

Missing Indigenous Persons Toolkit

Washington State Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and People Task Force



2025 Washington State Attorney General's Office

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*If using a printed copy, refer to publications on the Washington State Attorney General’s website, under Health and Public Safety at <https://www.atg.wa.gov/publications-reports>

For more information on the cover art and artist, visit <https://www.atg.wa.gov/washington-state-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-and-people-task-force>

A Letter to Families from the Families Subcommittee



haʔł sləxil txʷəl gʷəlapu, gʷəlapu dʔiisəd, dsyayayəʔ, tansi,

Good day to you all, our friends, our relatives, our people,

For many of us, the trauma of a missing relative brings a whirlwind of conflicting emotions. It's a confusing and frightening experience, but please remember, you are not alone. In response to our community's needs, we have developed this toolkit, drawing on the experiences of families who have navigated similar challenges. We understand the profound impact losing a loved one has on each of us, for generations to come, and are here to support you through this difficult time.

We gathered as a part of the Washington State Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People (MMIWP) Task Force, which works to address the many layers impacting the MMIWP crisis. The Task Force is comprised of several sub committees, of which the Families Subcommittee is one. The Families Subcommittee is focused on keeping families first by engaging and supporting impacted families, and assuring family voices and experiences are steering the work of the Task Force.

We would like to introduce you to the chairs of the Families Subcommittee team directly. Our names are Maureen Rosette, Chippewa Cree, and Carolyn DeFord, Puyallup. We chair the Families Subcommittee and have worked with various peers and friends throughout the state to present you with this Missing Indigenous Persons Toolkit. We hope this toolkit will be a beacon to guide your relative back home. This toolkit is an ever evolving and living document and may not apply to every situation. We welcome your feedback and insight in improving this resource.

This toolkit holds our hearts, our stories, our challenges, and deep love for our community. We recognize our interconnectedness and hold a shared responsibility to care for, protect, and seek justice, guided by our traditional understanding of kinship. We must walk along and uplift our relatives.

luudubuʔəd čəʔ. We are listening to you.

ʔuʔuʂəbitubuʔəd čəʔ. We love you.

ʔəʂxilčbitubuʔəd čəʔ. We stand with you.

ʔəsq'ič ti səshəliʔ ʔə ti sq'ixʷ. Your lives are valuable.

All my relations,

The MMIWP Families Subcommittee Chairs

Carolyn DeFord and Maureen Rosette



Purpose of the Toolkit

Indigenous communities are encouraged to use this Toolkit as a guide for developing a plan of action that will include awareness, prevention, and intervention strategies. This Toolkit is not a complete checklist but rather a collection of ideas, tasks and suggestions of what can be done to support a family facing crisis and ways to respond in an organized manner when one of ours goes missing or is found murdered. This Toolkit will evolve as new resources are found and strategies are developed.

The solutions to the MMIWP crisis lie in the experiences, recommendations, and insights from impacted Indigenous community and family members. Members of the MMIWP Task Force and staff at the Attorney General's Office who support the Task Force are committed to centering these voices at every step and grounding the work in Indigenous knowledge, values, and practices. For more information on the Task Force, or to get involved, [check out the Task Force website](#).

Emotional Reactions When Someone You Love Is Missing

Initially, you might feel disbelief when someone you love is missing. You might feel guilt or frustration. Others who have gone through this traumatic process describe it is an emotional rollercoaster, sometimes feeling opposite emotions at the same time or in quick waves one after the other. They recommend finding ways to still take care of yourself, despite the feelings of guilt that could emerge. They advise availing yourself of the peer support that comes from talking circles, tribal programs, including domestic violence support, or social media groups. You can also ask non-Native organizations for referrals for other resources for the Native community. Youth can also use [HearMeWA](#), a youth-centered crisis-response program, to be linked with support systems.

What to do Immediately

Call 911. Provide law enforcement as many details as possible. **Don't hesitate to report even if you don't know all the information.** No law requires a waiting period, like 24 hours, to report.

When should I call? **Call 911** as soon as you suspect anything suspicious about someone's disappearance.

What should I say? Accurate information helps police prioritize. Inform law enforcement someone you know is missing and that you would like to file a Missing Person's Report.



Immediately report the person missing to 9-1-1. DO NOT WAIT. Report the missing person to the police department nearest to where the missing person was last known to be.

Share as much information as possible when you report:

- Names (with attention to correct spelling), nicknames or aliases, date of birth, sex, nationality, race(s), and physical and clothing descriptions, including height, weight, eye and hair color, identifying body markings, scars, and tattoos.
- Disabilities, medical conditions, pregnancy status, cognitive or mental health concerns, or required medication.
- The date, time, place and circumstances of their disappearance:
 - Note if they took a trip, ran errands, went hiking, had an argument, attended a party, etc.
 - Also, note if they are outside their usual community (i.e., if they are from the east side of the state visiting the west side).
- If they might be at risk to themselves or others, or if they have been a victim of intimate partner or domestic violence.
- Any recent actions that are out of the ordinary or concerning to you.
- The make and model of any vehicles they may have access to and related license plate numbers.

Classify the missing person's race accurately and correct it anywhere it is incorrect, like a report or flyer.

Racial misclassification, which is the incorrect coding of someone's race or ethnicity, can cause underutilization of appropriate resources and undermine the harmful impact of the MMIWP Crisis.

If the missing person is biracial or multi-racial, law enforcement tends to use the first race identified

Categories in NCIC currently include African American, Asian, East Indian (as in South Asian), Hispanic, Native American*, Other, Pacific Island and White.

*While NCIC lists Native American as a race, it is a political identity.

For your records, ask law enforcement:

- "Will this information about my loved one be entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database?" (*NCIC is a nationwide computerized index of missing persons and is designed for the rapid exchange of information between criminal justice agencies.*)
- "Can you give me a case number?"

Emphasize the following factors that can alert law enforcement to the urgency of the situation:

- If they are Indigenous and identify any tribal affiliations, descendancy, tribal community involvement, etc.
- If they are a child, autistic, or medically impaired.
- If they might be at risk to themselves or others, including any threats made towards or by the missing person.
- If they might be experiencing withdrawal from medication or any substance.
- Any disabilities, medical conditions, pregnancy status, cognitive or mental health concerns, like

suicidal ideation, acts of self-harm or dementia, or lifesaving required medication, such as insulin. Also note if they have been seeking health services, like chemotherapy or dialysis.

- Any concerns regarding domestic violence, labor trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, or child abuse or neglect.

Remember: Obtain and verify the case number, the badge number and name of the officer you spoke with, and an initial copy of the report.

Information Law Enforcement May Ask

- Changes or concerns about recent behaviors, routine, personality, or physical characteristics.
- Date of last contact, conversation, or interaction and type (phone, in person, online).
- Most recent available, digital photo, preferably a candid, unedited and without filters.
 - Any photo is better than no photo, but a current photo is best to share with other law enforcement agencies and the public.
 - If you don't have a photo, law enforcement can acquire a Washington Department of Licensing (DOL) or Tribal ID photo. Photos from licenses are not preferable if other photos are available. Photos from licenses and identification issued by the DOL are only updated every 8 years. Additionally, the DOL is unable to provide a photo to law enforcement outside of standard business hours.
- Place(s) of employment or school.
- If the missing person is active online, including social media, gaming platforms, and online dating. What are their usernames and handles? If they play games online, which games and usernames?
- Description of vehicles (make, model, year, and color) they may have access to and related license plate numbers.
- Who they spend time with and places they frequent (i.e., friends, neighbors, community groups).
- Family dynamics and relationships. These questions are not intended to be accusatory. The purpose is to understand any factors that may have contributed to a person's disappearance and rule out family members as suspects.
- If they have been missing before, mention where they were found. Emphasize if you suspect something is wrong. If under 18, note if they have previous history of leaving without permission.

What Law Enforcement Considers in Cases

After law enforcement takes a missing person report and opens a case, it becomes an investigation. The resources law enforcement dedicates to it depend on many factors. You can assist by providing as much information as possible, including any details that might indicate your loved one is vulnerable or in danger. You are your loved one's best advocate.

Note that once the investigation begins, law enforcement may be limited in the information they can share with you to protect the integrity of the case. You can ask law enforcement when you can expect to hear from them about the case and set a reminder for yourself to check in periodically with them.

Here are factors law enforcement may use in determining how they can address a case. One such consideration is if the missing person may be a harm to themselves. Law enforcement is looking most urgently for cues that the missing person might be in danger like:

- Does not have necessary prescription medications with them or there are other immediate medical concerns;
- Has or might have a behavioral or mental health concern;
- Is in a relationship with risk factors, such as a history of domestic violence, substance use disorder, control and/or isolation by their partner;
- Seems depressed;
- Has financial problems;
- Recently suffered a loss (e.g., death or loss of job or a divorce);
- Did not return from a wilderness or aquatic activity;
- Failed to perform an important task without notice, like meeting or picking up a child or family member.

Law enforcement will also consider past behaviors that suggest the missing person may be voluntarily missing:

- Has a history of going missing;
- Personal belongings, like clothing, toiletries, car, cell phone or wallet are missing;
- Drained their bank account.

Missing Person Under 18

- For children, which includes anyone younger than 18, an officer must enter the missing person into NCIC within two hours of filing the report under federal law.
- Contact the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children \(NCMEC\)](#) at 1-800-843-5678 for resources, like [guides on Support for Families of Missing Children](#).
- Let law enforcement, NCMEC, or others helping in the case know if there is a guardianship, power of attorney or if the missing person is under 18 and emancipated.

Actions You Can Take After Reporting

Identify a trusted person, like a family member, to support you during this entire process. Call or physically search common locations, and bring a recent photo, such as:

- School or work.
- Public places like libraries, churches, schools, bus stations, or youth centers.
- Places they frequent like restaurants, bars, or other businesses.
- Hospitals. Let hospitals know that the person is missing or if they are endangered.
- Churches, temples, synagogues, mosques, or other religious places of gathering.
- Jails and tribal jails, using their website, if available, or by phone.
- Prisons, using the Washington Department of Corrections [website](#) or phone at 360-725-8213.
- Shelters in your area.

Also consider checking the following:

- Location services on phone, like FindMy on iOS, Google Sharing, or Life360 on all smartphones.
- Bank account to see if the missing person made any withdrawals. Also check money transfer apps for any recent, public activity like CashApp, Venmo, or Zelle.
- Last time they were on social media.

If you choose to post on social media, include name and where they may have last been along with the photo. Refer to the [section on social media](#) in this toolkit for more details.

- Washington State Patrol (WSP) can also provide missing persons poster after a report is made to police. This requires a recent picture and signature of a family member.

Log names, phone numbers and addresses of everyone you talk to before and after reporting the missing person, like family members, friends, neighbors. Note the information they shared and date and time of the contact in case you need to follow up.

- Get a notebook or use [Appendices C and D](#) to keep a record of all communications, dates, times, badge numbers, and people you have spoken to.
- Another option is to use voice memos or video recordings to document thoughts immediately after conversations with anyone helping with the case.
- Use [Appendix B](#) to create a timeline of last known events of the missing person. This encapsulates who, what, where, and when.
- Secure the missing individual's residence and belongings like vehicles, computers, cell phones, etc.

Next Steps + + +

You may have vital information about the missing person that law enforcement does not know or cannot access.

- Check location information. Friends or siblings might have location sharing services, or if they have any devices or apps that may share GPS location, like headphones or watches, or ride share and fitness apps.
- Look on their social media accounts for last known physical presence, noting multiple names, aliases, or usernames.
- Write out an initial statement **with as much information as you can**. You can use a voice or video recording as an alternate way to document what's happening.
- Ask the reporting law enforcement if they will relay information to press or social media so you can share that information.
- Contact the school or place of employment to verify attendance and ask about changes in behavior.
- Check with missing person's tribe to see if the missing person has received, accessed, or requested services or benefits.

Tribal Enrollment

Check with your tribal leadership or follow tribal policies on notifying tribal enrollment that your loved one has been reported missing.



Missing and Unidentified Persons Unit (MUPU)

[MUPU](#) at WSP assists law enforcement agencies and parents in locating missing persons. Before MUPU can provide assistance, the primary law enforcement agency must submit a report into NCIC.

- The Washington State Patrol's Tribal Liaisons connect community members with resources and support in jurisdictional challenges. To request assistance, Indigenous community members can [contact WSP's Tribal Liaisons on MUPU's website](#).
- MUPU activates Missing Indigenous Persons Alerts (MIPA), after law enforcement agencies submit a MIPA request. A missing person's report must be completed before a MIPA can be requested. [You can read more about MIPAs on MUPU's website.](#)
- MUPU also creates missing person posters and assists with distribution upon request of the family or law enforcement. MUPU encourages using this free poster because it contains all the necessary pieces of information while protecting your or the missing person's information. [MUPU collects a photo for the poster.](#) This photo should be recent, digital, in color, and good quality. To authorize this process, as well as the release of medical and dental information, MUPU collects information through the [WSP Missing Persons Packet](#). You can use the Packet to collect information law enforcement may need. MUPU can also provide assistance in filling it out. By filling it out, you're not filing a report. Filing the report should be the first step.
- However, once you have a case number, you can ask MUPU to post a missing person's poster on their website.
- MUPU can also assist with challenges regarding jurisdiction, meaning which law enforcement agency is responsible for the case e.g., tribal police, city police, county sheriff, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), etc. It is not always clear, even to those intended to provide services. Typically, the last known location of someone determines which agency takes the case, but every case is different. If you experience challenges with jurisdiction or especially if you find yourself getting referred around after making the initial report, reach out to the WSP Tribal Liaison assigned to your region for support.



Reminder: A MIPA can be issued anytime.



Tip: Families who have gone through this process recommend filling out the MUPU data packet to help prepare and alleviate anxiety around reporting



Note: MUPU cannot issue a poster until law enforcement enters the missing person's report into NCIC.



Attorney General's Office MMIWP Cold Case Unit

The [MMIWP Cold Case Unit](#) assists federal, county, municipal, and tribal law enforcement agencies in solving missing person and cold homicide cases involving persons of Indigenous ancestry who go missing and are murdered. The Cold Case Team can:

- Offer investigative assistance to the original agency to whom the missing person was reported.
- Provide the family with a victim advocate, who is familiar with how police and criminal justice systems work, and can connect families with community resources.

The MMIWP Cold Case Unit can be reached at crjmmiwp@atg.wa.gov and toll-free at 844-770-7900.



Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA)

HIPAA is a federal law that is best known for protecting private health information. Law enforcement officers are familiar with these protections and may be able to help you obtain information that is not subject to these protections. Washington state health care providers may have additional restrictions on the information they can provide based on state law and their own policies. Hospitals, behavioral or mental health facilities, or even shelters for unhoused individuals may say that they cannot provide information due to HIPAA or other privacy protections. More information on HIPPA can be found on the [Washington Health Care Authority's website](#).

What is a “Right to Go Missing”?

It is important to note that if law enforcement finds the person, they may not be able to provide any detail beyond that they located the missing person. Law enforcement's main concern in locating a missing person is the person's safety. You may hear that people have a “right to go missing.” This is another way to say that adults have a right to privacy, and that adults have the choice to cut off contact. They can choose to leave work and ignore friends or even family. Going missing is not a criminal or detainable offense. Law enforcement has limits and cannot share information beyond what the individual has allowed. There may be some cases where law enforcement can place a vulnerable person into protective custody. This might be someone under 18, someone who cannot take care of themselves, or someone who has experienced abuse or neglect.

Hiring Private Investigators

If you decide to hire a private investigator to help locate a missing loved one, be sure to vet and interview them. Ask for their license number, other credentials and references if available. You can look up licenses with a license number on the [Department of Licensing's website](#). Make sure that contracts specify exactly which services are included and the agreed upon rate for those services, and any services that are not included. Once you hire a private investigator, notify everyone working on the case. A private investigator's search activities should be coordinated with the investigating law enforcement agency to avoid costly and time-consuming duplication of services.

Using Local Media and Social Media + + +

Local media and social media are powerful tools in garnering awareness. They are fast and effective ways to reach larger audiences. While there is no requirement to use either, there are a few advantages, including people potentially reporting sightings. There are many ways to build attention around a missing persons case. It may be easier to assign a family member, advocate, or spokesperson to be the liaison between the family/friends and media.

Media – newspapers, news stations, podcasters

For some cases, it can be difficult to gain media interest and there is no guarantee the media will use your story or represent it how you share it.

Step 1: Decide if involving media is right for you.

- Before working with the media (e.g. news announcer, journalist, reporter), consider that many people may reach out to you. Let family members or friends know you are planning to speak to the media, so they are not caught off guard. The media and the public are helpful tools, but they can also be invasive, according to families with missing loved ones.

Step 2: Let law enforcement know.

- Law enforcement can also be a helpful tool. Touching base with law enforcement when you want to go to the media with your story does two important things. First, it can help protect the integrity of the investigation. Law enforcement may intentionally leave out some details when sharing information publicly. Second, it can prevent duplication. The law enforcement agency

may have staff who regularly work with media and can help or coordinate media outreach. These professionals know how to communicate with media. In some cases, if law enforcement issues a press release about your missing loved one, reporters may be more receptive to covering the case.

- *If there is a media coordinator at the law enforcement agency, known as a Public Information Officer, coordinate with them to get your missing person media exposure. If not, continue to the following steps.*

Step 3: Find media outlets.

- Location, readership, and personal contact with a reporter are among the considerations that can influence which media outlets you choose. Some options can include cable TV news stations, online news providers, local papers, even radio stations in your area.

Step 4: Share information with media, including:

- Name or aliases of the missing person
- Area they are missing from
- Date they went missing
- Age at disappearance
- A current photo
- Who your missing person is to you or your relationship with them (e.g., mother, father, sister, friend, partner, etc.), what they might likely wear (or were last seen wearing, if known), physical and distinguishable characteristics. Consider writing the information down or recording yourself so you don't have to keep repeating yourself, especially if media attention becomes overwhelming.

TIP: In your support network, identify someone who can help you with social media. They can help you post information and read and respond to comments.

Social media can attract a lot of engagement and consistently monitoring it can be overwhelming.

Using Social Media

Major social media platforms have millions, and even billions, of users. The range of outreach with social media can be much broader than traditional media or word of mouth.

- Social media is in a constant state of change. New platforms emerge regularly, and popularity can vary by age, interest, or content type.
- Ask your support network assisting with social media for help with different platforms, especially if your loved one uses one of them.
- It is advisable to inform law enforcement about any engagement with the public, even on social media. If the investigating law enforcement agency has social media accounts where they provide information about missing persons, you can share their content. Many law enforcement agencies have social media accounts with Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and Nextdoor. MUPU also has several social media accounts if your local agency does not have a particular account. You can also create a Facebook page devoted to bringing attention to your missing loved one.
- For instructions on how to make accounts and pages on commonly used social media platforms, use a search engine to look up how to make an account, page, post, or story.
 - Popular social media platforms include Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor, Snapchat, or TikTok, among others.
- Posts incorporating photos typically receive higher levels of engagement, which means more users are likely to see it. Photos can also help people identify the missing person. Use posters and flyers created by MUPU to release and spread information as they contain all the information necessary for public distribution. You are not required to use MUPU posters, but it is the standard and they are free for families.

Sample template for creating a post:

MISSING PERSON: *My loved one (name) has been missing since (date). (He/She/They) were last seen at (location) wearing (if known). If you have seen them recently, call 9-1-1 and provide this case number (loved one's case number). You can also call the non-emergency number with any additional information.*

CAUTION: If you successfully bring publicity to your missing loved one, some people seeking to exploit your situation may contact you. Be wary of those who demand money with a promise to find your missing person, including private investigators or psychics or, most distressing, those who claim to be holding your missing person for ransom. Report all such information immediately to law enforcement.

You can also [report businesses with unfair or deceptive practices](#) to the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division, which helps address marketplace harm by resolving consumer complaints and investigating and litigating against business conduct that violates consumer protection laws.

Long Term + + +

There is not an exact timeframe for how long someone may be missing before the case is classified as a long term or a cold case, which is typically when law enforcement has exhausted all leads. In this time, seek peer support through talking circles, elders, and cultural and community connections. Additional ways to keep attention on your missing person:

- Hold vigils or awareness events.
- Host seasonal or informational events on how other families may be able to spread the word.
- Certain days or anniversaries may help bring stories back to the forefront.
- Maintain contact with the law enforcement agency that made the initial report. Don't let the agency forget about your missing relative.

Consider having a support person, like a close family member or friend, track events. They can relieve some of the burden of media, investigations, monitoring social media, organizing searches, talking with law enforcement, etc.

Death Certificates

If you learn that your relative has passed, the Department of Health (DOH) processes death certificate orders through their [website](#). Two main types of death certificates with different levels of detail are available.

Long form:

A long form death certificate includes cause and manner of death as well as the social security number of the deceased person. Long forms are typically used for closing out bank accounts or claiming benefits.

Short form:

A short form does not include the cause, manner of death, nor social security number. Short forms are used to transfer property titles or for real estate transactions. Check with the agency or business where you will use the certificate to know what information it must include.

In some cases, for the protection of personal information, only those with *qualifying relationships* may receive a death certificate. A qualifying relationship includes spouse/domestic partner, other family members, funeral establishments, or government agencies (for official duties). This process requires [proof of identity](#) (like a driver's license or tribal enrollment ID card) and the qualifying relationship when making a request.

The DOH website page on death certificates above provides additional information.

If you need to correct a death certificate, [contact DOH](#) for more information on ordering certificates online or to schedule an in-person appointment. Records can also be ordered over the phone at 360-236-4300.

Victims' Family Resources

The [Washington State Crime Victims Compensation Program](#) works to reduce the financial impact of violent crime on eligible victims and their families. For those who qualify, this reimbursable program can pay for medical and mental health treatment, medication, grief counseling, partial wage loss replacement, funeral expenses, and other expenses, such as co-pays and deductibles, not covered by other insurance. More information on the program can be found on the [Washington State Department of Labor and Industry's website](#).

The MMIWP Task Force's Family's Subcommittee also hosts Talking Circles to provide a space for survivors, family members, and community members. More information can be found on the [Task Force's webpage](#) on the Washington Attorney General's website.

You can also check with the local tribal government if they have additional resources, such as a Victim Resource Program.



Appendix A: Missing Persons Databases and Tools for Law Enforcement

There are several databases and tools that law enforcement across the country can use for missing persons cases and other investigations. Each database has different functions and purposes. In Washington, law enforcement must enter missing persons cases into NCIC, but requirements vary in other states. Sometimes agencies may have a database with a different name that feeds into NCIC.

National Crime Information Center (NCIC), managed by the FBI, is an electronic clearinghouse of crime data that also includes missing and unidentified reports. Only law enforcement personnel can access NCIC.

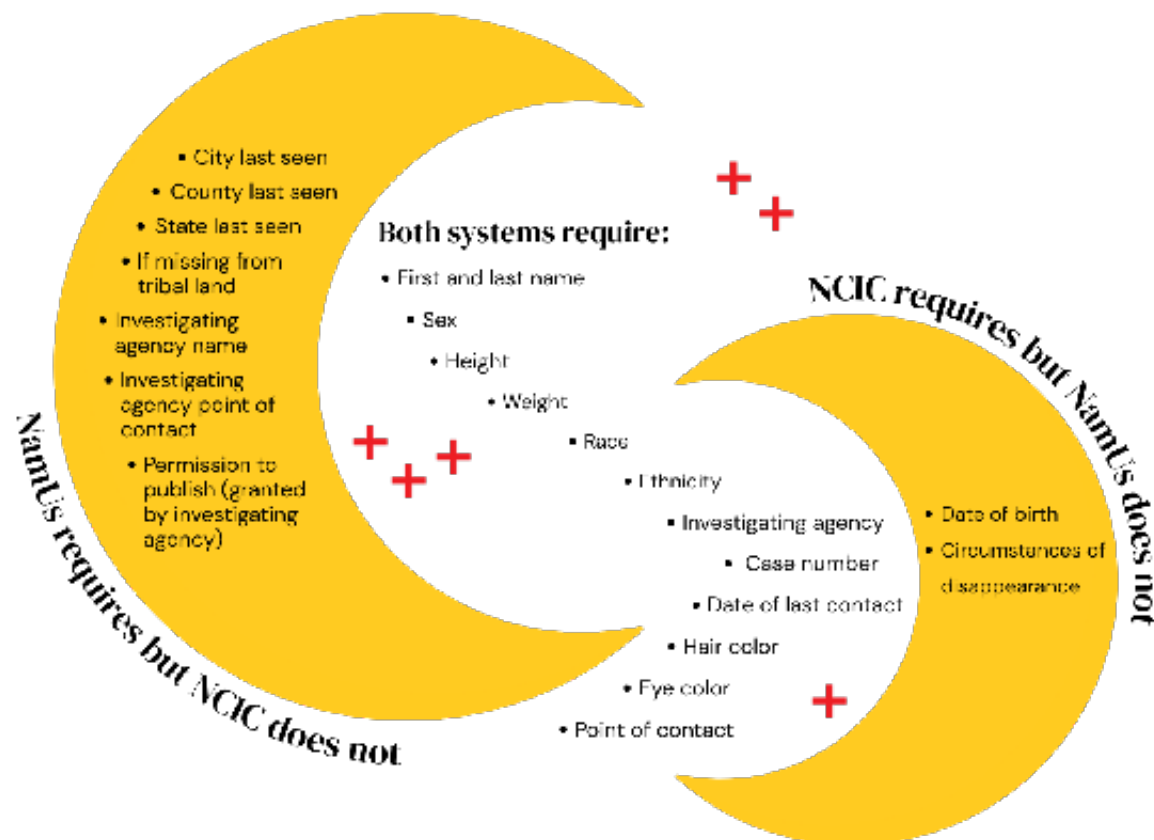
Missing and Unidentified Persons Unit (MUPU) has resources that can be used by law enforcement to assist missing/unidentified person cases. They also manage dental information. Examiners use dental records to identify remains. MUPU can also assist with Family DNA reference samples. MUPU provides MIPA request forms.

Most databases are not accessible to the general public and are maintained for use by law enforcement personnel. Members of the public can create profiles to use NamUs, which allows viewing limited details and adding details to a case.

National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUS) is a national centralized repository and resource center for missing, unidentified, and unclaimed person cases across the United States. Law enforcement and medical examiners and coroners can use NamUs, as well as friends and families of the missing person. Law enforcement must first enter any new cases. Members of the public can add new details. Law enforcement must verify details before they are added to the case record.

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) is a national resource center for issues related to missing and exploited children. NCMEC assigns case managers to work with on missing children's cases. NCMEC also operates a 24-hour toll-free hotline and a CyberTipline, which is a centralized reporting system for suspected child sexual exploitation.

Databases in the Report Process



Appendix B: Create a Timeline

When a loved one goes missing, investigators will ask for many details about how they disappeared. As you begin collecting this information, the Timeline template below can help you keep it all in one place. Describe known circumstances prior to your loved one's disappearance. This could be following a specific trip or running errands, hiking, a family argument, a party, etc.

What happened?	Date and Time?	Location?	Anyone else involved or may know more?	What were they likely wearing?	Any vehicles Involved?	Any other details?
<i>Ex. Hiking, Party, Family argument</i>	<i>Jan 1, 2024</i>	<i>Seattle, WA at a friend's house</i>	<i>Friends at school</i>	<i>Black shirt and jeans, converse</i>	<i>Ford, [example license plate]</i>	

Appendix C: Contact Log

As a loved one of a missing person, you have critical information that could help find them. It can be helpful to put it all in one place and in the same format to share with others involved in the search. Use the log below to document names and contact information (if known) of everyone you talked to before and after reporting your loved one missing. This could include family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers, etc. Note the information received and date of the contact in the event you need to get back to them for additional information. This is helpful for search parties, law enforcement, and any other agencies involved in the search.

Name and Relationship Including who they are to the missing person	Contact info. (phone, address, email address) Where do they reside or work?	When did they last have contact? When was the last text, phone call, or email sent from your loved one? When did they last see them?	Additional information Who else was there during that contact? Was there a vehicle involved?

Appendix D: Law Enforcement Communications Log

Trying to find a missing person involves a lot of conversations and back and forth with a variety of people in law enforcement and other agencies. This Communications Log may be a helpful tool to use to keep track of all correspondence and engagement.

How to Use When working with agencies, such as law enforcement, obtain the name, phone number and badge numbers, if relevant, of whom you spoke with so you can call to follow up or to report any additional information that you discover. Additionally, use the Log to record contents of the conversation and what the next steps may be, as well as who is responsible for those next steps.

Date and Time	Law Enforcement Agency	Officer or Person	Badge number or role	What they said	Follow up/responsible party for follow up

Appendix E: Methods of Identification

If remains do not have any identification, or decomposition renders visual identification impossible, the medical examiner or coroner will list the individual as “unidentified.” There are several methods to identify the individual, depending on information obtained from family and friends.

- 1. DNA:** Family members may be asked to provide a DNA sample if one is not directly available from the missing person. DNA analysis can only establish identification if there is a comparable sample from the individual or a family member. DNA samples can be taken from a toothbrush, hairbrush or other personal items. Generally, but not always, DNA can be obtained from partial remains.
 - a. **State Process:** Law enforcement can send the material to the Washington State Crime Lab for analysis.
 - b. **Private Process:** You can also test DNA through private labs. This can be time intensive and cost prohibitive and is often a last resort in the identification process.
- 2. Dental X-rays:** Comparison with dental records is a method of positive identification for recovered remains. Dental X-rays are helpful because dental work typically happens throughout someone’s life. If X-rays are not available, other dental records, such as dental casts, charting, or photographs, may be used.
- 3. Fingerprints:** Fingerprints can establish identification only if the missing person had fingerprints taken while alive and if fingerprints are obtainable from the unidentified body. If the missing person was not officially fingerprinted while alive, retain any object belonging to the missing person that might have fingerprints.
- 4. Body X-rays:** If your loved one had X-rays taken, provide those to law enforcement. Positive identification may be possible by comparing X-rays. Examiners prefer the most recent X-rays. Specifically, an X-ray of a broken bone or medical implant is helpful. This includes a CAT scan, a diagnostic imaging procedure that uses a combination of X-rays and computer technology, which is often taken in cases of suspected head injury.
- 5. Implants:** Most implants will have serial numbers. Let law enforcement know if your loved one had any sort of surgery or implants, including knee and hip replacements as well as defibrillators.
- 6. Other useful information** that can establish identity:
 - a. **Photos:** A photo of the missing person smiling allows comparison of the front teeth and a straight-on photo of the head allows superimposition, or a comparison with another image, like a skull.
 - b. **Scars, marks, tattoos:** Provide a description, and picture, if possible, of any unique body markings, tattoos, or scars. Let law enforcement know if your loved one was circumcised.
 - c. **Missing organs/appendages:** Report any removed organs (appendectomy, hysterectomy) or missing fingers/toes.

