



Norwich Police Department
Standard Operating Procedure

Subject:	Missing Persons
Distribution:	All Officers & H.Q.
Approved / By order of:	Jennifer Frank, Chief of Police

I. PURPOSE:	<p>The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure is to establish departmental guidelines for the investigation of missing persons, dissemination of missing person information/reports, and the making of appropriate entries into missing persons record entry databases.</p> <p>This Standard Operating Procedure becomes effective August 20, 2020, and rescinds all previous rules and regulations pertaining to the subject.</p>
II. POLICY:	<p>The Norwich Police Department regards the investigation of missing persons and runaways as a high priority. Special attention will be given to those cases involving young children, the elderly, disabled individuals and other persons who, for other reasons, may be particularly vulnerable. Per this SOP, runaway juveniles shall be considered missing persons, and no formal waiting period is required before commencing a missing person investigation, regardless of the individuals age.</p>
III. DEFINITIONS:	<p>A. <u>Missing Endangered Adult</u>: A potential victim of foul play, or suspected victim of abduction whose disappearance involves circumstances, not defined under Missing At-Risk Adult, or under circumstances which would cause a reasonable police officer to conclude that the missing person should be considered in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death.</p> <p>B. <u>Missing At-Risk Adult</u>: A person 18 years of age or older who has either an established intellectual or developmental (ID/DD) disability, suffers from serious life-threatening</p>

	<p>medical issues that may affect his/her ability to properly safeguard and protect themselves, resides in a group home, is 70 years of age or older, is a vulnerable adult, or has reduced mental faculties where the person may be unable to properly safeguard and themselves or is vulnerable to a life-threatening environment.</p> <p>C. <u>Missing Adult</u>: A person 18 years of age or older, or an emancipated minor, whose whereabouts are unknown to a friend or family member.</p> <p>D. <u>Missing Endangered Juvenile</u>: A person under the age of 18 and a potential victim of foul play or sexual exploitation, a suspected victim of abduction, or one who may be being held by those who are likely to seriously endanger his or her welfare or delinquency by involvement in dangerous, felonious criminal activity with likely potential for serious bodily injury or death.</p> <p>E. <u>Missing At-Risk Juvenile</u>: A person under the age of 18, with an established intellectual or developmental disability, or one who suffers from serious life-threatening medical issues that may affect their ability to properly safeguard and protect themselves or is vulnerable to a life-threatening environment.</p> <p>F. <u>Missing Juvenile</u>: An unemancipated person under 18 years of age whose whereabouts are unknown to a parent, guardian or person responsible for care of the child.</p> <p>G. <u>Runaway Juvenile</u>: Any juvenile under the age of 18 with indications he or she is a voluntary runaway or beyond control of the parent. Articulate facts such as notes, history, motive, calls, or evidence indicating he or she has voluntarily runaway will reduce the risk and level of response, and establish this category as runaway.</p> <p>H. <u>Long-Term Missing Person</u>: A person who has been missing for more than 1 year.</p>
<p>IV. PROCEDURES:</p>	<p>A. <u>Missing Person Investigation</u>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Members will investigate all reports of missing adults and missing children when there is a reasonable belief by a police officer that the person is actually missing and it is without reasonable explanation. When practicable, the report should be taken in person from the reporting person and preferably at the scene where the person was last known to be or lived. Many missing person reports involve individuals who have voluntarily left home for personal reasons, while other reports are often unfounded or quickly resolved. However, there are some instances in which persons disappear for

	<p>unexplained reasons and under circumstances that are suspicious or where they may be considered at-risk. Any responsible and competent adult whose whereabouts are unknown by choice will not be reported as missing.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">2. There is no commonly perceived "24-hour" period or standard waiting period to make a report.3. The majority of Missing Persons/Runaway Reports will be taken in person. The report of a possible abduction will receive priority response by officers. If a missing person call has been pending for 30 minutes or longer, a phone report will be taken so descriptive information from the complainant can be entered quickly into NCIC.4. A report of a missing juvenile should be considered at some risk until the preliminary investigation confirms no at-risk or endangered status exist. When a person is reported missing and either resides in, or was last seen in the Town of Norwich, an NPD officer will initiate the required report and NCIC entry process to avoid any delays in locating that person. If a person resides in the town of Norwich and was last seen in another jurisdiction, but that jurisdiction agency chooses not to take a missing person report, the receiving Norwich Police Officer will open a case for NCIC entry purposes.5. A report of a missing juvenile, even if custody has not been formally established, will be taken if the disappearance is without reasonable explanation, as determined by an officer or supervisor. Reporting parties shall obtain legal custody and court documents as soon as possible; however, since the safety of the missing juvenile(s) is paramount, officers will open a case when it can be shown that the juvenile has been removed, without explanation, from his/her usual place of residence or care. Child custody court paperwork should be scanned into records with the report.6. When juvenile, "at-risk," or "endangered," circumstances exist, officers will notify the Department for Children and Families (DCF) and an NPD Supervisor as soon as practicable.7. After a report is received of a missing person, a search for that person shall be commenced as soon as practicable, to include a check of local medical facilities. All on-duty officers shall concentrate their
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	<p>efforts in locating the missing person(s), investigative leads shall be followed up, and potential locations where the missing person might be found shall be searched. Use of a canine, or Global Positioning System (GPS) technology may be used as resources to assist with tracking a missing person.</p> <p>8. The following information should be obtained to assist with locating the missing person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. A full description of the missing person including name, age, sex, marital status, occupation and complete physical description, including description of clothing and in the case of juveniles, school attending and persons who will pick them up.b. Information concerning any type of disabilities, physical or mental, the use of medication, alcohol, or drugs or similar information that could factor in to the investigation.c. The extent of any search already performed by the complainant or other parties.d. Whether the person has ever been reported missing previously.e. Time and place at which the missing person was last seen, or reported to have been.f. Any possible destination the missing person may be headed to, anyone the missing person may have last been seen with, any vehicles the missing person may be traveling in, and any other information that may be useful in locating the person (e.g., particular habits or personal interests, places frequented, location of out-of-town relatives or friends, dependencies etc.)g. The name and address of the complainant and the complainant's relationship to the missing person.h. A recent digital photograph of the missing person (to include juveniles).i. Record if the missing person has access to an online computer, cellular telephone, or other wifi enabled device. If the missing person utilizes a social media account, attempt to ascertain user names, account log-ins, and associated phone numbers. Officers should attempt to examine records of activity on various "friends" lists for
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	<p>leads and consider other technological locator options.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">9. If the case becomes a Long-Term Missing Person, the investigating officer will ensure:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. If a juvenile, the missing person data was provided to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).b. If an adult, or for juvenile reported missing that would have come of age (18 years of age), the missing person data was provided to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) for entry into their databasec. Where possible, reference sample DNA has been secured from family members and sent for entry into the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS). <p>B. <u>Dissemination of Missing Person Report</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Upon completion of a missing person report, it will be disseminated to all law enforcement agencies within the jurisdiction where the missing person lives or was last seen, and to any other law enforcement agencies that can reasonably be expected to be involved in any investigation, to include those out of state; and to any law enforcement agency to which the complainant reasonably requests the report be sent.2. No missing person(s) information will be disseminated to the media, or posted on Internet sites without prior permission from the Chief of Police or her/his designee.3. Emergency Alert systems such as Code Red, Reverse 9-1-1, VT-Alert, and various Internet and Social media websites may be useful in locating missing persons. An NPD supervisor must be notified and grant approval prior to any missing persons information being disseminated via these channels. <p>C. <u>Missing Person Record Entry:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. National Crime Information Center (NCIC): A missing person record may be entered into NCIC for the following:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. A person of any age who is missing or under proven physical/mental disability, thereby subjecting himself/herself or others to personal and immediate danger.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. A person of any age who is missing under circumstances indicating that the disappearance was not voluntary. c. A person of any age who is missing and is in the company of another person under circumstances indicating that his/her physical safety is in danger. d. A person who is missing and declared unemancipated as defined by Vermont law and does not meet any of the above. e. A person of any age who is missing due to a catastrophe. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the missing person is an unemancipated minor, the report shall be entered immediately into the NCIC system and VCIC notified. • If the missing person is an adult or an emancipated minor, and after preliminary investigation it is determined that one of the above-mentioned NCIC criteria exists, an NCIC entry shall be made, and VCIC notified. • When an NCIC entry has been made and a thirty (30) day period has elapsed, an NCIC “Missing Person Data Collection Entry Guide” should also be completed by the investigating officer. This guide has been downloaded to the NPD server and may also be obtained online, or from the Vermont Criminal Information Center. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC): As a juvenile, the missing person data obtained by the Norwich Police Department may be provided to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children as an additional resource for locating the missing juvenile (1-800-THE-LOST / 1-800-843-5678). 3. National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs): As an adult, or for a juvenile reported missing that would have come of age (18 years of age), the missing person data obtained by the Norwich Police Department may be provided to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) for entry into their database as an additional resource for locating the missing person (1-855-626-7600 / https://www.namus.gov/About).
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">4. Combined DNA Index System (CODIS): Where possible, reference sample DNA should be secured from family members and sent for entry into the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS). <p>D. <u>Recovery of a Missing Adult:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Ensure the missing adult, having left for personal reasons, clearly communicates whether the Norwich Police Department may notify the complainant in the case of his or her location. Use caution if restraining orders or protection orders are in place.2. Notify Dispatch to cancel the NCIC entry, and an NPD Supervisor to cancel any broadcasts/bulletins and/or issue a recovery press release.3. No Missing Adult case will be closed or removed from NCIC without locating the adult. <p>E. <u>Recovery of a Missing Child:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Immediately assess the juvenile(s) to determine if s/he is a victim of a crime. Some children runaway due to abuse or neglect and should be assessed for that; while other may have been victimized, or recruited into criminal acts while on the run.2. Parents/Guardians who call to cancel a runaway should be contacted in person if possible and an officer should visually verify the child's return and assess the juvenile.3. Norwich Police Officers who take into custody a runaway juvenile will complete a supplemental report to the original case intake.4. No Missing Juvenile case will be closed or removed from NCIC without locating the juvenile.
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NCIC ENTRY FORM FOR MISSING PERSON					
(A copy of this form must be kept in the agency case file.)					
Criteria #	Agency Identifier		Agency Case #		
Name			Aliases and/or Nicknames		
Date of Birth			Place of Birth		
Sex	Race		Hair Color		Eye Color
Height		Weight		Skin Tone	
Marks, Scars, Tattoos, Deformities					
Operator's License #		License State		Year Expire	
Date Missing					
Miscellaneous Information					
If vehicle was used, attach a copy of NCIC Entry Form DPS 311. - <input type="checkbox"/> No known vehicle					
Date		Signature			
Police Agency					

DPS 318

NCIC Entry Criteria - To be eligible for entry into NCIC, the missing subject must be:

1. A person of any age who is missing and under proven physical/mental disability or is senile, thereby subjecting him/herself or others to personal and immediate danger.
2. A person of any age who is missing under circumstances indicating that the disappearance was not voluntary.
3. A person of any age who is missing and in the company of another person under circumstances indicating that his/her physical safety is in danger.
4. A person who is missing and declared unemancipated as defined by Vermont law and does not meet any of the above.

Written documentation must be obtained and on file at VCIC before entry. **Immediate entry** can be made in cases that call for such action provided the requesting agency has the documentation and supplies their Agency Case Number. If the necessary forms and statement are not received at VCIC within five days, the entry will be removed from NCIC.

Examples of acceptable documentation are:

- A written statement from a parent or legal guardian confirming that the person is missing and verifying his/her date of birth.
- A written statement from a physician or other authoritative source corroborating the missing person's physical/mental disability.
- A written statement from a parent, legal guardian, family member, or other authoritative source advising that the missing person's disappearance was not voluntary or that he/she is in the company of another person under circumstances indicating that his/her physical safety is in danger.

A missing person record is retained indefinitely until action is taken by the originating agency to cancel the record. It is, therefore, very important that the Vermont Crime Information Center be informed at once if the person is located.