

4

THE  
MISSING

A

RESOURCE GUIDE FOR THE  
COMMUNITY AND INDIVIDUALS

# INTRODUCTION

The 4 THE MISSING COMMUNITY PLAN is designed to help bring together the missing person's family, law enforcement and the community. This is a source of reference to help guide a community in coordinating a plan of action.

This reference guide describes how to help the family and law enforcement (LE) in the first 24 hours, how to notify and keep the community informed and how to most effectively guide the community volunteers in searching for the missing person (MP) of your community.

Always respect law enforcements (LE) efforts, do not impede on their investigation or searches. Cooperation is the key. Respect all local, state and federal laws. Realize that every case is different and not all material in this reference guide will be applicable in all cases.

Establish a relationship with the family and law enforcement (LE).

Evaluate the situation and determine how the community can best help.

Educate the family and community on what can and should be happening.

Empower the family and community to actively participate for the best possible outcome.

# STRUCTURE

While this is not meant to be an official organization, some structure is necessary to run an efficient community group.

A core group will be needed to start and maintain a 4 THE MISSING COMMUNITY PLAN.

***Several of these roles may have access and process information that may be sensitive in nature. This core group must be discrete and reliable. These people may quickly find themselves in a full time commitment and ideally someone to relieve them will help prevent exhaustion.***

In the beginning you will need:

- **COORDINATOR**

- **Qualities needed for this role:**

- Available full time during the case
    - Highly organized
    - Committed but not invested, this person must be able to maintain strong emotional boundaries and continue to work strategically in a very highly charged environment
    - Intuitive to fill positions with best fits (able to size people up)
    - Perform effectively without emotional responses
    - Good at delegating
    - Not afraid to speak up when things are getting off track

- This person will oversee and aid with all efforts. The COORDINATOR will be the main contact with and for law enforcement as well as all core group members. Therefore, they must be able to establish relationships with these key groups. The person who accepts this role must know that he or she will be working with people who are in a highly charged and emotional state. To most, this may be the most stressful event in which they will ever be involved. This person will come into contact with people who are feeling anger, fear, anxiety and depression and must be prepared for that.

- **FAMILY ADVOCATE**

- **Qualities needed for this role:**

- Calm
    - Compassionate
    - Preferably not a family member (may be a friend, but it's better if this person is not personally connected)

- This person will be responsible for supporting the family, helping to make sure that the 0-24 hour checklist is completed, working with and assisting law enforcement in any way possible, reporting to the HEAD COORDINATOR.

- **SEARCH COORDINATOR**

- **Qualities needed for this role:**

- Military, law enforcement or SAR background ideally
    - Analytical
    - Organized

- Knows how to read maps & use a GPSR
- This person is responsible for the all things connected to the physical searches that are going on by the community.
  - Collect tips
  - Establishing a map with grids for easier tracking (giving each grid a number, see sample)
  - Determine areas critical for searching (enlist help for LE when possible), map and prioritize.
  - Track where people are searching (either on their own or in more organized searches)
  - Determine if community members with special equipment (boats, kayaks, horses, etc, can be helpful and post a "call to action" for them if so.
  - Constantly emphasize the importance of safety, no one should ever search remote, isolated or dangerous areas alone.

- **COMMUNITY AWARENESS LIAISON**

- **Qualities needed for this role:**

- Experience with Web, graphics, Word, Excel
- Technical
- Organized

- This person is responsible for creating and maintaining flyers, a Facebook Group & Twitter Updates.

- **MEDIA LIAISON**

- **Qualities needed for this role:**

- Excellent writing skills (writing press releases)
- Well spoken
- Comfortable on camera and in interviews

- This person is responsible for planning all media events, preparing press releases regarding community efforts (clear all releases with LE first),
- and keeping the story alive and in the news.

- **DONATIONS LIAISON**

- **Qualities needed for this role:**

- Good people skills
- Well spoken
- Organized

This person is responsible for all things related to donations. This will include creating a list of potential donors, soliciting donations, collecting donations and sending thank you notes to those who donated. (A simple thank you card can make the difference if future donations are ever needed.)

## **COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES-A BREAKDOWN**

The First 48 hours

- Locate community space
- Try and reach out and get people with the skills needed to help bring the community together effectively.
- Establish who will fill the core group.
- Establish a database or system for recording and tracking tips, search results and volunteer efforts.
- Keep the media involved.

### **PHYSICAL FACILITY**

While a private residence can be used a more public area that can handle traffic and is accessible to the community is ideal. Take time BEFORE a person goes missing to find such a site and get permission to use that place IN THE EVENT it is needed sometime in the future. It is much easier to do it when not in a rush!

- Considerations for facility
  - Easy access
  - Ample parking
  - Available for at least a week
  - Ideally with a separate private room for sensitive meetings

### **SETTING UP YOUR COMMUNITY CENTER**

There are some basic things you will want in your center. These should be either posted in the private room or kept in a folder or binder. Privacy should always be respected, do not post contact info on wall where the public can see. Keep all information up to date.

**PRIVATE AREA OR BINDER- must stay at Community Center**

- A current detailed map of the area
  - Grid Map out into search and information sections
    - Number map areas
    - Highlight sections that have been searched
      - Use a different color highlighter for each day (keep a key on side of map)
      - Mark type of searching on map
      - Mark any evidence found on map
- Contact information for all members of core group. (phone, cell, pager, email)
- Contact information for all law enforcement involved
- Message area for core group
- Community Search Efforts Journal
  - Dates and times of searches (see templates at back)

## **PUBLIC AREA**

- Photo of *missing person*, a collage if possible
- Large dry erase board or paper
  - Show highlights of what community has been doing
    - Number of community out searching
    - Number of flyers distributed (daily & total)
    - Number of members of Facebook
    - List of areas needing to be searched
    - A map and sewing pushpins where both the core group and community members can “show” where they have searched
- Copy of *current* flyer
- Press releases
- Information for online sources to follow
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - Website

**All volunteers every day should sign in (see templates for sign in sheet). This applies to ALL groups.**

# FAMILY LIAISON RESPONSIBILITIES-A BREAKDOWN

## THE FIRST SIX HOURS

- **VERIFY THAT 911 HAS BEEN CALLED**
  - Make sure that LE is using the TRAK system (Technology to Recover Abducted Kids). It is a dedicated computer system.
- **Do NOT touch ANYTHING.** Wait for LE.  
Ask investigators to enter your child into the **National Crime Information Center (NCIC)** Missing Persons File. There is no waiting period for entry into NCIC for children under age 18.
- Request that LE put out a Be On the Look Out (BOLO/BOL) bulletin. Include surrounding areas/counties.
  - **INCLUDE** all that are applicable in your area
    - State Parks
    - National Parks
    - Coast Guard
    - Harbor Patrol
    - Lake Patrol
    - School Police Depts
    - College Police
- **Ask about involving the FBI in the search.** (Primarily for children)
- Give LE all the facts and circumstances related to the disappearance of the MP, including what efforts have already been made in searching for the MP. Yes, tell them about fights or problems, changes in behavior, anything and everything.
- Help family write a detailed description of the clothing worn and any personal items he or she may have had at the time. Include birthmarks, scars, tattoos.
- Help family make a list of friends, acquaintances, and anyone else who might have information or clues about the MP whereabouts. Include telephone numbers and addresses, if possible.
- **Find several CURRENT pictures & video of the MP (missing person).** Have them ready. Call friends of the person if needed and get pictures from them. Kids often have loads of them taken daily on their cell phones. An accurate picture is crucial.

- Help family make a list of favorite places, habits and routines. (for example, love water, hate crowds, always walked the same route to x spot, etc.) Help to eliminate areas and mark areas for focus.
- Ask family how the MP should be approached. Will they likely hide from strangers? Will they talk? Will they be violent? Will they come to a stranger's voice or only a family member? Is there a password they use so they know a stranger is "safe"?
- Call the NCMEC (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children) at 800-THE-LOST (800-843-5678) to ask for help with photo distribution. Also, ask for the telephone numbers of other nonprofit organizations that might be able to help.
- For adults call the National Center for Missing Adults @ 800-690-FIND.
- Keep a notebook by the phone to jot down all names and numbers of anyone who calls.
- Keep a notebook with you, jot down all thoughts, questions and record all information that is told to you, you will not remember it without it.
- Make sure someone is at the location where the person would likely return to. It does not have to be a family member, but someone needs to be at the house, the car, the campsite, etc.
- Make sure family is eating and resting.
  - Solicit help from friends and neighbors to bring meals, transport other children, take care of pets for the family, etc.
- The family will be overwhelmed with volunteers, psychics, well wishers, reporters, and those who are just curious. Try and shield them as much as possible.
- The family is in a very fragile condition. Try to just listen and avoid giving advice.
- Be as informative as possible. Tell them what the community is doing to help.
- Protect the family from false rumors. Advise them to always assume a rumor is false until proven otherwise.
- If needed coordinate with LE for security around the residence.

## **PUBLIC AWARENESS LIAISON**

Responsible for Flyer creation/distribution, Facebook & Twitter

- Create flyer (see templates at end)
    - **PROOF READ SEVERAL TIMES BY SEVERAL PEOPLE**
  - *\*Make sure it is all languages applicable for the community\**
    - Scan photos to create computer image files
      - 640 x 480 Absolute minimum resolution for 4x6 (results will vary)
      - 1024 x 768 Minimum recommended resolution for 4x6
      - 1152 x 864 Minimum recommended resolution for 5x7
      - 1600 x 1200 Minimum recommended resolution for 8x10 or larger
    - 72 dpi for web
    - min. 150 dpi for print
  - Make sure you have clear and current details from family/LE
  - Enhance color rendition as needed
  - Convert to black and white
  - Enhance black and white for faxing and printing
  - Use word doc (in templates) to combine text & photo
  - Prepare and post web version on Facebook, in the media, anywhere you can put it
  - When creating banners type should be at least 4" tall, many places will not allow banner to go up if it's smaller than that.
  - Use color copies whenever possible (print multiple pictures on one sheet, cut and paste onto black and white flyer if necessary for cost)
  - Attach flyers to bright neon poster board, the bigger and brighter the better
- Fax or email Flyer to missing child agencies
  - National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
  - 1-800-THE-LOST (-843-5678)
  
  - Beyond Missing
  - [www.beyondmissing.com](http://www.beyondmissing.com)
  
  - [www.theyaremissd.org](http://www.theyaremissd.org)
  
  - [www.missingadults.org](http://www.missingadults.org)
- Create Facebook Group
  - <http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php>
  - Make sure Coordinator and Media Liaison are admins on page/group

Title is VERY important for Facebook use this format

- Missing First Name Last Name Special circumstances Town State
  - Example-Missing Jane Smith Autistic Child Santa Fe New Mexico
  - Use as many photos as possible
  - Use "events" section to guide bigger search efforts
  - Use "discussions" for posting critical information
    - Keep this area secure to admins only so it stays neat and clean
    - Post press releases here
    - Post any other *approved* material given to you by the Coordinator
  - Allow wall to be open and encourage people to post what they have done and where they have searched
    - Track this information
- Run Facebook page
  - Encourage all members on FB to invite their "friends" to join the group/page, do this at least twice a day.
  - Go to other community boards & local business pages, send a PM and ask if it's ok to post information on their page as well.
  - Find local band/sports teams pages and ask if you can post on their FB page and if they will send a message out to their fans/friends
- Updates on Twitter
  - <https://twitter.com/signup>
- Processes all email coming in from web
  - Forwards any relevant material to LE

## Flyer Distribution

- Print and distribute flyers within 5 mile radius of PLS (solicit help)
  - Post flyers in:
    - Fast food restaurants
    - Restaurants
    - Post offices
    - Schools & School districts
    - Grocery stores
    - Banks
    - Drive up ATM's
    - UPS & FedX
    - Utility companies
    - Morgues
    - Stores
    - Chamber of Commerce
    - Shopping centers
    - Service stations (every store if possible)

- Truck stops
- Hotels
- Child related businesses
- Hospitals
- Doctor's offices
- Apartment complexes
- Airports
- Rental car agencies
- Sporting events
- Parks
- Homeless shelters and community kitchens
- Suicide prevention lines
- Public transportation
- Craigslist
- Libraries, public and schools
- Churches
- City Govt buildings
- Yahoo groups (via email)
- Bike couriers
- Meter readers
- Phone companies/trucks
- Cab companies
- Universities
  - Dining Halls
  - Mail area
  - Common areas

**(check them off)**

- Send web version to groups who are out often
  - Jogging
  - Cycling
  - Mom's groups
  - Riding (horse and motorcycle) Groups
  - Team in training
  - Girl/Boy Scouts
  - Big Brother/Big Sister
  - PTA

Other means of distributing flyers

- See if local papers will insert flyers in the paper
- Ask churches to hand out at their services
- Ask pizza companies to place on each box
- Ask larger businesses if they will forward to all branch locations
- Ask delivery truck drivers to drop off flyers at every stop they make

People know people, try to find out who know high profile people including athletes, celebrities, anyone with connections that can help spread the word and help with the media.

## **MEDIA LIAISON**

Media exposure is key. Media reaches the most people the fastest. This person must be personable & comfortable giving concise information and updates to the press & public.

- Establish relationships with the media. Avoid favoritism, they can all help.
  - Create a media contact list with names, phone numbers, fax numbers, email
  - The media is aware that not all information can be disclosed. Some information is sensitive and must be held back. It is best to state simply that certain issues can't be discussed.
  - Coordinate with LE on the release of information and always *avoid any criticism of the investigation*. To be effective the community and law enforcement need to be working together.
  - Press releases should be prepared after 10 PM and faxed to all stations for use in morning news programs
  - Keep a record of all press releases and announcements.
  - Ask Law enforcement if they have a media spokesperson who can give tips on how to effectively use the media.
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- Every chance there is the MP's face needs to be in front of the public.
  - Personalize the MP's live in every way possible
    - Home videos
    - School activities
    - Sports and special interests they have
    - Different pictures
- 
- Try to verify or discount rumors as quickly as possible.

Don't forget Radio!

Plan "MEDIA THEMES"- notify media well in advance (at least 24 hours)

- Prayer vigils
- Ribbon making
- "Search X (a particular) spot day"

Make a daily fact sheet for those reporters who come into the story late

- Include timeline
- All relevant facts

- Accurate descriptions and spellings of names

***ALWAYS speak of the missing person in the present tense.***

## **COMMUNITY SEARCH COORDINATOR**

- Using social networking begin searches as soon as possible
- Obtain maps of area (web, local govt, USGS, chamber of commerce, sporting goods stores, Delorme software)
- Start at the beginning, the PLS (place last seen) if it does not interfere with law enforcement. Work out.
- MAKE SURE POLICE ARE CALLING IN DOGS (NOT police dogs, unless they are cross trained, SAR dogs are what's needed)!

**With very few exceptions dogs should be called out immediately, as in as soon as the search is activated.** If they are not, ask why. Trailing dogs should be the initial responders. They are the dogs who will take the scent from an item of the victim, start at the PLS (place last seen) and follow the trail. Demand that the dog handler collects the scent article, not the family, not LE, only the handler, even if it means a little extra time. Area search dogs should also be called in if an area is rural or where there will not be a lot of people (this can include abandoned buildings, open fields, woods, etc. If there is a body of water in the area water search dogs should also be called in.

### **Dogs can be used well into a search, days even weeks later.**

- At the same time have community volunteers search and be on the lookout while driving on major roads and highways leading to and from the PLS.
- Search all secondary thoroughfares including railroad tracks, trails, waterways (rivers, flood control ditches, etc)
- Vacant buildings and lots (do not trespass)
- If missing person is in an urban area ask LE if they are doing a door to door search and/or if you can help.
  - Take notes on each home or business
    - Note what the person said and if they were home
    - Note if there are security camera

ATV's should be used on a case by case basis. They destroy evidence and are too loud to hear a voice calling for help, however they are useful in clearing a trail or road quickly.

## **ORGANIZED COMMUNITY SEARCHES**

### ORGANIZE AND PREPARE

- **Solicit & Select Team Leaders**
  - Use social media to find people with LE or military experience who would like to take on this role
    - Team leaders will help their group and be a point person to
      - Brief and Debrief
      - Communicate with the Search Liaison
      - Aid in training other volunteers
- Decide on Date, time and staging area for search
  - Consider size of community outpouring
    - Choose staging area accordingly
    - Ask media liaison to solicit food/water donations
- "Call to Action" on Facebook, twitter, the media
  - use the "event" function on facebook so that people can RSVP and you can get a rough headcount of how many people will be participating
    - Make sure to put a checklist on there of what searchers will need to do/bring
      - Wear closed toed shoes and long pants/shirt
      - Bring a flashlight
      - Bring tape or survey flags for marking possible evidence
      - Bring water and snacks in a pack they can hike with
      - Know your own limits and tell team leaders ahead of time
      - Don't become another missing person!
- Organize map and search zones
- Print flyers for teams to hand out while searching
- Have maps for all team leaders showing their search sector, keep a copy in a folder or binder. Include team leaders name, contact info and date/time on map.
- PRINT a search roster (see templates)(make sure to make enough pages)
- Get carbon paper for making copies of team rosters & briefing forms

### THE SEARCH

- Team leaders first (arrive 30 minutes early)
  - Get cell #'s and radio freq.
    - Brief them on search
    - Hand out team assignments to team leaders

- Include Roster sheet for their team
- Flyers for passing out
- Basic searching sheet (see templates)

#### Status Board

- The status board helps to keep a quick visual reference on all of the searching going on
  - For small efforts a printed word doc is sufficient, for larger needs a poster board with lines drawn is better.

## **SEARCH BASICS**

Remember your job is to assist the official search operation by checking any areas that they are **NOT**. Do not impede official SAR operations.

(Know that you have every right to be out there looking for a MP as long as you obey all laws.)

**Searches are NOT a place for children. There are many dangers out in the field (cliffs, holes, snakes, sharp objects) not to mention the potential of finding the missing person deceased. No child should be out on a search.**

**Likewise, searches are NOT a place for the family to be for the same reason. Family should NOT be out actively searching. If they have pertinent information, they can have someone relay that to the search coordinator.**

#### BEFORE YOU GO

1. Stay organized. Know where people are searching.
2. Only search in groups/teams, never alone.
3. Know your limits. Do not create another search/rescue situation.
4. Stay off of private/restricted property.
5. Obey all laws.

6. Do not interfere/impede any official searches.
7. Make sure you are prepared with necessary supplies.
  - a. Food
  - b. Water
  - c. Clothing Layers
  - d. Appropriate shoes
  - e. Map, compass, GPS
  - f. Flashlight
  - g. Radio, cell phone
  - h. Whistle
  - i. Flagging Tape

## SEARCHING BASICS

- Document where you are starting, what time it is and how many people are in your group.
  - Report this information to Community Center via phone or web (twitter/facebook)
  - Search systematically in a grid (divide areas on a map into small "grid" sections and then mark off as you complete), thoroughly covering one area looking HIGH and LOW before moving on. Remember, if the person is down or injured they can be right next to you on a trail or behind a dumpster and you won't see them unless you are almost on top of them.
  - Determine your "probability of detection" for each area on map and mark it. In other words, would you say that in Area X it was an 80% POD (meaning that if the person was in that area there was an 80% chance that you would have found them.)
    - Variables like how far you can see, how much area you can access, light/dark, terrain will affect this number.
    - The more thoroughly you can search an area the higher the percentage will be.
  - Call out the missing person's name continually (assuming that they will not run)
  - Look for signs that someone has been in the area
  - Crushed vegetation
  - Food/water wrappers
  - Footprints

- Mark anything with tape that looks like it could be connected and report it via phone/web.

## • DO NOT TOUCH ANYTHING

## EVIDENCE

Potential evidence includes anything that matches the descriptions of clothing, personal items **AND anything that appears "out of the ordinary"**, shoe prints, blood, bodily fluids, hair, etc. Cameras are always a great idea and should be encouraged to be taken by the community when out searching whether casually or more formally.

- ***Do NOT touch, lift or move anything that could be evidence.***
- Call the Search Liaison immediately (or LE, if that is how they request it)
- Secure the site and keep people out of the area
- Document on map & write detailed description, date, time & photo if possible

## DONATIONS LIAISON

The community can be a great resource to get a great many things that will be needed. It is better to have only a few people doing this and have a well documented account of who is soliciting donations where to

Volunteers will need food and water. 100's if not thousands of flyers will need to be printed. Banners can be made. All of these things can be acquired by gracious donations from the community.

A QUICK AND EFFECTIVE WAY TO GET THINGS STARTED IS BY ASKING FOR GIFT CARDS TO OFFICE SUPPLY STORES.

- Food
  - Request non-perishable items
  - Ask for help from local church groups
  - Local restaurants may be willing to bring in food
  - Salvation Army & Red Cross may help

- Post to facebook or twitter

Donate any extra food & beverages to a charity organization

- Flyers & Banners
  - Print shops
  - Office stores (often corporate offices can give permission to store)
  - Local businesses
  - Colleges
- Contact local Banner shops

**Always make sure to publicly thank these places in the media & on Facebook/Twitter for their generosity (no matter how small or large).**

**Make sure to send them thank you letters after the search is complete. It can make the difference of them donating or not again if the need should ever arise**

## **PRE-INCIDENT PREPARATIONS**

In an ideal world preparations and planning should be done before a person every goes missing in your community. The goal is to be prepared and hope you never need it.

- A checklist
  - Identify possible facilities for a community center
  - Speak to the owners/city/etc BEFORE hand
  - Prepare a 0-24 hour "kit"
    - Resource guide printed
    - Maps of area (see search coordinator specifics on where to obtain)
    - Volunteer list-those already interested in helping beforehand
    - Flyer materials (tape, tacks, string, staple gun)
    - Office supplies
      - Laminator
      - Sticker paper
- Create a phone tree for the core group
  - Coordinator
  - Family Liaison
  - Community Awareness Liaison

- Media liaison
- Search Coordinator
  
- Create a phone/web/fax list of important community numbers
  - Local and regional law enforcement agencies
  - Local and regional merchants willing to post flyers via fax
  - Local and regional media contacts (radio, television and web)

Find and identify businesses willing to provide supplies and services (banner making, flyer printing, food, office space). Try starting at the chamber of commerce. Make a list of these businesses.

Find out what specially trained teams may be locally available.

- K9 SAR teams
- Helicopters
- Planes
- Mounted patrol (horses)
- ATV's in some cases where you don't need to listen for a voice

Create a gmail account before you need it.

Missingpersoninyourtown(town and county,etc)@gmail.com

Example-missingpersoninsavannah@gmail.com