arrive.

It also includes ways you and your community can help in the search—because every action, no matter how small, can make a difference.

You are not alone.

Support is available, and there are people ready to help guide you through this.

Locating a missing person **as quickly as possible** is critical. If you believe someone is missing or you are worried for their safety, call the police immediately.

In Ontario, **you do not need to wait 24 hours** to report someone missing. If you cannot locate someone and are concerned for their safety, it's important to report it right away.

Anyone can file a missing person report, **regardless of their relationship** to the missing individual. You don't have to be a family member, and a person's age will not affect their eligibility to be reported missing.

If you're worried about someone's whereabouts, it's always best to act quickly—the sooner the police can begin their investigation, the better the chances of locating the person safely.

## Check with Family, Friends, and Your Available Video Footage

Many people use location-sharing features on their phones or other devices. Check with the person's family, friends, or close contacts to see if they have access to the missing person's location.

If the individual is **vulnerable**—for example, living with Alzheimer's, dementia, or another condition that may affect memory or safety—and location sharing was set up, be sure to check this feature right away.

If you have **video surveillance at your home or business**, review the footage to see if it captured your loved one leaving or the direction they were last seen heading. This information can be extremely helpful to the investigation.

As part of the police investigation, **officers will canvass the area for other available video footage**.

Because there are certain steps that must be carried out by members of the Toronto Police Service when video is involved, it's important to **inform the police right away** if you have footage that may help.

## How to Report a Missing Person

- Call 9-1-1 if you are concerned for the person's immediate safety
- For situations that are **not urgent**, call the **non-emergency line: 416-808-2222**
- You can also visit your local police division in person to make a report
  - To find your division in Toronto, visit
  - Scroll down to the "Find Your Division" section on the webpage and enter your address

### Visit the Missing Persons Unit Webpage for Additional Information

The URL to access this website is: <https://www.tps.ca/organizational-chart/specialized-operations-command/detective-operations/investigative-services/homicide/missing-persons/>

## I've Decided to Report Someone Missing — What Can I Do Before Police Arrive?

Once you've made the decision to report someone missing, there are important steps you can take while waiting for police to arrive. Officers will need as much information as possible to begin the search quickly. While you won't be asked to fill out any forms, gathering key details in advance can help move things forward quickly.

### Steps You Can Take While Waiting for Police

**Gather Important Information:** Write down as much as you can about the missing person—either on paper, in a notebook, or on an electronic device. This can include physical description, routine, recent behaviour, or contact details of people close to them. A book or device is also helpful for keeping track of any information the police share with you, including names, contact numbers, and business cards.

**Review Key Questions:** Police will ask specific questions to guide the investigation. You can find a full list of these questions on the Toronto Police Missing Persons webpage at [tps.ca/missing/](https://tps.ca/missing/), or on the Appendix (page 43) of this guide. For example, if the missing person is an older adult, they may return to places they've lived before—so having a list of past addresses can be useful.

**Find a Recent Photo:** A clear, up-to-date photo of the missing person is crucial. The picture on your wall or phone might not reflect how they look now, so try to find the most recent image available. If needed, this photo may be shared in a public news release to ask for help from the community.

For more details on how news releases are handled, see page 20 of this guide.

### Who Will Attend?

Once you take the important step to report someone missing, a uniformed police officer will meet with you in person—wherever you are. Depending on the circumstances, additional officers may also attend to support the response.

From the moment you call the police, the Missing Persons Unit begins monitoring the investigation. The Missing Persons section focuses specifically on cases involving missing individuals and unidentified remains in Toronto. Their primary goal is to help locate people as quickly and as safely as possible.

### Ensuring a Thorough and Consistent Investigation

To support a complete and coordinated response:

- Skilled investigators follow structured checklists to guide their actions
- Supervisors oversee the investigation at various levels to ensure no lead is overlooked

- Faith-based or cultural considerations will be respected. However, if someone's safety is at risk, police may need to act immediately even before consulting a community or religious leader

The goal is always the same: to locate the missing person as quickly and safely as possible.

### **Speaking to Others**

Even if you've already provided information, police may need to speak with others who might have useful details. These follow-up conversations are essential and help guide the next steps in the search.

## **How to Help Find a Missing Person**

When someone goes missing, there are important steps you can take to support the search and help police locate them as quickly as possible.

Whether you're a family member, friend, or concerned community member, your actions can make a difference.

### **Check with:**

- **Family and Friends:** Ensure they haven't made other arrangements
- **Local Hospitals:** Ensure they are not at the hospital
- **School/Employer:** Find out if they have seen or heard from them
- **Community Groups or Faith-based Organizations:** Find out if they have attended these places
- **Frequented Places:** Check places the person usually goes to
- **Social Media:** Monitor accounts for activity

## Accessibility, Trust and Reporting Concerns

Everyone deserves access to help and support, no matter their background, language, ability, or life experience. This section addresses common concerns that may prevent someone from reporting a loved one missing.

Whether you're worried about language barriers, communication challenges, immigration status, or past interactions with police, know that your voice matters and there are ways to safely connect with support.

### How Can I Report a Missing Person If I Don't Speak English, Cannot Hear, or Cannot Speak?

You don't need to speak English to call 9-1-1. A call-taker can quickly connect you with an interpreter during the call. The Toronto Police Service 9-1-1 Communications Centre has access to a wide range of interpreters.

**Tip:** If you can say the name of your language in English, it may help connect you to an interpreter faster.

#### **If You Are D/deaf, Hard of Hearing, Non-Speaking, or Have a Speech Impairment**

If you use a TTY (teletypewriter), follow these steps:

1. **Stay calm.** Place the phone receiver on the TTY device.
2. **Dial 9-1-1** for emergencies, or **416-467-0493** for non-emergencies (TTY line).
3. Once the call is answered, **press the TTY keys repeatedly** to alert the operator.
4. **Wait for the call-taker's TTY connection.** If needed, press the keys again.
5. The call-taker will type "GA" (Go Ahead) when they're ready.
6. Clearly type the type of emergency (Police, Fire, or Ambulance), your name, phone number, and your location.
7. Answer all questions from the operator. **Do not hang up** until told to do so.
8. When the call is finished, type "**SK**" (**Stop Keying**) to end the conversation.

#### **Text with 9-1-1**

If you are D/deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech impairment, you can register your mobile device for Text with 9-1-1 through your wireless service provider. This service allows registered users to communicate with 9-1-1 operators by text during an emergency.

The Toronto Police non-emergency number (416-808-2222) is also available with support in multiple languages.

### What if I Need Language Support?

If an interpreter is needed during the investigation, police will arrange for one to assist with communication. While family and friends are helpful by quickly providing information, they cannot be used as interpreters for formal statements.

## What if I'm Worried About my Immigration Status?

If you are reporting someone missing—or if you are missing yourself—your immigration status is not a concern for police.

**Being missing is not a crime.** If you are a victim or a witness in any case, the police will not ask about your immigration status, unless there is a bona fide reason, which happens only in rare and specific situations.

You can find more details about these special circumstances in the **Definitions** section on page 2.

## What if I Don't Want a Marked Police Car to Attend?

There may be situations where someone reporting a missing person may prefer not to have uniformed officers arrive at their home. This could be due to cultural considerations, privacy concerns, fear of judgment from neighbours, or other personal reasons.

While it's not possible to specifically request a plainclothes officer to respond to a missing person call, you do have the option to visit a police station in person to file the report instead. However, depending on the situation, uniformed officers may still need to attend certain locations, including the person's home, as part of the search for the missing individual. The top priority is always the well-being and safety of the missing person, and police will act as quickly as possible to locate them.

## Do Criminal History and Current Problems with the Law Affect the Investigation?

No, they do not. Every missing person and missing person report is treated with the same level of urgency, regardless of who made the report, the missing person's background, or whether they have a criminal history or current legal concerns.

Anyone who reports a missing person will be treated with sensitivity, respect, care, and dignity. The police will use the same investigative process and resources for every case, ensuring that each missing person is searched for with the priority and attention they deserve.

## Can I Trust the Police?

The Toronto Police Service is committed to treating all reports of missing persons with care, respect, and urgency, regardless of a person's background, circumstances, or identity.

Officers receive specialized training to enhance their understanding and improve their interactions with diverse communities, including individuals of different cultures, races, religions, genders, abilities, socio-economic backgrounds, and those who have experienced trauma. Every missing person case follows the same reporting and investigative process, ensuring fairness and consistency in each investigation.

We recognize that some communities may have concerns about trusting the police. To address this, we are working closely with community organizations to offer a more informed and culturally sensitive approach to investigating missing persons.

At the end of this guide, you'll find a list of community organizations and resources that can offer additional support and help you navigate the process.

## What Will Happen When Police Arrive?

Having the police attend and begin an investigation can feel overwhelming, especially in a moment filled with worry and uncertainty. This section helps you understand what to expect when officers arrive to take a missing person report.

You'll learn why certain units, like the Missing Persons Unit, are involved and how the process of filing a report works.

The goal is to provide clarity, ease fears, and help you feel more prepared for what happens next.

When officers arrive, a **supervisor will be notified** and a **risk assessment** will be conducted to help determine the urgency and response needed for the investigation.

Police will ask for detailed information to help locate your loved one as quickly as possible. You may be asked to share:

- Full name and date of birth
- School, work, and social connections (such as friends, colleagues, or support workers)
- Medical and dental information (if available)
- Last known location and places the person visits often
- Description of clothing, vehicle details, and contact information (e.g., phone number, cell phone provider, social media accounts)
- A recent photo of the missing person
- A personal item (if requested) to help obtain DNA, which may assist with identification

For more information on how DNA is used in missing person investigations, refer to the Family's Guide to the National Missing Persons DNA Program found in the **Resources** section on page 37.

## Why Is the Missing Persons Unit Part of the Homicide Unit?

While the name may sound alarming, the integration of the Missing Persons Unit within the Homicide and Missing Persons Unit reflects the seriousness and priority given to all missing persons cases.

This structure allows for:

- Specialized expertise when cases involve complex or urgent circumstances
- Thorough investigations, using the same care and diligence applied to major cases
- Access to national resources, including the National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains (NCMPUR)
- Guidance and support for frontline officers and families throughout the investigation

By combining these two units, the Toronto Police Service ensures that every missing person investigation is approached with urgency, coordination, and care, no matter the individual's background or situation.

### **National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains**

The National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains is Canada's national centre that provides law enforcement, medical examiners and chief coroners with specialized investigative services in support of missing persons and unidentified remains investigations.

The URL to access this website is: <https://canadasmissing.ca/about-ausujet/index-eng.htm>

## **Filing a Report to Begin the Investigation**

After you file a missing person report, the uniformed officers who first responded will complete the report, and the case will then be assigned to an investigator at the local police division. This investigator has specialized training and expertise in handling missing persons cases.

## **Who Will Contact You?**

You may not immediately know the name of the assigned investigator, but someone from the team will reach out to you as soon as possible. You may be contacted by:

- The lead investigator
- A Missing Person Coordinator
- Another member of the investigative team

## **How to Follow Up**

To follow up on the investigation, contact:

- The local police division handling the case
- The Missing Persons Unit at:
  - Phone: 416-808-7411
  - Email: [MissingPersons@tps.ca](mailto:MissingPersons@tps.ca) (Emails are monitored regularly, and responses are typically provided within 1–2 business days.)

For phone numbers of all Toronto Police Service divisions, see the Resources section on pages 40 and 41.

# Understanding the Investigative Process

Once a missing person report is filed, the investigation begins—and so does a journey that can feel uncertain and emotionally heavy. This section outlines what happens during the investigation, why officers might request DNA from family members, and how you can stay informed as things move forward.

Knowing what to expect can help you feel more involved, supported, and prepared throughout the process.

## The Investigative Process

**Note:** in the plain text version of this guide, a diagram was omitted which is meant to be a visual representation of key areas of a missing person investigation that involve loved ones, the public or the missing person themselves.

When someone goes missing, every minute matters. The diagram in the previous page, excluded in this copy, is explained below and it is not meant to be a representation of every investigative step taken to find a missing person.

### 1. Making a Report

- You can call 9-1-1 if the missing person is a child or you believe them to be in serious risk of harm. Call the non-emergency line or visit a police station if the situation is not urgent. A uniformed officer will take your report.

### 2. Initial Review and Risk Assessment

- A police supervisor reviews the details and determines the level of risk to the missing person. This guides the type of response and resources needed.

### 3. Initial Search (300 Metres)

- Officers begin searching within a 300-metre radius of the place last seen, where missing persons are often found early on.

### 4. Public Notification

- If the person isn't found, a news release may be issued to inform the public and request assistance.

### 5. Ongoing Investigation

- If needed, specialized teams, including the Missing Persons Unit and the Emergency Management and Public Order Unit, join in. Investigators may:
  - Search a wider physical area
  - Review video footage
  - Request legal authorization for records
  - Contact community agencies and use social media

### 6. When the Person Is Found

- Once located, police confirm the person's safety, have a return support conversation, and connect them with services that may help prevent future disappearances.

### 7. Monitoring and Support

- The Missing Persons Unit monitors all reports of missing persons from start to finish and can offer support to families and the person found.

## Why Police May Request DNA from Family Members

As part of a missing person investigation, police may use DNA to help confirm someone's identity. In some cases, they may request a sample from a close family member, even if personal items have already been provided.

Even if you've already given police something like a toothbrush or hairbrush belonging to the missing person, police may still ask for a DNA sample from a close blood relative. This is done to confirm that the DNA collected from the personal item belongs to the missing person. This prevents errors and ensures the most accurate and reliable results.

The most helpful DNA samples usually come from biological parents, children, siblings, or other close relatives.

While this request may feel unexpected, please know that it's a standard part of the investigation. It's carried out with care and respect, and its sole purpose is to help identify and locate your loved one.

## Staying Informed: Communication Throughout the Investigation

During a missing person investigation, staying connected and informed can bring a sense of stability and reassurance. Knowing who to contact and what to expect helps you feel supported—and ensures you remain an active part of the process.

### Creating a Communication Plan

When you speak with police, they will work with you to create a communication plan.

This is a simple but important step that outlines:

- Who should receive updates (e.g., yourself, a family member, or a support person)
- How updates will be shared (e.g., by phone, email, or in-person)
- How often you'll hear from investigators

This plan is tailored to your needs and ensures you always know how to stay connected.

### Getting Key Information

At the time of reporting, ask police for the occurrence number (a unique number assigned to the case). Having this information makes it easier to follow up or share updates.

### Ways to Stay in Touch

You can:

- Ask to speak directly with the lead investigator
- Leave a message or speak with another member of the investigative team
- Request to speak with the Detective Sergeant if you have concerns or if the lead investigator is unavailable

Victim Services Toronto may also assist with communication and emotional support during this time.

### **What to Expect Over Time**

In the early stages of the investigation, you may receive more frequent updates and see active police involvement. As initial steps are completed and leads are followed, updates may become less frequent—but this does not mean the case has stalled.

The investigation remains open and active. New information will always be followed up on, and investigators will check in with you if they need further details or if there's a significant development.

### **You Are Not Alone**

If you feel overwhelmed, it's okay to ask questions or request more clarity at any stage. Let police know if your contact information changes so you don't miss any updates. Support is available for both practical and emotional needs—many of these services are listed in the **Resources** section of this guide (page 37)

## Special Considerations for Vulnerable Individuals

While every person reported missing is taken seriously, certain individuals may face greater risks due to age, health, or other circumstances. This section outlines how police and support teams respond with urgency, care, and specialized approaches when a vulnerable person is missing.

This section outlines how the Toronto Police Service responds to missing person reports that involve vulnerable individuals. This may include:

- Children and youth
- Seniors, including those with dementia or Alzheimer's disease
- Individuals with cognitive impairments or developmental disabilities
- People living with mental health conditions
- People experiencing homelessness or housing instability
- Those facing addiction or substance use challenges
- Newcomers, refugees, or individuals with language or cultural barriers

Every missing person is important. When someone may not be able to advocate for themselves, communicate their needs, or safely navigate unfamiliar environments, extra steps are taken to locate and support them as quickly as possible.

### What if the Missing Person is a Child?

When a missing person is a child (under 18 years old), the Toronto Police Service follows the same investigative steps used in all missing persons cases.

However, additional measures may be taken depending on the situation.

#### Urgency and Special Procedures

The safe and immediate recovery of missing children is always the highest priority. In some situations, an **AMBER Alert** may be issued to help locate the child quickly.

AMBER Alerts are only activated when very specific criteria are met. To learn more about these criteria, please refer to the **Definitions** section on page 3.

### What if the Missing Person is a Senior?

Older adults, especially those living with dementia, Alzheimer's disease, or other cognitive or physical challenges, may be at greater risk when they go missing. They may become confused, disoriented, or unable to communicate vital information, such as their name or address.

#### Recognizing the Urgency

Missing seniors are treated with high priority due to the potential for rapid physical or cognitive decline, particularly if they are without necessary medication, proper clothing, or assistance. Time is critical in these cases.

## **How Police Respond**

Officers are trained to recognize signs of dementia and cognitive impairment. The Toronto Police Service works closely with healthcare providers, caregivers, and community agencies to gather important background information and tailor the search strategy accordingly.

In some cases, medical alert programs or identification tools (like ID bracelets or tracking services) can assist in locating the individual quickly. The Alzheimer Society of Toronto's "Finding Your Way" Program is one example of a resource that supports families in preventing future occurrences. Please refer to the **Resources** section on page 37 for more information.

## **Working with Families and Caregivers**

Police may ask about the person's routines, recent behaviours, and known places they like to visit. Loved ones play a key role in providing context that can help direct search efforts and determine risk.

The goal is always to find the missing person quickly, safely, and with compassion.

## Investigation Privacy and Media

When someone goes missing, public awareness can be an important tool to help locate them. At the same time, privacy and safety must be carefully protected—especially for the person who is missing and their loved ones.

This section explains how police decide what information to share publicly, what legal tools may be used during the investigation, and how your privacy is respected throughout. You'll learn what's typically included in a news release, what stays confidential, and how the public is informed once someone is located.

### Privacy and Safety Considerations

The privacy and safety of the missing person are treated with the utmost care and seriousness.

Police will not share information with anyone who may pose a risk to the missing person's well-being.

If you have concerns about sharing specific details, such as information related to gender identity, neurodivergence, mental health, or other personal identifiers, please let the officers know.

The investigative team will work with you to determine the most respectful and appropriate way to proceed.

Everyone involved shares the same priority: to locate the missing person safely, and as quickly as possible

### What Law Assists Police in Finding a Missing Person?

Investigators carry out their work under the authority of the Criminal Code, the Missing Persons Act (2018), and other applicable laws, depending on the circumstances of the case.

The Ontario Missing Persons Act provides police with important tools to help locate a missing person, especially when no criminal activity is suspected.

Under this Act, police can:

- **Apply for court orders** to access key records—such as phone, banking, or medical information—that may help locate the missing person.
- **Search premises** when necessary, as part of the investigation.
- **Demand access to records without a court order** in urgent cases, allowing officers to respond quickly when time is critical.

The Act is designed to support timely, effective investigations while also respecting individual privacy rights.

## News Releases: An Investigative Tool

A news release is one of the tools investigators use in missing person and unidentified remains investigations. It is a written statement that is given to the media and public that contains key details about the case to help police locate a missing person or identify remains.

### A news release may include:

- First name
- Age
- Physical description
- Clothing description
- Time, date, and location where the person was last seen
- The area they are missing from
- Any associated vehicles
- Any other relevant, non-private information that could assist in locating the person
- If deemed appropriate and available, the news release will also include a photo of the missing person.

### To protect privacy, a news release will not include:

- Surname
- Gender
- Date of birth
- In-custody images

News releases are a vital way to involve the public in the search process while carefully balancing the privacy, dignity, and safety of the person who is missing.

## Why Are Last Names Not Included in News Releases?

When the Toronto Police Service issues a news release about a missing person, **the individual's last name, gender and date of birth** are intentionally excluded to help protect their privacy and future opportunities.

Publishing a person's full name or date of birth in a public release means that information could remain searchable online indefinitely. Even years later, it could show up in job searches, background checks, or other situations—potentially creating unnecessary obstacles for someone who was found and is moving forward with their life.

In most cases, last names **do not significantly assist** in locating someone within the community. News releases instead focus on information that is most helpful in generating leads and public awareness, such as:

- Physical descriptions
- Clothing details
- Photos (if available and appropriate)
- The time, date, and location the person was last seen

This approach reflects a careful balance between public engagement and respect for the individual's **dignity, safety, and future well-being**, and it's also something to keep in mind when using social media to help find a missing person.

### **Did You Know?**

Together with members of the Missing and Missed Implementation Team, the Toronto Police Service made the intentional decision to exclude surnames, gender and dates of birth from missing person news releases.

This change reflects valuable community input and recognizes that people who go missing—and are later found—shouldn't have their past follow them forever in online searches. The decision supports long-term privacy and can help prevent challenges with employment, housing, education, or personal relationships later in life.

This is an important example of community collaboration leading to meaningful change in how missing persons cases are handled and communicated to the public.

### **Will the Public Know When a Missing Person Is Located**

Yes. When a missing person is located, the Toronto Police Service will issue an update through a news release and social media channels used during the search. The update will include the date and time the individual was found.

However, no additional personal details, such as where or how the person was located, or the circumstances surrounding their disappearance, will be shared with the public.

This approach reflects a careful balance: engaging the community in search efforts, while also respecting the privacy and dignity of the person once they are found.

The investigation remains open and active until the missing person is located.

## Search and Community Efforts

Searching for a missing person involves many moving parts, both within the police service and out in the community. While the police lead formal investigations, community members often play a powerful role in helping to locate a loved one.

This section outlines what you can expect when a search begins: from coordinated search efforts and how they're organized, to the roles officers and volunteers may play. We also address an important concern—whether the search continues after police shifts end. It does.

Every moment matters when a person is missing. Whether you are actively participating in a search or simply staying informed, your involvement is part of a broader community effort to bring someone home safely.

### Searching for the Missing Person

One of the first steps police take when someone is reported missing is to physically search the location where the person was last seen. This includes thoroughly checking all areas—under beds, inside closets, and each room. Even if you have already done this, it is an important part of the investigative process to ensure no detail is overlooked.

#### Larger Search Efforts

If deemed appropriate after an initial assessment, police may conduct a 300-metre radius search around the location where the person was last seen or last known to be. This broader search must be approved by a supervisor and is part of a structured approach to locating missing individuals.

The 300-metre radius is based on the research of Dr. Robert J. Koester, an internationally recognized expert in search and rescue. In his book “Lost Person Behavior” Dr. Koester outlines how data and behavioural patterns can help predict where a missing person may be found.

This method provides police with a proven, data-informed starting point for organizing search efforts and is widely recognized as a best practice in missing persons investigations.

#### Coordinating the Search

Search Managers are responsible for overseeing and coordinating ground search efforts, ensuring the most effective strategies are used based on the situation.

They have specialized training, and may deploy specialized equipment, and additional resources as needed to support the search. Depending on the circumstances, support units from across Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) may also be brought in to assist.

You may notice a significant police presence in the area during these efforts. While this can feel overwhelming, it's important to remember that a larger, coordinated response increases the chances of finding the missing person quickly and safely.

## **Does the Investigation Stop When Officers Finish Their Shift?**

No. The investigation continues, even when an officer's shift ends. Each missing person case is handed over to the next shift to ensure that efforts to locate the missing person remain active and uninterrupted.

If the original investigator is away for an extended period or leaves the unit, another qualified investigator will be assigned to take over looking for your loved one. The goal is to maintain momentum and ensure consistent follow-up throughout the investigation.

# Support and Advocacy

When someone goes missing, the emotional impact on their loved ones can be overwhelming. You may feel fear, confusion, sadness—or all of these at once. It's important to know that you're not alone. There are people and services available to support you through this difficult time.

This section highlights the types of help you can access, including how to connect with a support person after filing a report. You'll also find guidance on what families often find helpful, and how community or cultural supports can offer comfort and care.

Whether you are navigating the early moments of a disappearance or dealing with ongoing uncertainty, having the right support can make a meaningful difference.

## How to Get a Support Person After Filing a Report

While locating the missing person is always the top priority, it's equally important to support the individuals searching for them, as well as the missing person, once found.

### Who Provides Support?

Missing Person Support Workers are part of Victim Services Toronto and work directly within the Toronto Police Service's Missing Persons Unit. These trained professionals provide:

- Emotional support
- Referrals to community services
- Assistance navigating the investigation process

### Who Gets a Support Person?

The need for a support person is evaluated on a case-by-case basis as part of the standard risk assessment conducted in every missing person investigation. Not everyone will need additional emotional or logistical support, but it is available for those who do.

### How is a Support Person Determined?

Any member of the investigative team, including officers or civilian personnel, can help arrange support. This may include support from:

- A Victim Services staff member
- A Liaison Officer
- A Missing Person Coordinator
- A Missing Person Support Worker

If referrals to Victim Services Toronto or other external agencies are recommended, your consent is always required.

### How a Support Person Can Help You

A support person can offer valuable assistance throughout the investigation. They may provide:

- Emotional support during what can be a highly stressful and uncertain time
- Referrals to specialized services in your local area, based on your unique needs
- Guidance and help navigating the missing person investigation process

Support is available at every stage. The Toronto Police Service recognizes that certain moments, such as seeing a loved one’s photo in a news release or learning of a case involving unidentified remains, can be especially difficult. Victim Services Toronto or other support agencies may be available to help you and your family manage these emotional impacts.

### How to Access a Support Person

- A support person may reach out to offer assistance—but you can also request help at any time
- Victim Services Toronto, missing person support workers, and missing person coordinators can connect you with hundreds of external agencies based on your situation
- There is no cost to access Victim Services
- You do not need to live in Toronto. Victim Services Toronto can still be your starting point for support and referrals

For more information about Missing Person Support Workers and Missing Person Coordinators, please see the **Definitions** section of this guide on page 2.

## What Families Find Helpful During This Time

Research from Australia, featured in “Missing People: A Guide for Family Members and Service Providers” highlights several types of support that families of missing persons have found especially helpful:

- **Practical help:** Assistance navigating legal matters, dealing with investigative processes, and accessing information related to the missing person
- **Timely access to support services:** Early connections to professional support can help families feel less isolated and more grounded during an overwhelming time
- **Opportunities to talk and acknowledge the loss:** Having a safe space to share experiences, express grief, and process the uncertainty is vital
- **Support that is respectful and non-judgmental:** Everyone reacts differently, and it's important that support systems acknowledge and honour that diversity
- **Compassion from primary healthcare providers:** Understanding the physical and emotional toll on loved ones helps ensure they get the care they need
- **Recognition that ambiguous loss is trauma:** This unique form of grief can be especially difficult to cope with and requires a sensitive, informed approach
- **Greater public awareness:** Building understanding of what families go through helps foster compassion, reduce stigma, and strengthen community support

## Cultural and Community Support

For many, turning to a religious or cultural community during a time of crisis can offer strength, comfort, and guidance. While some may feel that a missing person investigation is separate from their cultural or spiritual life, the support of a congregation, community group, or religious leader can be deeply grounding and helpful.

The Native Women's Association of Canada outlines several meaningful suggestions in their "Community Resource Guide" to support anyone impacted by a missing person case—regardless of background or belief. Their key recommendations include:

- **Building a support system close to home:** Reach out to those around you for emotional, spiritual, or practical support
- **Having someone stay with you:** A trusted person can offer comfort, help with daily tasks, or assist with childcare when needed
- **Choosing a spokesperson:** Appoint someone to share updates with family, friends, and your community so that you can focus on your own well-being
- **Bringing an advocate to important meetings:** A trusted friend or relative can support you during meetings with police, counsellors, or service providers by helping to ask questions, take notes, and ensure your voice is heard
- **Seeking help for practical needs:** Whether it's grief or trauma support, medical care, financial assistance, travel logistics, managing attention from the media, or help with paperwork, you don't have to handle it all on your own

Reaching out for cultural or community support is not just okay—it's often essential. These connections can make a meaningful difference during an uncertain and emotionally challenging time.

# Understanding Emotional Impact

This section explores the emotional journey families and loved ones may face—both during a disappearance and afterward. You'll find information on recognizing signs that you might need support, how to look after your mental and emotional well-being, and where to turn for help.

## Emotional Impact on Family and Loved Ones

No one can predict how they will feel when someone they love goes missing. The range of emotions and reactions is vast—and no single guide can capture it all. Everyone experiences this kind of crisis differently, and whatever you're feeling is valid.

When someone disappears, their loved ones are often left in a place of deep uncertainty and confusion. Many struggle with questions like:

- What am I supposed to feel?
- Is it okay to grieve if I don't know whether they're still alive?
- Are there others who understand what I'm going through?

This emotional state—of not knowing, of waiting—can become a form of chronic stress. It may lead to exhaustion, anxiety, sadness, or a sense of disconnection from daily life. Some people experience guilt or fear. Others go numb. These are all natural responses.

Families of missing persons often live in a state of emotional and psychological limbo for an indefinite period of time. Dr. Pauline Boss, a leading researcher in this field, coined the term “ambiguous loss” in the 1970s to describe this unique kind of grief—the pain of missing someone whose fate is unknown.

You are not alone. While the path is difficult, there is support available, including people and groups who understand this kind of loss and can walk beside you as you navigate it.

## Emotional Impact After the Missing Person is Found

The emotional journey doesn't end when a missing person is found. In fact, new challenges often begin. Families and loved ones may face lingering fears, trust issues, or anxiety that the person might go missing again. Some people may feel anger or confusion, especially if the person left voluntarily.

Just as there's no “right” way to feel when someone goes missing, there's no predictable response when they return. Relief and joy may exist alongside frustration, sadness, or uncertainty. All of these emotions are valid.

## Looking After Yourself

When someone you care about goes missing, taking care of yourself may feel impossible. Eating, sleeping, or doing everyday tasks can seem out of reach. That feeling might return even after the person is found, especially if the situation remains complicated.

But caring for your own mental, emotional, and physical health is essential. It allows you to cope with what has happened and move forward at your own pace.

### **How Do I Get the Help I Need?**

This guide includes a **Resources** section (page 37) with tools and services tailored to your specific needs. Whether you are a family member, friend, or the person who was missing, these resources can help support you as you heal and adapt.

You don't have to figure it all out on your own. Victim Services Toronto is available to help—24 hours a day—and can connect you with appropriate support, agencies, or community organizations.

If you're not sure where to start:

- Call 2-1-1 to connect with social services, programs, and community supports in your area
- Contact Victim Services Toronto at 416-808-7066 (available 24/7 for crisis support)

Whether you ask for a support person through police services or reach out on your own, help is always available. You deserve support, no matter the circumstances.

### **Signs You May Need Support**

Take a moment to reflect. If you identify with any of these, it may be helpful to seek support. Support is available, and you don't have to go through this alone.

#### **Emotional Signs:**

- Feeling overwhelmed, helpless, or unable to cope with your emotions
- Persistent feelings of anxiety or worry, even after the person has been found
- Anger or frustration that you can't seem to manage
- Difficulty finding joy or relief after the person's return
- Feeling emotionally drained, numb, or disconnected from your feelings

#### **Physical Signs:**

- Trouble sleeping (difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking up too early)
- Appetite changes (eating too much or too little)
- Persistent fatigue or exhaustion, even with rest
- Unexplained aches or pains

#### **Behavioural Signs:**

- Avoiding people, activities, or places that you once enjoyed
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Difficulty concentrating or focusing on tasks
- Increased use of substances (alcohol, medications, etc.) to cope
- Reliving or replaying the events surrounding the disappearance or return of the person

**Social or Relational Signs:**

- Constantly needing to talk about the situation, but feeling like others don't understand
- Feeling isolated or misunderstood, even when surrounded by others
- Difficulty interacting with others or experiencing tension in relationships
- A desire to protect the person from others or isolate them from support

## When There Are No Leads

It's incredibly difficult when all the leads have been exhausted and it feels like there's no new information. The uncertainty and the waiting can feel unbearable. However, it's important to remember that the investigation doesn't stop just because there are no new leads at the moment.

This section offers guidance on how to stay involved, how to keep the search active, and what steps can be taken even when it seems like the case has hit a standstill. While it may feel like everything has been tried, there is always the possibility of new information surfacing.

### What Can I Do When All Leads Have Been Exhausted?

Even when all known leads have been followed, the police will continue working to find the missing person. New information can surface at any time, and investigators will revisit the case to explore any new leads.

#### How You Can Help

There are meaningful ways to keep the search active and raise awareness outside of the police investigation:

- **Share your loved one's photo** on social media and encourage friends, family, and community members to do the same.
- **Keep conversations going** both in your community and the community of the missing person to keep awareness active.
- **Stay in contact with investigators** if you receive new information, report it as soon as possible. Even a small detail could make a difference.

Your efforts can help generate new leads, renew interest in the case, and remind the community that your loved one is still missing.

You may receive calls, messages, or emails from investigators checking in for updates. If you would prefer **not to be contacted**, let investigators know directly. Ignoring calls may result in repeated attempts, as officers are required to follow up.

A missing person case remains open until the individual is found.

Even after many years without new leads, the investigation remains active. Investigators periodically review the case and may repeat investigative steps in the hope of uncovering new information.

**Every lead—no matter how old—is taken seriously.**

# Unidentified Remains

When remains are found, there are often many unanswered questions. If the identity of the remains is not immediately known, the connection to a missing person's case may not be clear at first. This section explains the process of identifying remains and the steps taken to determine if they belong to a missing person.

We also address how family DNA can play a crucial role in the identification process, the voluntary nature of providing such samples, and how these efforts contribute to solving the case. Finally, we discuss the role of news releases in these investigations and how they help raise awareness to aid in the identification process.

This section is meant to offer clarity during a sensitive time, ensuring that families understand the processes and their options, while also respecting privacy and emotional well-being.

Talking about human remains can feel difficult, especially when someone you care about is missing. When we use the term “unidentified remains”, we are referring to situations where a person has died, but their identity is not yet known.

This part of the guide is included with great care and sensitivity. Its purpose is to help families and loved ones understand how the Toronto Police Service works with other agencies to respectfully investigate these cases—and how this process may help bring answers to those still searching for someone they love.

## What is the Connection Between Unidentified Remains and Missing Persons?

When human remains are found, the Missing Persons Unit is notified and involved in the investigation. If the identity of the remains is not immediately known, they are examined by the Office of the Chief Coroner/Ontario Forensic Pathology Service.

If the remains are still unidentified after that step, investigators may request a comparison of DNA, dental records, tattoos, scars, and other distinguishing features with those of people who have been reported missing across Canada.

This is why, when you report a missing person, police may ask for personal items, such as a toothbrush or hairbrush, to obtain the missing person's DNA. That DNA can then be uploaded to national databases for comparison against unidentified remains.

## Why Family DNA May Be Requested

Police may also request DNA samples from family members of the missing person. These samples help investigators determine whether there is a match between the unidentified remains and a known missing person.

**Important:** Family DNA is not compared to crime scene DNA. It is **only** used for the purpose of identifying missing persons or unidentified remains.

## Voluntary Participation and Privacy

Providing DNA for comparison is entirely voluntary.

There is a clear and respectful process in place to ensure that family members are fully informed and feel safe and supported when making this decision. If a sample is provided, the DNA profile can be compared against future unidentified remains cases on an ongoing basis.

Written consent from the missing person's family is required before DNA can be used as part of an investigation. With consent, the information may be entered into the National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains, a national resource operated by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. This secure database allows municipal police services—like the Toronto Police Service—to access and compare information from across the country.

Families can learn more about how this process works by reading “A Family's Guide to the National Missing Persons DNA Program.”

The URL to access this website is: <https://rcmp.ca/en/missing-persons/familys-guide-national-missing-persons-dna-program>

## News Releases for Unidentified Remains

In cases involving unidentified remains, a news release may be issued to seek the public's help in identifying the individual. These releases may include:

- The location where the remains were found
- Available physical description
- Details of clothing, jewelry, tattoos, or other distinguishing features
- The investigating police division, case number, and direct contact information
- Crime Stoppers contact details for those who wish to share information anonymously

This approach helps preserve the dignity of the individual while inviting public assistance in bringing answers to the families of missing persons.

### **Quote from Detective Shona Patterson, Missing Persons Unit:**

“The families and loved ones of missing persons deserve closure and answers. The uncertainty and anguish of not knowing the fate or whereabouts of a loved one can be incredibly difficult to bear and can transcend through generations. The Toronto Police Service is dedicated to locating all missing persons in order to bring resolution to families. The oldest case the Service has with respect to a missing person is from 1919. Investigators remain in contact with the families over decades in certain circumstances. Regardless of how old a missing person is [or whether they are] presumed to have outlived the standard life expectancy – the case will remain open.”

# What to Do if You Are Reported Missing?

## What if I find out I've been reported missing?

Realizing that you've been reported missing can be confusing, overwhelming, or even traumatic. You might see your name, photo, description, or vehicle shared online, on posters, or in the news. The most important thing to remember is this: **you are not in any trouble.**

Your family and friends were likely worried and are now relieved to know you're safe. Police officers dedicate time and resources to locating missing persons, and they too will be glad that you are okay. There are **no criminal consequences** for simply being reported missing and later found.

## What to Expect

- Police will usually meet with you in person to confirm that you are safe and that no one is forcing you to stay hidden or silent
- You may be asked questions about where you've been—but you are not required to share anything you don't want to
- If you speak with a Victim Services Toronto staff member or a Missing Person Support Worker, anything you say will be kept completely confidential, unless you give permission for it to be shared

## Next Steps

After meeting with you, police will complete a brief report confirming that you are safe and noting the date and location where you were found. This concludes the investigation.

- You can choose to receive support, information, and referrals to services if needed.
- Your family or loved ones will not be told where you were or why you were missing unless you choose to share that information.

## What if I Left Willingly?

If you left on your own, you might feel like it doesn't matter if others think you're missing.

You may have had important personal reasons for stepping away or starting fresh.

Reaching out to the police may feel risky especially if you don't want people from your previous life to know where you are, or if you have concerns like an outstanding warrant or your immigration status.

Still, it's important to let police know that you are safe.

Police will not ask about your immigration status unless there is a bona fide reason to do so.

You can call the investigator directly and speak openly. Let them know your preferences around privacy. For example, not wanting your location disclosed. The investigator may be able to work with you to close your missing person case while protecting your safety and privacy.

By confirming you are safe police resources can be reallocated to other investigations. If you choose not to provide all the details needed to fully close the file, the police can update the report to reflect they have made contact with you. The investigation will remain open, but there will be an update on your status.

# Moving Forward and Closing Reflections

## Moving Forward

When a person is reported missing—whether you are the person who went missing, a loved one searching, or someone still seeking answers—can be life-altering. When the immediate search ends or the person is found, the journey doesn't always end there. This is a time for reflection, healing, and building safety and connection moving forward.

The Missing Persons Unit and Victim Services Toronto work together to support individuals after they've been located, with a goal of preventing future incidents. This means helping people understand what led to their disappearance and connecting them with meaningful, culturally sensitive services that meet their needs.

## Closing Reflections

We hope this guide has offered clear, supportive, and easy-to-understand information about:

- The truth behind common myths and misconceptions
- The process of reporting someone missing
- What to expect during an investigation
- Why police may take certain investigative steps
- What to do if you've been reported missing

Equally important, this guide connects you with the community resources, services, and supports that exist to help—whether you are navigating uncertainty, managing the emotional impact, or simply trying to take the next step.

You are not alone. Help and support are available.

## Acknowledgement and Thank You

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the many community representatives, advocacy groups, and external agencies who generously contributed their time, insight, and lived experience to help shape this guide.

This document was created through meaningful collaboration with members of the Missing and Missed Implementation Team (MMIT), cultural and faith-based organizations, community advocates, and individuals with direct experience navigating the missing persons investigative process. Your voices, perspectives, and feedback were vital in ensuring this resource is inclusive, compassionate, and grounded in the real needs of the communities we serve.

This guide reflects our shared commitment to better support those affected by someone going missing—and to continue improving how we respond. It is a living document, and we recognize that learning and growth are ongoing. We will continue to listen, revise, and build on this work together.

Thank you for helping us create something that we hope will provide comfort, clarity, and support to anyone who needs it.

**Note:** The electronic version of this guide will be periodically updated to ensure that it remains current and accurate. If you have any questions or suggestions for future editions, please contact the Missing Persons Unit via email at [MissingPersons@tps.ca](mailto:MissingPersons@tps.ca).

# Resources

## **A Family's Guide to the National Missing Persons DNA Program**

This guide can be found in hardcopy or online at:

<http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/a-familys-guide-the-national-missing-persons-dna-program>

## **Alzheimer Society of Toronto**

The Alzheimer Society of Toronto (AST) works to enhance public understanding of dementia, advance research, and champion services that uphold the dignity of everyone affected by the disease. The Alzheimer Society of Toronto provides free counselling, caring support, programs and education to help those living with dementia, their families and their care partners.

<https://alz.to>

## **Finding Your Way®**

Finding Your Way helps people living with dementia, their families, caregivers and communities to recognize the risk of going missing, to be prepared for incidents of going missing, and to ensure that people with dementia can live safely in the community. The balance between independence and safety is important for a person living with dementia. To help with decision-making, Finding Your Way® offers information, tips, and strategies to help provide peace of mind, while improving personal independence. Information is available in multiple languages.

<https://findingyourwayontario.ca>

## **Canadian Centre for Information on Missing Adults**

The Canadian Centre for Information on Missing Adults (CCIMA) is a bilingual online resource that acts as an information and referral centre for Canadian families and friends of missing individuals. CCIMA is a cooperative project between the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime and Ontario's Missing Adults. The goal of CCIMA is to provide Canadian families with useful and practical information to help them cope with the realities arising from having a missing adult loved one.

<https://ccima.ca>

## **Community Consultative Committee Liaison Officers (Toronto Police Service)**

Aboriginal:	PC Richard Warman. Badge #99683. Email: 99683@tps.ca PC David Sawyer. Badge #8361. Email: 8361@tps.ca
Asia Pacific:	PC Andy Huynh. Badge #90450. Email: 90450@tps.ca
Black:	PC Curtis Celestine. Badge #10894. Email: 10894@tps.ca
Chinese:	PC Ming Li. Badge #10834. Email 10834@tps.ca
French:	PC Tina Trépanier. Badge #7182. Email: 7182@tps.ca
Jewish:	Email: volunteer@torontopolice.on.ca
LGBTQ2S+:	Sgt. Robert Chevalier. Badge #9808. Email: 9808@tps.ca PC Cheryl Taylor. Badge #9990 Email: 9990@tps.ca
Muslim:	PC Haroon Siddiqui. Badge #9061. Email: 9061@tps.ca PC Farhan Ali. Badge #10126. Email: 10126@tps.ca

Persons with Disabilities: PC Mark McCabe. Badge #9141. Email: 9141@tps.ca  
Seniors: PC Mark McCabe. Badge #9141. Email: 9141@tps.ca  
South & West Asian: PC Haroon Siddiqui. Badge #9061. Email: 9061@tps.ca

### **Community Partnerships & Engagement Unit Contacts- Toronto Police Service**

The URL to access this website is <https://www.tps.ca/organizational-chart/communities-neighbourhoods-command/field-services/community-partnerships-engagement-unit/community-partnerships-engagement-unit-contacts/>

### **Family Information Liaison Units (FILU)**

Family Information Liaison Units are a “one-stop information service” for all families of missing and murdered Indigenous people. FILUs work directly with families in a culturally grounded and trauma-informed manner to gather the information family members are seeking from government agencies about the loss of their loved ones, including assistance in addressing outstanding questions.

FILUs work directly with family members to coordinate information gathering from a wide range of federal, provincial, and territorial government agencies and services, including:

- the criminal justice system (police, prosecutions, corrections)
- social services
- coroners
- child protection
- health services
- other Family Information Liaison Units across the country

If families need additional support, FILUs make connections between family members and cultural advisors, Elders, or counselling services and programs, depending on the family’s wishes.

<https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/fund-fina/cj-jp/fund-fond/mmiw-fada/index.html>

### **Kids Help Phone**

Call 1-800-668-6868 (toll-free) or text CONNECT to 686868. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to Canadians aged 5 to 29 who want confidential and anonymous care from trained responders. Online chat support and resources are also available online.

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

### **Missing Children Society of Canada (MCSC) – Child Search Network**

MCSC’s mandate is to help missing vulnerable persons return to a safe environment. MCSC also reaches out to enlist the help of the public in the search and location of missing children in addition to working with traditional media and online/social media to bring public awareness to cases of missing kids and vulnerable members of society. For high-risk missing person cases that do not meet the strict criteria for Amber Alerts.

The MCSC - Child Search Network creates the ability for high-risk missing person information to be shared among police services and agencies across the country, and links community members to police services.

Members of the community can access the MCSC - Child Search Network via MCSC rescu instantly at [rescu.mcsc.ca](https://rescu.mcsc.ca), register for alerts in their area and add the page to their home screen—no downloads needed!

For the purpose of the MCSC - Child Search Network, a child is a person under the age of eighteen years old.

<https://rescu.mcsc.ca/>

### **Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people**

This website provides information and support to people affected by the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people. It provides a support line for immediate emotional assistance by calling 1-844-413-6649, information about long-term health support services such as mental health counselling, community-based emotional support and cultural services and some travel costs to see Elders and traditional healers. Family members seeking information about their missing loved one can also access Family Information Liaison Units

<https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/fund-fina/cj-jp/fund-fond/mmiw-fada/info.html>

<https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1590523702000/1590523850562>

### **National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains**

The National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains (NCMPUR) is Canada's national centre that provides law enforcement, medical examiners and chief coroners with specialized investigative services in support of missing persons and unidentified remains investigations.

<https://canadasmissing.ca/about-ausujet/index-eng.htm>

### **Ontario's Missing Adults**

Ontario's Missing Adults was launched in September of 2007 as a non-government organization created to focus on missing and unidentified adults.

The organization grew out of the recognition that service gaps exist at the most basic level for families who are living with the disappearance of an adult loved one. One of their goals is to help family members who are grappling with this unique situation and who have questions or need guidance. The hope is that, by providing orientation and information, families will feel more empowered to manage the challenges they face during this time.

[https://missingadults.ca/resources\\_main/](https://missingadults.ca/resources_main/)

### **Toronto Community Crisis Service (TCCS)**

TCCS provides free, confidential, in-person mental health supports city-wide from mobile crisis worker teams. TCCS supports Toronto residents 16 years of age or older and is available 24/7. Call 211 to be Connected to TCCS.

The service provides a non-police-led, community-based, client focused, and trauma-informed response to mental health crisis calls and wellness checks. A trauma informed approach promotes healing and recovery and takes into account a client's life experiences.

TCCS also provides:

- referrals and connections to other services
- resources and information
- post-crisis follow-up supports

<https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/public-safety-alerts/community-safety-programs/toronto-community-crisis-service/>

### **Toronto Police Service Divisions**

- 11 Division
  - 416-808-1100
  - 2054 Davenport Road, Toronto, ON M6N 1C8
- 12 Division
  - 416-808-1200
  - 200 Trethewey drive, North York, ON M6M 5E6
- 13 Division
  - 416-808-1300
  - 1435 Eglinton Avenue W, York, ON M6C 3Z4
- 14 Division
  - 416-808-1400
  - 350 Dovercourt Road, Toronto, ON M6J 3E3
- 22 Division
  - 416-808-2200
  - 3699 Bloor Street W, Toronto, ON M9A 5G1
- 23 Division
  - 416-808-2300
  - 5230 Finch Avenue W, Toronto, ON M9V 0A1
- 31 Division
  - 416-808-3100
  - 40 Norfinch Drive, North York, ON M3N 1X1
- 32 Division
  - 416-808-3200
  - 30 Ellerslie Avenue, North York, ON M2N 1X8
- 33 Division
  - 416-808-3300
  - 50 Upjohn Road, North York, ON M3B 2W1
- 41 Division
  - Phone: 416-808-4100
  - 2222 Eglinton Avenue E, Scarborough, ON M1K 2M2
- 42 Division

- Phone: 416-808-4200
  - 242 Milner Avenue, Scarborough, ON M1S 5C4
- 43 Division
  - 416-808-4300
  - 4331 Lawrence Avenue E, Toronto, ON M1E 2T4
- 51 Division
  - 416-808-5100
  - 51 Parliament Street, Toronto, ON M5A 2Y5
- 52 Division
  - 416-808-5200
  - 255 Dundas Street W, Toronto, ON M5T 2W5
- 53 Division
  - Phone: 416-808-5300
  - 75 Eglinton Avenue W, Toronto, ON M4R 2G9
- 55 Division
  - 416-808-5500
  - 101 Coxwell Avenue, Toronto, ON M4L 3B3

## **211**

Dial or text 2-1-1. The helpline is answered by real people 24/7 and service is available in 150+ languages. 211 is a helpline that easily connects people to the social services, programs and community supports they need. The website for 211 can be searched by topic or by agency name and can be filtered by location.

<https://211ontario.ca/search/>

## **Victim Services Toronto**

Victim Services Toronto provides immediate, confidential support for any person who has experienced crime or sudden tragedy 24/7 and can be reached by calling 416-808-7066.

<https://www.victimservicestoronto.com>

## **Vulnerable Person Registry**

The Vulnerable Persons Registry is a voluntary database that provides important information to first responders about the issues that vulnerable members of the community might be coping with.

<https://www.tps.ca/services/vulnerable-persons-registry>

Email: [vpr@tps.ca](mailto:vpr@tps.ca)

# Staying Connected and Informed

## Missing Person Alert

Subscribe to TPS news releases to get notified when someone goes missing and when they are located.

The link below provides a list of the types of news releases you can subscribe to, including one for missing persons alerts.

<https://www.tps.ca/media-centre/mailling-lists/>

## Social Media

Instagram: @missingpersons.to

Facebook: Toronto Missing Persons

X: @TPSMissing

## Contact Information

Missing Persons Unit: 416-808-7411

40 College St. Toronto, ON

M5G 2J3

[MissingPersons@tps.ca](mailto:MissingPersons@tps.ca)

# Appendix

## Information to Prepare When Reporting Someone Missing

### Personal Information

- Their name, date of birth, age, sex, gender expression and birthplace
- Physical build, height, weight, hair colour, length and style
- Eye colour, corrected vision, and glasses, style and type, if applicable
- What they were last seen wearing
- Frequently worn clothing, footwear, jewelry
- Ethnicity, complexion, scars, tattoos or piercings
- Communication skills and languages spoken
- A list of names and contact information of their family and/or friends, including any social media accounts of their family and/or friends

### Medical History

- Known medical condition(s), health condition and allergies
- Medication(s), dosage, frequency and pharmacy location
- Doctor's name and phone number
- Medical and other counselling professionals' names and phone numbers
- Dentist name and phone number
- History of drug use
- History of surgeries
- Known psychological issues

### Background Information

- Home Address
- Cellphone number and service provider
- Email Address
- Bank and credit card providers and account numbers
- Social Insurance Number, health card number and MedicAlert ID
- Passport(s) or travel documents
- Means of transportation or familiarity with public transit
- Vehicle make, model and year
- Social media details, including their profiles and frequently visited websites
- School and/or workplace locations

### Disappearance

- When and where were they last seen?
- Who was the last person to see and/or talk to them?
- Have you noticed any recent change in behaviour?
- Have you had any recent conversations prior to their disappearance?
- Have they experienced any personal, familial or emotional difficulties?
- Are there any notable items missing or left behind (i.e., passport, wallet, phone, computer, favourite possessions)?
- Did they take any pets with them or did they leave any pets behind?
- Have they gone missing before? If so, where were they found in the past?