

# IF A LOVED ONE GOES MISSING...

*By Susan Bartelstone, Crime Prevention Specialist*

**IMPORTANT:**

**There's NO 24/48-hour rule for reporting missing people!**

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**Insist that the missing person's information be entered in the NamUs data base (National Missing and Unidentified Persons Systems) [www.namus.gov](http://www.namus.gov) AND the NCIC data base (National Crime Information Center) (<https://fas.org/irp/agency/doj/fbi/is/ncic.htm>) and that an investigation is initiated**



*If the worst happens and a loved one goes missing, don't lose hope. Things can be done that increase your chances of finding the missing person.*

## **1. Contact the Police**

- Go to the police precinct where the missing person lives (there's NO wait 24/48-hour rule) and speak to a detective. Don't leave until you do.
- Give the police full access to the missing person's property: journals, letters, phone records, bank records, emails, tapes, cell phone, electronic devices, computer hard drive, social media sites. **Make copies for yourself first.**
- Bring a list of names, phone numbers, home and job addresses of all family members and relevant friends; also doctor and dentist contact information, and anything else that might be pertinent. Use the information below as a guide.
- Collect photos and videos from family and friends to distribute.
- Make follow-up phone calls and/or visits to the detective squad **daily.**

## **2. Make a poster-size flyer with a large, color photo of the missing person and distribute. Hand deliver if possible.**

- Include on the flyer: Large clear photograph, physical description, phone number and all contact information including e-mail address(es) or website(s) for the missing person and for family members; circumstances of the disappearance; and reward (if any).
- Distribute flyers at the location the missing person was last seen; where the missing person works or attends school; where the missing person resides; and on relevant social media sites.
- Target the same sources above with information about the suspected kidnaper (if applicable).

## **3. Call, email and contact the following sources via website, social media sites (highly recommended) and also send them flyers:**

- The Mayor, Police Chief/Commissioner and Missing Persons Squad of your town or city, state and US Senators/Assembly persons, City Councilpersons and other local politicians. Hand deliver if possible.
- The **National Center for Missing & Exploited Children** (<http://www.ncmec.org>) 800-THE-LOST (800-843-5678).

*\* Visit [crimeprevention101.com](http://crimeprevention101.com), check out our Safety Store and get a free eBook "All-Time Top Tips for Keeping Yourself Safe!"*



✓ **Add specifics to your own list.**

**Additional Resources: Crime Prevention 101 Radio Show**

<https://www.voiceamerica.com/episode/53975/commemorating-missing-childrens-day-the-jennifer-kesse-story>

<https://www.voiceamerica.com/episode/45462/finding-missing-persons>

- True crime forums, blogs and websites that feature missing persons (Websleuths, Bonnie's Blog of Crime, for example); local newspapers' crime/police reporters.
- Local victim services organizations and hospitals.

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Sources: *Just in Case...Missing*. National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and **Quad Cities Missing Persons Network** (<http://www.qcmpn.com/basic-steps-on-how-to-find-a-missing-person.html>)

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#### 4. Additional Suggestions:

- Plan a vigil or media event and send out press releases.
- Keep written or digital documentation of all contacts (phone, personal visits, emails) regarding the person who went missing; keep accurate and detailed notes (date, time, exact words) of all the information given to you by family/friends or any of those contacts.
- Set up a website for the missing person on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Check out <http://charleyproject.org/case/kristine-kupka> as an example.
- Consider hiring a qualified private investigator who has worked on missing person cases; consult a lawyer for advice.
  - Consider getting help from a reputable psychic, preferably one who has previously worked with law enforcement.
  - Seek counseling for yourself and your family. Get support and advice from families of other high profile missing persons.

#### More information the police may need (from [Quad Cities Missing Persons Network](#)):

1. Did the missing person have any problems in connection with a recent breakup from his/her partner? Any domestic violence issues connected with a spouse/partner/date?
2. Did the missing person have any recent financial setbacks, gambling debts or problems paying off bills?
3. Did the missing person have any criminal history, specifically drug trafficking, human trafficking, or felony offenses?
4. Were there drug or alcohol problems, other addiction problems or hospitalizations?
5. Was the missing person ever diagnosed with a mental illness, dementia, or categorized as suicidal?
6. Was the missing person ever a victim of a crime such as burglary, robbery, rape, human trafficking, or any other sexual offense?
7. Did the missing person have any problems on the job such as bullying, violence with a co-worker, disagreements with supervisors, or recently been terminated?
8. Any problems in school with bullying, poor grades, multiple absences?
9. Has the missing person met or been corresponding with anyone online recently? This is especially relevant for teenage girls and young women who might be potential sex-trafficking victims or might have been coerced to run away.
10. Did the missing person ever discuss with family members that they were thinking of taking a long trip. If so, give details. Indicate which family member talks to the missing person most frequently and how frequently?

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