



THE
journey
WE WALK

A GUIDE TO
SEARCHING FOR OUR
MISSING LOVED ONES

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You are not alone. This guide is to help you on your journey to find your missing loved one. We will not leave an American Behind

Daniel Robinson Foundation:

What to Do After When a Loved One Goes Missing: A Quick Family Guide

THIS IS A PROGRESSIVE GUIDE: MORE SUGGESTIONS WILL BE ADDED IN FUTURE

1. Stay Calm and Organized

Take a Deep Breath:

- Remaining calm is essential for thinking clearly and taking effective action. This will help you approach the situation with a focused mindset.

Notify Friends, Family, and Employers:

- Share the details of your loved one's disappearance and ask if anyone has recently seen or heard from them.
- Take detailed notes of any last sightings, conversations, or interactions your loved one had with others.

Reach Out to Key Contacts:

- Contact their workplace, school, or any places they frequently visit.
- Ask close contacts if they've received any recent messages, calls, or noticed unusual behavior. (Be sure to take thorough notes.)
- Gather as much information as possible about their activities, habits, and interactions in these settings. (Take notes to document everything.)

Organize Information:

- Create a **dedicated folder or binder** to collect and organize all relevant documents, notes, phone numbers, times, dates, and evidence related to the case. This will help you stay organized and ensure you have quick access to important information.

Contact Law Enforcement:

- Once you've done your due diligence and confirmed that your loved one is missing, contact law enforcement in the jurisdiction of their last known location.
- **Important:** There is no policy requiring families to wait to report a missing person in 95% of law enforcement agencies in the US. Predominantly all agencies are **No-Wait Reporting**.
 - If an officer asks you to wait and call back, politely but firmly request to speak with a supervisor.
 - Ask for a copy of the policy that requires waiting to report and make note of the interaction.

By staying calm, reaching out to contacts, organizing critical information, and understanding your rights when engaging law enforcement, you can approach the situation methodically and ensure no time is wasted in searching for your loved one.

***Note:** This is an incredibly emotional time for everyone involved. It's important to designate a trusted family member to serve as the lead person. This individual can take charge of coordinating efforts and communicating with law enforcement and the public on behalf of the family.

2. Work Closely with Law Enforcement

Provide All Relevant Details:

- Share a recent photo, detailed physical description, clothing last worn, location where your loved one was last seen, and any known habits, medical conditions, or vehicle information. Providing complete and accurate information helps law enforcement act quickly and effectively.

Obtain a Case Number:

- Write down the official case/report number assigned to your loved one's case and the name and contact information of the officer or detective handling it. This will be essential for follow-ups and ensuring continuity in communication.

Ask Key Questions:

- **Who should I contact for updates?**
- **What are the next steps in the investigation?**
- **Are there any searches planned?**
- **Has my loved one been added to the NCIC database?** (National Crime Information Center)

- **Have they been entered into the NamUs system?** (National Missing and Unidentified Persons System)
- **If applicable:** Has an **Amber Alert**, **Clear Alert**, or **Silver Alert** been issued?
- **How are you engaging the public for tips and sightings?** (Flyers, news coverage, and social media campaigns)

Maintain Regular Contact:

- Follow up with law enforcement consistently to stay updated on the case's progress.
- Keep a detailed record of all communications, including dates, times, and the content of discussions. This helps track developments and ensures accountability.

Involve Law Enforcement in Your Search Efforts:

- Request their presence and support during all planned search efforts to enhance safety and provide credibility to your operations.
- Share your search plans, including locations, dates, and times, so they can offer guidance and avoid conflicting efforts.

Ask More Questions:

- Don't hesitate to ask additional questions to better understand the investigative process. Asking thoughtful questions not only demonstrates your active involvement but also builds confidence that progress is being made.

By maintaining open communication and collaboration with law enforcement, you ensure that your efforts align with theirs, maximizing the effectiveness of the search and investigation.

3. Create A Social Media Account & A Website:

- **Establish Dedicated Social Media Accounts:** Create social media profiles specifically for your missing loved one to centralize information and updates.
- **Create a Family Website:** Develop a dedicated website to centralize all information, updates, and resources related to your missing loved one. Include photos, contact information, and updates, and make it a hub for anyone seeking details or wanting to help.
- **Use Recent, Clear Photos:** Share high-quality, up-to-date photos of your loved one to aid recognition.
- **Include Essential Details:** Provide key information such as their name, age, physical description, the location where they were last seen, and a contact number for tips.

- **Share Widely:** Post updates on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and your family website. Encourage friends and followers to share these posts to increase visibility.
- **Join Local Groups:** Share updates on local community pages, neighborhood groups, and missing persons networks. Encourage others to join in the search and share information.
- **Protect Sensitive Information:** Avoid sharing private details, such as information about persons of interest or suspects, that could hinder the investigation or jeopardize safety.
- **Create Flyers:** If you haven't already, design and distribute flyers featuring clear photos, essential details, and contact information to maximize visibility.
- **Post Regular Updates:** Share daily updates about your missing loved one on social media and the family website to keep the case active and in the public eye.
- **Consider Starting a Podcast:** If media coverage slows or stops, creating a podcast can be a powerful way to maintain public interest and awareness about your loved one's case.

Best Times To Post On Social Media For Maximum Engagements:

- Facebook: Tues, Wed, and Fri at 9 AM – 1 PM
- Instagram: Wed and Fri at 10 AM – 12 PM
- Twitter (X): Monday – Fri at 9 AM – 12 PM
- LinkedIn: Tues – Thurs from 10 AM – 2 PM
- TikTok: Tuesday at 9 AM, Thurs at 12 PM, and Friday at 5 AM
- YouTube: Thurs and Friday between 12 PM and 4 PM
- Pinterest: Saturdays at 8 PM – 11 PM and weekday evenings
- DO NOT ENGAGE THOSE OFFERING INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA. (If a PI is needed, search for a well-established, reputable agency.)

4. Leverage Local Newspapers, Radio, and News Organizations for Community Support

Reach Out to Local Media Outlets:

- **Email or Call:** Contact your local newspaper, radio stations, and news organizations.
 - Most contact information can be found on their website, typically under sections like “Contact Us,” “Place Ad,” or “Customer Service.”
- **Request an Interview:** Ask for a 10–15-minute on-air interview or a feature segment to share information about your loved one and raise awareness.

Engage on Social Media:

- Post detailed information about your loved one's disappearance on the social media pages of local media outlets.

- Include a clear photo, physical description, last known location, and a contact number for tips.
- Encourage followers to share the post to help spread the word.

Leveraging local media outlets effectively increases community awareness, encourages public involvement, and ensures more people are informed about your loved one's case.

5. Organize Search Efforts: Recruit Volunteers

How to Recruit Volunteers:

- **Leverage Online Platforms:** Post announcements on your family website and social media platforms requesting volunteers to assist in the search. Provide clear details such as the location, date, and time of the search, along with any necessary equipment volunteers should bring.
- **Engage Local Communities:** Reach out to local organizations such as churches, bike clubs, hiking groups, fraternities, sororities, and community centers. These groups often have members who are willing to participate in community-based efforts.
- **Utilize Media Outreach:** Send out a press release to local and regional news organizations to announce the search effort. Include a compelling call-to-action for volunteers and highlight the importance of community support in finding your loved one.
- **Collaborate with Online Groups:** Post in community forums, local Facebook groups, and neighborhood apps like Nextdoor to recruit additional volunteers.

Coordinate Searches:

- **Work with Law Enforcement:**
 - Inform law enforcement of your plans to avoid interfering with official investigations. Provide specific details such as the location, date, and time of the search.
 - Seek guidance on any restrictions, safety concerns, or sensitive areas that may require additional precautions.
- **Assemble a Command Team:**
 - Identify and appoint key roles for the search operation:
 - **Search Coordinator:** Oversees the search and ensures plans are executed efficiently.
 - **Logistics Coordinator:** Manages supplies, equipment, and transportation needs.
 - **Medic:** Provides first aid and handles medical emergencies.
 - **Communications Lead:** Ensures all team members remain in contact and disseminates updates.

- **Plan the Search:**
 - Base your search strategy on information gathered about your loved one's disappearance. Prioritize locations based on credible tips, proximity to their last known location, and potential hazards.
 - Visit the area beforehand to assess safety concerns such as private property issues, hazardous terrain, and environmental conditions.
 - Determine the type of search required based on the circumstances of the case, volunteer safety, weather, terrain, and the scope of the area.
 - **Engage Family and Friends:** Involve close friends and family members to increase manpower and provide emotional support to those participating in the search.
 - **Prepare Volunteers:**
 - Designate a meeting spot for all volunteers to gather before the search begins.
 - Conduct a **safety briefing** to outline the search plan, emergency protocols, and safety measures. An example of how to conduct a briefing can be found on the PleaseHelpFindDaniel.com website.
 - Implement the **buddy system** to ensure no one is searching alone.
 - **Set Rules and Standards:**
 - Clearly outline search boundaries, emergency procedures, and expected conduct to ensure the safety and organization of the search team.
 - Let volunteers know the search is entirely on a **voluntary basis**, and each participant assumes responsibility for their own safety.
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Record Participation:

- **Sign-In and Sign-Out Sheets:**
 - **Sign-In:** At the start of the search, all volunteers must sign in, providing their name, contact information, and any emergency contacts.
 - **Sign-Out:** Volunteers must sign out upon returning to confirm they have safely completed their participation.
 - Keep these records organized and readily accessible to ensure accountability and the safety of everyone involved.
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Secure Supplies and Equipment:

- **Contact Local Grocery Stores:** Reach out to local grocery stores and other businesses to request donations of water, snacks, and other supplies for volunteers. Emphasize the community-focused nature of the effort and how their contributions will support a meaningful cause.
- **Partner with Equipment Providers:** Approach companies that may be willing to offer discounts or loans on essential search equipment such as ATVs, drones, GPS devices, and other tools. Examples include outdoor retailers, drone manufacturers, or local businesses specializing in recreational or utility vehicles.

- **Express Gratitude:** Ensure that businesses and organizations contributing to your efforts are acknowledged through your social media platforms, website, and press releases to encourage ongoing community support.
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Bring Flyers for Distribution:

- Provide volunteers with **flyers** featuring clear photos, essential details, and contact information about your missing loved one.
 - Encourage volunteers to take flyers home and distribute them in their neighborhoods, cities, and even states. This broadens the reach of awareness efforts and engages volunteers beyond the search event.
 - Include instructions on where to post flyers, such as community bulletin boards, local businesses, and high-traffic public areas.
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Additional Considerations from Successful Missing Persons Searches:

- **Document the Effort:** Maintain detailed records of the areas searched, volunteer participation, and any findings. This information can be shared with law enforcement to prevent duplication of efforts and highlight areas that need further exploration.
- **Coordinate with Experts:** Consider involving professional search-and-rescue teams or K9 units if resources allow. They bring valuable expertise to the operation.
- **Provide Comfort Stations:** Set up rest areas with water, snacks, and medical supplies to keep volunteers safe and energized during the search.
- **Debrief After Each Search:** Hold a short meeting after each search to gather feedback, share updates, and plan for future efforts.

By equipping volunteers with flyers, you empower them to continue raising awareness long after the search, expanding the network of people who can help locate your loved one.

Create Flyers:

- Include: clear photo, name, age, physical description, last known location, and contact details.
- Distribute flyers at gas stations, grocery stores, hospitals, shelters, and public spaces.
- **Check Key Locations:**
 - Hospitals, police stations, homeless shelters, public transit stations, and areas they frequent.

6. Document Everything

- Keep a detailed log:
 - Date, time, and content of all calls or messages.
 - Names of law enforcement officials and their updates.
 - Tips and leads shared by others.
 - Information you think is needed that may have come to mind later.
- Save screenshots of social media shares, comments, or messages.
 - Record Date, time, and profile picture and name of leads that may show up in the comments.
 - Record Dates, Times, Profile pictures and name of any posts that are threatening or concerning. (Report to Law Enforcement)

7. Reach Out To Advocacy And Support Groups

- Contact organizations specializing in missing persons for guidance and additional resources.
- Examples include:
 - Daniel Robinson Foundation
 - The Black and Missing Foundation
 - NamUs National Missing and Unidentified Persons System
 - AAMMP African American Missing and Murdered Persons
 - Black Missing and Exploited Children
 - No more Silence
 - Dream Catcher Foundation
 - The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)
 - NAMI- National Alliance for Mental Illness Missing Persons Advocacy network.
 - AMBER Amber Alert System
 - Operation Lookout (National Child Alert Program)
 - The Missing Persons Clearinghouse
 - Local or national nonprofits focusing on missing individuals.
 - NBJC National Black Justice Coalition
 - Polly Klaas Foundation

8. Consider Media Outreach

- Contact local news stations, radio, and newspapers to share information.
- **Prepare for Interviews:**
- Stick to the facts: describe your loved one, where they were last seen, and share a contact number.
- Avoid discussing sensitive information that could interfere with the investigation.

9. Stay Vigilant And Take Care Of Yourself

- Keep your phone always charged and with you in case someone calls with information.
- Ensure someone is always available to answer follow-up calls or give tips.
- **Self-Care Matters:** This is an emotionally exhausting time. Rest, eat well, and ask for help when needed.

10. Follow Up On Leads And Tips

- Share credible leads with law enforcement immediately.
- Do not attempt dangerous searches or investigations on your own.
- Verify any information to avoid scams or misinformation.

11. Know Your Rights

- There is NO waiting period to report someone missing in most law enforcement agencies.
- If law enforcement is not responsive, escalate concerns to higher authorities.
- Use state or federal missing persons resources as needed.
- You have a right to information under the Freedom of Information Act. (FOIA) Request a FOIA.
- If your loved one's case needs a second look, you have the right to request a FBI case review. If denied, you can request a again.

12. Hiring A PI Or Search Organization

- If a private investigator is needed, research and take careful consideration to ensure that the PI is reputable and experienced in the area you're seeking help.
- Before bringing on a PI, define your needs. Determine the specific type of help you need. For example: (e.g., surveillance, witness interviews, database searches, etc.)
- Consider whether the PI should specialize in missing American or related cases (e.g., abductions, family tracing).
- When hiring a private investigator or anyone offering assistance, ensure you obtain a written contract outlining all agreements between you and the agency. If the service is provided on a pro bono basis, make sure the contract explicitly states the terms of the pro bono arrangement. I also recommend obtaining legal representation to review all contracts and agreements, including those with TV networks, media outlets, and news organizations.
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Important Contacts

Resource	Phone Number	Website
Daniel Robinson Foundation contact@drfus.org	1-803-200-7994	danielrobinsonfoundation.org
Black and Missing Foundation 7400 Buchanan Street, #2431	1-877-972-2634	blackandmissinginc.com
National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) 1849 C Street NW, MS-3662 Washington, DC 20240	1-833-872-5176	namus.gov
National Center for Missing & Exploited Children 333 John Carlyle Street Suite #125 Alexandria, VA 22314-5950	1-800-THE-LOST (1- 800-843-5678)	missingkids.org
Local Law Enforcement	Call 911 or local precinct	

Remember: You are not alone on this journey. Stay strong, stay focused, and seek help when needed. Your determination and efforts can make a difference.

David Robinson II (Founder/President)

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