

Dispelling Common Myths

Misunderstandings about missing persons investigations can prevent people from getting help. To prevent delays in reporting, this information sheet provides accurate information and dispels common myths. Do not wait to report a person missing. Every second counts.

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.

To learn more, visit <https://www.tps.ca/missing> and download the "Community Guide to Report a Person Missing."

Questions? Contact the Missing Persons Unit at MissingPersons@tps.ca