

# WHAT TO DO IF A LOVED ONE GOES MISSING...

*By Susan Bartelstone, Crime Prevention Specialist*

## THERE'S NO 24/48 HOUR RULE FOR REPORTING MISSING PEOPLE!

*Insist that the missing person's information be entered in the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) data base and that an investigation is initiated.*  
(<https://fas.org/irp/agency/doj/fbi/is/ncic.htm>)

Seek support and advice from families of other high profile missing persons.

*If the worst happens and a loved one goes missing, don't despair. 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 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, 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 and friends; also doctors and dentist contact information, and anything else that might be pertinent. Use this **guide**<sup>1</sup>.
- 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 missing person which includes the following:

- Large, clear photograph; physical description; circumstances of the disappearance; phone number or contact information for family and e-mail address or website for missing person; reward (if any).
- Distribute flyer as follows (and make sure they're posted) and post on websites/social media sites: Location the missing person was last seen; where the missing person works or attends school; where the missing person resides.
- Target the same sources above with information about the suspected kidnaper (if applicable).

### 3. Call, fax, email or contact via social media sites (highly recommended), the following:

- 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.
- National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (<http://www.ncmec.org>) **1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)**
- 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's services organizations and hospitals (hand deliver your missing persons flyer and make sure they're posted).



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.qcmpn.com/basic-steps-on-how-to-find-a-missing-person.html>



## Contact Us:

Crime Prevention101  
[www.crimeprevention101.com](http://www.crimeprevention101.com)  
[solutions@fightsafe.com](mailto:solutions@fightsafe.com)  
**\*Sign up for the blog**

## 4. Additional suggestions:

- Plan a vigil or media event and send out press releases.
- Keep written 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 (example: [www.kristinekupka.com](http://www.kristinekupka.com)) and social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
- 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 who has worked with law enforcement.
- **Seek counseling for yourself and your family. Get support and advice from families of other high profile missing persons.**

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*Sources: Adapted from Just in Case...Missing. Copyright© 1985 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children; Adapted from Quad Cities Missing Persons Network: <http://www.qcmpn.com/basic-steps-on-how-to-find-a-missing-person.html>*

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## 5. Information the police may need (adapted from Quad Cities Missing Persons Network, <http://www.qcmpn.com/basic-steps-on-how-to-find-a-missing-person.html>):

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 problems, gambling debts or problems paying off a debt?
3. Did the missing person have any criminal history, specifically drug trafficking, human trafficking, or felony offenses?
4. Were there drug or alcohol problems? Addictions? Hospitalizations?
5. Was the missing person ever diagnosed with a mental illness, with dementia, or as homicidal or 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 or being picked on, poor grades, multiple absences?
9. Has the missing person met or been corresponding with anyone online recently? This is especially important for teenage girls and young women whom could be potential sex-trafficking victims or 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. What family member talks to the missing person most frequently and how frequently?

*More resources: Crime Prevention 101 radio shows, VoiceAmerica.com:*

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

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