

<b>Policy Name:</b>	<b>MISSING PERSON INVESTIGATIONS</b>		
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<b>Issued By:</b>	INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES BUREAU	<b>Approved By:</b>	SURREY POLICE BOARD
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**RELATED POLICIES**

AD 9.16 *ViCLAS*

OP 4.34.7 *Hostage-taking/Kidnapping*

OP 4.34.8 *Major Case Management*

OP 4.1 *AMBER Alerts*

**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1. To provide guidance and direction to Surrey Police Service (SPS) Members in the appropriate processes and procedures for investigating reports of a Missing Person.
- 1.2. To emphasize the urgency and importance of Missing Person investigations and to ensure these investigations are conducted in compliance with the *BC Provincial Policing Standards (BCPPS)*.

**2. SCOPE**

- 2.1. This policy applies to all SPS Employees.

**3. POLICY**

- 3.1. This policy is governed by the guiding principles and practices outlined in the *BCPPS Missing Person Investigations*.
- 3.2. This policy incorporates recommendations from the *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019)* regarding the police investigation of a report of a missing Indigenous person.

- 3.3. A “Missing Person” is defined as anyone reported to police or by police as someone whose whereabouts are unknown, whatever the circumstances of their disappearance, and who are considered missing until located.
- 3.4. All Missing Persons reports are to be treated as suspicious until demonstrated otherwise, requiring a thorough response appropriate to the circumstances. This will provide the best chance of preserving perishable evidence and of locating the Missing Person quickly or determining if there has been foul play requiring a different investigative direction.
- 3.5. Members must not tell complainants that they must wait a specific period of time before a report of a missing person can be made. There is no “24-hour waiting period” for reports of missing persons.
- 3.6. A Missing Person incident is inherently stressful for family members/reportees and this cannot be overlooked by investigators. When conducting these investigations, individual circumstances and individualized risk factors must be considered, especially for marginalized people who are likely to face societal challenges that increase their risk of going missing, and which may act as barriers to reporting. Trauma-informed practices and the principles of respect, compassion and empathy must guide all Missing Person investigations.
- 3.7. There are two categories of Missing Person investigations:
- i. High Risk people or situations; and
  - ii. Non-High Risk people or situations.
- 3.8. A High-Risk Missing Person investigation is defined in the BCPPS as one in which the Missing Person’s health or well-being may be in immediate danger due to:
- i. their own vulnerability (e.g., the very young and very old, persons with physical illnesses, disabilities, substance use disorders or mental health concerns, persons who may be suicidal, and persons involved in activities that may place them at an increased risk of harm);
  - ii. being part of an identifiable group that is at an increased risk of harm (e.g., Indigenous women and children);
  - iii. the weather or physical conditions where the Missing Person is believed to be; or
  - iv. reasonable grounds to believe they may be the victim of a crime.
- 3.9. Missing Person incidents determined to be High Risk will be investigated and documented as soon as practicable by responding Members and followed up by the Missing Persons Team (MPT) where necessary.
- 3.10. The SPS Missing Person Coordinator (MPC) is the Sergeant in-charge of the MPT and is responsible for the oversight and support functions for SPS Missing Person investigations, including those

functions listed in BCPPS Standard (1), Section 5.14, *File Review and Monitoring, Missing Persons Investigations*.

- 3.11. The BC Police Missing Persons Centre (BCMPC) is a provincial police unit that provides guidance and support to all police in the province for Missing Person investigations, and coordinates and supports unidentified human remains investigations. The SPS MPC will be the point of contact to the BCMPC.
- 3.12. SPS will investigate all Missing Person reports when the Missing Person was last seen in Surrey, or if the person normally resides in Surrey and it is not known where they were last seen. In the event of a jurisdictional dispute, the safety and welfare of the Missing Person is paramount. The SPS will assume initial responsibility for investigations when jurisdiction is unclear and cannot be resolved between police agencies. In these circumstances, the MPC shall be notified and will be the point of contact with the Officer in Charge of the BCMPC to render a decision on jurisdiction as soon as practicable.
- 3.13. SPS has protocols in place with local mental health facilities, hospitals and nursing homes to facilitate Missing Person investigations involving patients or residents.
- 3.14. SPS has protocols in place with Ministry of Children and Family Development authorities and Delegated Aboriginal Agencies, to facilitate Missing Person investigations involving youth in local group homes and foster care.
- 3.15. If a missing person report does not fall within the jurisdiction of SPS:
  - i. SPS will assume responsibility for the investigation, including prompt initial entry of the missing person on PRIME, CPIC, and any other relevant police databases, until it has transferred the investigation to the police of jurisdiction. The transfer of the investigation is not complete until the police of jurisdiction has confirmed its receipt of the report and responsibility for the investigation, and generated a file number;
  - ii. All information received or generated by SPS in relation to the missing person report is forwarded to the police of jurisdiction immediately or, at the latest, within 24 hours;
  - iii. SPS will tell the reportee about the transfer and provide the file number generated; and
  - iv. The receipt of the missing person report, its transfer to the police of jurisdiction, the notification of the reportee, and any other actions taken are documented.
- 3.16. SPS will promptly respond to requests for assistance from another police of jurisdiction in relation to a Missing Person investigation.
- 3.17. Members assigned to a Missing Person investigation must complete a General Occurrence (GO) report prior to the end of their shift.

## 4. PROCEDURE

### Operational Communications Centre (OCC)

- 4.1. Upon receipt of a report of a Missing Person, the OCC must notify the frontline policing Supervisor and assign the file to a Member.
- 4.2. If the Missing Person report involves a Child, the OCC must immediately dispatch the file and notify a frontline policing Member and Supervisor.
- 4.3. An OCC Employee must complete the PRIME-BC Missing Person Details page (Provincial Missing Person Intake Form) upon file intake.
- 4.4. An OCC Employee must create a CPIC entry for the Missing Person and complete all the relevant fields.

### Investigator

- 4.5. A Member assigned to a Missing Person investigation must create a General Occurrence (GO) report (if not initiated by the OCC) and conduct the initial risk assessment as soon as practicable, and:
  - i. complete the PRIME-BC Missing Person Risk Assessment Template;
  - ii. determine the risk in consultation with a Supervisor and:
    - a. if the response to ALL questions on the Missing Person Risk Assessment Template is “no”, the Member must consult with a Supervisor to confirm the screening result; or
    - b. if the response to any question on the Missing Person Risk Assessment Template is “yes”, the matter requires immediate review and consultation with a Supervisor to assess the appropriate response and resources.
- 4.6. If the Missing Person investigation involves a Child, the Member must consult a Supervisor to determine whether criteria for issuing an AMBER Alert are met (see OP 4.1 *AMBER Alerts*).
- 4.7. If the Missing Person is identified as an Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit) Woman, Girl or person identifying as 2SLGBTQQIAA (see Definitions):
  - i. identify, score, and investigate the incident as a High Risk Missing Person; and
  - ii. liaise with the Indigenous Policing Unit/Member for guidance and assistance. If available, engage a culturally competent and relevant responder/support person to meet the immediate needs of the Missing Person’s family and to provide them with support.
- 4.8. If the incident is determined to be Non-High-Risk, the assigned Member must forward the GO to the MPT for notification and review.
- 4.9. The assigned Member must notify the family/reportee of the actions taken.

4.10. If the incident is determined as High Risk, the initial investigative steps which should include, but are not limited to:

- i. interview relevant persons who may include the reportee, witnesses, friends and family members of the Missing Person, and the person who last saw or had contact with the Missing Person, to determine:
  - a. the location where the Missing Person was last seen or known to be;
  - b. possible destination or location where the Missing Person might be found;
  - c. Missing Person's medical conditions and required medications;
  - d. known or common mode of transportation, including whether the Missing Person had a Compass card, and its number, if known;
  - e. cell phone, credit card/banking information, email addresses, social media user names and passwords, if available;
  - f. items such as a cell phone, wallet, clothing, computer, etc., which were taken or left behind which may be characteristic, or uncharacteristic, of the Missing Person's comings and goings;
  - g. employment and/or school contact information and details;
  - h. vehicle description and license plate number, if applicable;
  - i. history of similar incidents and whether it is out of character for the Missing Person to go missing; and
  - j. reasons why the person is missing;
- ii. obtain a description of the person and a photograph if possible. Ensure the photo is recent and a true likeness;
- iii. consider sending a signal to the Missing Person's cell phone (if applicable) to determine its location (i.e., "ping" the phone);
- iv. conduct checks for the missing person on PRIME, CPIC, and other relevant police information systems;
- v. conduct a search of relevant locations which may include the Missing Person's residence, point last seen and/or point last known to be, possible destinations, or other locations that may be relevant, obtaining consent or authority to conduct the search as required. Where applicable (e.g., dementia cases), attend the past residences as well as present residences of the Missing Person;
- vi. conduct/coordinate neighbourhood inquiries and/or a video canvass of the area where the Missing Person was last seen, if appropriate;
- vii. secure physical evidence such as surveillance footage, computers, electronic devices and their passwords, bank records, and phone records;
- viii. secure biological evidence (e.g., known biological samples, personal items, dental or medical records);
- ix. request assistance from other police forces as necessary by sending a CPIC message (e.g., to other jurisdictions where the Missing Person is known to visit);
- x. request assistance from other agencies and businesses that may assist in the investigation: Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA),

- taxi companies, public transit authorities, Department of Homeland Security, towing companies, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, airport authorities, etc.;
- xi. where foul play is not suspected, consider the use of the BC *Missing Persons Act* to obtain records (telephone, banking) via Records Access Orders or to conduct searches via Search Order;
  - xii. in consultation with a Supervisor, consider whether a media release would be beneficial to further the investigation. For all high-risk investigations, Members must consult the Media Relations Officer (MRO) to determine whether a media release would further the investigation. Ensure all media releases are made through the SPS MRO or their delegate and posted to the SPS media/social media sites;
  - xiii. consider a CPIC BOLF and/or a Real-Time Intelligence Centre (RTIC) Bulletin which can be emailed to **S. 15**;
  - xiv. request that Surrey OCC contact area hospitals;
  - xv. if the Missing Person has access to a vehicle and the vehicle is not located:
    - a. contact towing companies which operate in Surrey and determine if the vehicle has been impounded since the Missing Person was last seen;
    - b. contact the City of Surrey Parking Enforcement “police only” line (available through Surrey OCC) to determine if the vehicle has been ticketed; and
    - c. ensure the vehicle is entered on CPIC as associated to the Missing Person;
  - xvi. provide the family and/or reportee of the Missing Person with information about support services available (Victim Services) and offer to have Victim Services contact them;
  - xvii. identify a family liaison and coordinate the communication with family members and reportees;
  - xviii. notify the family and/or reportee of the Missing Person that the MPT will contact them as soon as practicable for follow-up, and to contact 9-1-1 if the Missing Person returns home;
  - xix. complete the GO as soon as practicable, and before the end of shift. The report must include:
    - a. the PRIME-BC Missing Persons Details Page and all relevant CPIC fields (usually completed by Surrey OCC but Member to confirm);
    - b. the completed Risk Assessment Template;
    - c. the completed Risk Assessment – Supervisor Review Template; and
    - d. document all investigative steps, including steps that were taken but failed to advance the investigation, as well as steps that were considered but determined not to be appropriate or relevant given the circumstances of the case;
  - xx. ensure that the GO /file is routed to the MPT; and
  - xxi. email a digital photograph of the Missing Person to the MPT.

4.11. The assigned Member must re-evaluate the level of risk throughout the investigation for both High-Risk and Non-High-Risk Missing Person investigations, including at a minimum:

- i. when new information pertaining to the Missing Person or their disappearance is obtained or received; and
- ii. within seven days of the start of the investigation. The exception is where the Missing Person is reasonably believed to be deceased.

- 4.12. Any decision to vary or change the level of risk must be reviewed by a Supervisor and documented in the GO, including updating the PRIME-BC scoring.
- 4.13. If the investigation establishes that the Missing Person investigation should be the responsibility of another police service/jurisdiction, refer the matter to the SPS Duty Officer.
- 4.14. When a Missing Person investigation meets the National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Human Remains (MCMPUR) criteria, a profile of the Missing Person must be completed and forwarded to the BCPMPC for inclusion on the “Canada’s Missing” website. A data input form is available from the BCPMPC.
- 4.15. If the Missing Person may be linked to another ongoing Missing Person investigation, ensure the other investigator/agency is advised of the file. The assigned Member must maintain contact, undertake coordination, ensure the files are cross-referenced, and notify the BCPMPC via email at **S. 15**
- 4.16. As soon as the investigation determines a reasonable likelihood of death through an independently witnessed event or through other substantive evidence, the assigned Member must complete the BC Coroner’s Service (BCCS) Missing Persons Query Intake Information Form and forward to the Unidentified Human Remains Unit at **S. 15**

#### **Access to Personal Records Orders**

- 4.17. Members may apply to a justice for an order requiring a person to give access to personal records of a Missing Person as set out in s. 9 of the *Missing Persons Act*.
- 4.18. If the Missing Person is a Minor Aged Child or is a Vulnerable Person, and is believed to be with a third party, Members may apply to a justice for the third-party person’s records if the Member has reasonable grounds to believe that the records may assist in locating the Missing Person.
- 4.19. If the Missing Person is a Minor Aged Child or is a Vulnerable Person, a Member may apply for an order authorizing Members to enter, by force if necessary, a private dwelling or other premises to search for a Missing Person if the Member has reasonable grounds to believe the Missing Person may be located there.
- 4.20. Members may make an emergency demand for records, requiring a person to give access to the records, if the time required to apply for the record may result in serious bodily harm or the death of a Missing Person, or destruction of the record. If a Member makes an emergency demand for records, the Member must file a report in relation to the demand with the Chief Constable, or designate as soon as practicable.
- 4.21. Contact the SPS Legal Applications Support Team (LAST) for assistance with orders and demands under the *Missing Persons Act*.

### **Ongoing Investigations – Beyond One Month**

4.22. Missing Persons investigations that extend beyond one month must be reviewed by an MPT investigator who will:

- i. attempt to obtain dental and medical records, if not already done, and ensure that these records are added to CPIC;
- ii. if available, ensure that the Missing Person's fingerprints and/or familial DNA have been collected and have been made into an exhibit;
- iii. revisit banking, social assistance and other governmental agencies to see if any activity has occurred since the Missing Person disappeared; and
- iv. review the file to determine if there are any circumstances that would place the Missing Person in the "high risk" category. If so, contact the BCPMPC and BC Coroner's Service for direction on submission of the DNA exhibits to the BC Unidentified Human Remains DNA Databank.
- v. If a person remains missing for more than ninety (90) days from the initial report, or if foul play is suspected, any dental records obtained must be submitted to the NCO i/c Unidentified Human Remains Unit, RCMP "E" Division for entry into the Provincial Dental Databank.

### **Supervisor**

4.23. The assigned Member's Supervisor must consult the investigating Member, review the file, and complete the Risk Assessment – Supervisor Review Template.

4.24. The Supervisor must consider the specifics of the incident including factors that may make the case High-Risk, including whether the Missing Person's status as an Indigenous or non-Indigenous marginalized person may alone justify treating the investigation as High Risk.

4.25. If the investigation is High Risk, the assigned Member's Supervisor must:

- i. ensure a Priority One response and immediately assign appropriate resources;
- ii. notify the Duty Officer;
- iii. notify the Sergeant in charge, MPT. If after hours, seek authorization from the Duty Officer;
- iv. ensure the GO has been completed;
- v. ensure the investigator has notified RTIC; and
- vi. prepare an Advance Report or Briefing Note for distribution to SPS senior leadership.

4.26. The assigned Member's Supervisor must review and document oversight of the GO file, at a minimum:

- i. daily for the first 48 hours of the investigation;
- ii. weekly for the first 30 days of the investigation;
- iii. three months from the start of the investigation; and
- iv. every 12 months thereafter.



### **Missing Person Coordinator (MPC)**

- 4.27. The MPC must track the status of the Missing Person investigation and ensure there is an active primary investigator assigned to the file.
- 4.28. The MPC must make available to investigators a list of local resources and suggested checks to assist in the investigation.
- 4.29. The MPC must ensure a Family Liaison Officer (FLO) has been identified and follows the requirements for family communication as outlined in the BCPPS, s. 5.1.5 *Missing Persons Investigations – Family Members and Reportees*.
- 4.30. The MPC will liaise with the BCPMPC as necessary.
- 4.31. If foul play is suspected, the MPC must ensure the file has been assigned to the Investigative Services Bureau.

### **Foul Play is Suspected – Investigative Services Bureau**

- 4.32. If foul play is suspected, the case must be assigned to the Investigative Services Bureau (ISB) for investigation. The Missing Person investigation will be subject to the formal review process outlined in the BCPPS, s. 5.1.4 *Specialized Investigations – Missing Person Investigations – File Review and Monitoring*.
- 4.33. Where applicable, High Risk Missing Persons investigations will be conducted using the Major Case Management principles outlined in the BCPPS, s.5.2.2 *Specialized Investigations – Major Case Management – Command Triangle and Investigative Team*.
- 4.34. The assigned ISB Member must ensure that a Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System (ViCLAS) booklet is completed within 30 days and provide updates as required by ViCLAS policy.
- 4.35. ISB will assign a Family Liaison Officer (FLO) if appropriate to replace the original investigating Member. The FLO will:
  - i. provide updates and timely information regarding the status of the Missing Person to the family/reportee throughout the investigation, unless doing so would jeopardize the Missing Person or the integrity of the investigation;
  - ii. ensure all communication with the family/reportee is documented on the file on a designated occurrence report titled “Family Communication”;
  - iii. advise the family/reportee in advance when details pertaining to the investigation will be released to the media and/or the public, unless doing so would jeopardize the Missing Person or the investigation;
  - iv. provide an opportunity for the family/reportee to review and consent to any photo(s) and/or description(s) of the Missing Person that will be released to the media and/or public, unless doing so would jeopardize the missing person or the investigation; and

- v. establish a communication plan in consultation with the family/reportee as soon as appropriate given the circumstances of the investigation, or no later than within two weeks of the start of the investigation.

4.36. In addition to regular supervision, open investigations where foul play is suspected are subject to formal case review overseen by an appointed reviewer within ISB and the case will be reviewed, at minimum:

- i. within 5 to 7 days of the start of the investigation;
- ii. between six to eight weeks of the start of the investigation; and
- iii. in conjunction with the timing of the annual supervision of every 12 months thereafter.

#### **Duty Officer**

4.37. When the Duty Officer is notified of a High-Risk Missing Person, the Duty Officer must, in consultation with the MPT Sergeant, consider if additional resources are required (e.g., search and canvass team, Media Relations Officer).

4.38. The Duty Officer will authorize the activation of an AMBER Alert if the Missing Person is a child and the Activation Criteria are established (see OP 4.1 *AMBER Alerts*).

4.39. The Duty Officer must consider if the Missing Person could have been abducted or kidnapped. If so, the Duty Officer must refer the investigation to ISB (see OP 4.34.7 *Hostage-Taking/Kidnapping*).

4.40. The Duty Officer may set up a command post, if necessary.

#### **Concluding a Missing Person Investigation**

4.41. When a Missing Person is located, the Member will confirm the well-being of the Missing Person. This can be done by the Member in person, or if located within the same shift as when the Missing Person was reported, via an Approved Verifier. An Approved Verifier is a person who is familiar with the Missing Person and their circumstances and who is also:

- i. a parent or caregiver;
- ii. a social worker, youth/child protection worker, or group home worker;
- iii. a transition house worker or anti-violence worker;
- iv. a doctor, psychiatrist, counsellor, or other health care provider;
- v. a victim services worker;
- vi. a shelter or outreach worker;
- vii. a lawyer or legal advocate; or
- viii. an Indigenous support worker.

4.42. If the Missing Person is a minor age child under 19 years of age, an extra standard of care is required to determine whether the Minor Age Child was exploited or harmed leading up to or during their absence. The assigned Member must:

- i. determine any resources or assistance that could be offered to help promote the Minor Age Child's safety and/or prevent them from going missing again;
- ii. if required, consult the MPT; and
- iii. note that a Minor Age Child has the right to refuse to cooperate or answer questions and should not be pressured or compelled to provide information.

4.43. When a Missing Person is found, the location or whereabouts of a found Missing Person who is a competent adult are not disclosed to the family/ reportee without the Missing Person's consent.

4.44. The following are considered before disclosing the location or whereabouts of a found missing person under the age of 19:

- i. The minor's age and competency;
- ii. Whether the minor consents to the disclosure; and
- iii. The minor's relationship to the family/reportee

4.45. The assigned Member must ensure the Missing Person and their vehicle (if applicable) are removed from CPIC.

4.46. The assigned Member must submit a supplemental page to the original GO report as soon as practicable and before the end of shift and update the Synopsis to reflect the outcome of the file.

4.47. If a person is found who is related to a Missing Person investigation from another jurisdiction or police agency, the assigned Member must ensure the SPS found person/assist file is cross-referenced to the other jurisdiction's Missing Person file and notify the appropriate sections and/or other jurisdictions and agencies.

4.48. Closure of a Missing Person report or investigation must be reviewed and approved by a Supervisor with such approval being documented in the case file.

## APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

“Child” means, specific to AMBER Alert policy, a person under 18 years of age at the time the person was reported missing.

“CPIC” means the Canadian Police Information Centre, the computerized national information repository and retrieval system operated by the RCMP on behalf of the nation's policing community that facilitates the sharing of information among authorized agencies.

“Duty Officer” means the Frontline Policing Inspector on duty.

“Employee” means a sworn Member or Civilian Employee appointed by the Surrey Police Board.

“GO” means a PRIME-BC General Occurrence Report.

“Member” means a sworn Police Officer appointed by the Surrey Police Board.

“Minor Age Child” means a person under 19 years of age.

“Missing Person” means anyone reported to police or by police as someone whose whereabouts are unknown, whatever the circumstances of their disappearance, and who are considered missing until located.

“Missing Person Coordinator” means the police officer designated as responsible for oversight and support functions for the police force’s missing person investigations, including those functions listed in Standard (1) of 5.1.4 File Review and Monitoring of the British Columbia Provincial Policing Standards.

“Supervisor” means a Sergeant, Staff Sergeant, Inspector, Superintendent, Deputy Chief Constable, Chief Constable, and any other person acting in a Supervisory capacity who is accountable for a particular area or shift on behalf of SPS.

“Vulnerable Person” means an individual for whom a committee has been appointed under the *Patients Property Act*; a person for who a representation agreement under the *Representation Agreement Act* is in effect, or a person who is the subject of a support and assistance plan under ss. 53 or 56 of the *Adult Guardianship Act*.

“Woman, Girl and 2SLGBTQQIA” means adult women and female children, and includes persons identifying as Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Androgynous, and Asexual, as defined in the *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* “Reclaiming Power and Place: Executive Summary of the Final Report”, 2019.

## **APPENDIX B: REFERENCES**

*Adult Guardianship Act*, R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 6

BC Provincial Policing Standards, s. 5.1 *Missing Persons Investigations*.

BC Provincial Policing Standards, s. 5.1.4 *Specialized Investigations – Missing Person Investigations – File Review and Monitoring*.

BC Provincial Policing Standards, s. 5.2.2 *Specialized Investigations – Major Case Management – Command Triangle and Investigative Team*.

*Missing Persons Act*, S.B.C. 2014, c. 2

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls “Reclaiming Power and Place: Executive Summary of the Final Report”, 2019.