





POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

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|  | MISSING PERSONS | |
| | POLICY NUMBER: 41-5 | ISSUING AUTHORITY  |
| | EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2025 | Christine A. Elow Police Commissioner |

I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES

A missing person is one who is absent for no apparent reason under circumstances that may indicate an involuntary disappearance or when there are concerns for the person's safety. Missing persons are not fugitives and may have voluntarily gone missing for reasons the reporting party is reluctant to disclose. The department has an obligation to investigate all such reports and take follow-up action.

Additionally, some cognitively impaired adults may tend to wander off. Locating these persons is critical considering possible medical complications or physical frailty. They may be confused, disoriented, and unable to identify themselves; and caregivers may not be aware of their absence.

However, in all cases, it is the obligation of the police department to gather as much information as possible, to follow established procedures in the attempt to locate such persons, and to investigate when necessary.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Cambridge Police Department to:

- A. promptly record, investigate, and attempt to locate missing persons;
- B. enter into and remove from CJIS information regarding missing persons;
- C. conduct follow-up investigations when necessary; and
- D. consider the urgency of locating missing persons who may be at risk.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. *Missing Person:* A person 18 years of age or older whose whereabouts are unknown to persons with intimate knowledge.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. 41.2.5 (M) Missing Persons

1. Procedures for reporting and investigating adult missing persons shall include the following.
 - a. Reports of missing persons may be received by the department from a reporting party who comes into the police station, calls the ECD, or approaches an officer in the field. Personnel receiving the report should gather as much information as possible including:
 - (1) the circumstances of the disappearance, location where the person was last seen, and any likely destinations;
 - (2) the identity of the missing person;
 - (3) a description, distinguishing marks, clothing;
 - (4) an estimate of the level of risk including mental health issues;
 - (5) the identity of the reporting party and contact information;
 - (6) any prior history and the location where the person was found;
 - (7) any tracking devices worn by the person; and
 - (8) medications the person may be taking.
 - b. Collected information should be disseminated as follows.
 - (1) When the report of a missing person comes into the ECD, a police officer will be dispatched who will gather all pertinent information, file a state Missing Person Report, and the case may be assigned to a detective depending on the risk of harm to that person and other factors.
 - c. The following procedures address the entry and removal of the information in the appropriate criminal justice information system.
 - (1) If a Missing Person Report is completed, dispatch personnel in the ECD shall enter the information into the CJIS Missing Persons database.
 - (2) Dispatch shall remove the entry as soon as practical after the person has been located.
 - d. Criteria for activation of an alert system for notification to the public include the following.
 - (1) Notification of the general public through the news media or department online websites, including social media, can be valuable in locating a missing person. A decision to contact the news media or publishing online shall be made after approval by the Police Commissioner or designee, after consultation with the family

of the missing person, and in collaboration with the Director of Communications/Public Information Officer.

- (2) If there are circumstances and risk factors to warrant other notifications, a supervisor will determine which additional notifications will be made.
 - (3) A Silver Alert may be issued by the department at the discretion of a supervisor. The Crime Analysis Unit will forward such alerts to the BRIC; the MSP will distribute the alert if requested to do so.
- e. After the report of a missing person is filed, a detective will be assigned to the case for follow-up with the reporting party.
 - f. The follow-up investigation and search will be conducted and managed by the detective assigned to the case.
 - (1) The detective may consider alerting the Office of the District Attorney, the Massachusetts Missing Persons Clearing House, or in the case of suspected abduction, the FBI.
 - g. Special considerations applicable to critically missing or at-risk persons are as follows.
 - (1) If the missing person is known to be wearing a SafetyNet tracking device, the Mass State Police will conduct the tracking.
 - (2) If the missing person is known to be suffering from Alzheimer's Disease, the department should contact Safe Return, the National Alzheimer's Registry.
 - (3) If an officer in the field encounters a person who appears to be lost or disoriented and there is no active report of a missing person, the officer should attempt to identify the person, determine the need for medical assistance, confirm with the ECD, based on the description, that the person has not been entered into CJIS, and arrange to send out an administrative broadcast if advisable.
 - (4) If officers locate an unidentified at-risk person, the person should be transported to a hospital for medical evaluation. The follow-up should be conducted by detectives if the identity is still unknown.