



SASKATCHEWAN
MISSING PERSONS
PARTNERSHIP

Saskatchewan Agency Response Guide for Missing Persons

July 2024

Saskatchewan Missing Persons Partnership Introduction

The Saskatchewan Missing Persons Partnership (SMPP) is a unique, collaborative approach between community agencies, Indigenous groups, police agencies, search and rescue volunteers, and government ministries. The SMPP is chaired by the Ministry of Justice and aims to share education and awareness resources to prevent people from going missing. It also helps coordinate policies and legislation and supports agencies that provide services for families of missing persons.

The SMPP was established by the Government of Saskatchewan in 2005 as the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons. The name was changed in 2021 to better reflect the location and collaborative focus of the group.

Since 2005, the partnership has played a role in supporting the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police (SACP) to develop a standard Missing Persons Policy for police agencies. The partnership also provided input into *The Missing Persons and Presumption of Death Act* in 2009 and further amendments to the Act in 2018 to improve emergency access to information to aid in the search for missing persons.

Every year the SMPP proclaims and hosts Missing Persons Week in Saskatchewan to honour and raise awareness about long-term missing persons and to support their families.

Agency Response Guide to Missing Persons

This Agency Response Guide to Missing Persons is intended to support agencies and provide guidance regarding best practices to help families and friends of missing persons. This guide covers topics by section including:

- 1) Missing Persons Facts and Risk Factors
- 2) Reporting a Missing Person
- 3) Supporting the Search and Investigation
- 4) Services for Families
- 5) Long Term Missing Persons
- 6) Agency Resources and Contacts

Throughout an investigation, police may work with various agencies to gather information to help locate the missing person; to provide support to families during the investigation or through long-term missing persons cases; and/or to support the missing person upon their return.

Even agencies not specifically designated to provide counselling or support services to the families of missing persons may become involved if their client base includes people who are vulnerable or may be at high risk of going missing.

Table of Contents

1) Missing Persons Facts and Risk Factors	4
Children and Youth Missing from Care	5
Amber Alerts	5
Saskatoon Operation Runaway Risk Assessment Tool	5
Understanding Key Risk Factors	6
Dementia and Getting Lost	6
Understanding Personal Circumstances.....	6
Voluntary Disappearances	7
2) Reporting a Missing Person	7
Key Information for Police.....	9
3) Supporting the Search and Investigation.....	10
Communication with Police	10
Supporting the Police Search	11
Public Tips	12
Managing Public Donations	12
Third Party Organizations.....	13
4) Services for Families and Friends of Missing Persons.....	14
Police-based Victim Services and Missing Person Liaisons	14
Family Information Liaison Unit (FILU).....	15
Canadian Benefit for Parents of Young Victims of Crime	15
Return Interviews.....	15
Supporting Children or Youth.....	16
5) Long Term Missing Persons	17
Ambiguous Loss	17
Age progression photos	17
Honouring the Missing.....	18
<i>The Missing Persons and Presumption of Death Act</i>	18
Managing Financial and Property Matters for a Missing Person	19

6) Missing Persons Agency Resources20

Missing Persons Partnership Contact List	20
Missing Persons Checklist	23
Missing Persons Agency Support Checklist and Resources.....	26

1) Missing Persons Facts and Risk Factors

Anyone can go missing for any number of different reasons. People go missing due to accidents, getting lost in the wilderness, dementia, mental health issues, and in some cases, foul play.

Although police agencies receive thousands of missing persons reports in Saskatchewan every year, thankfully most of those cases are not criminal and they are found safe.

The Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police defines a missing person as anyone whose location is unknown and who might be:

- In need of assistance to return home.
- The victim of a crime or offence.
- In critical need of medical attention.
- Mentally impaired and unable to care for themselves.
- Anyone who may pose a danger to themselves or others.
- A child or youth who leaves their residence for an indefinite time.

Anyone can go missing, but there are certain factors that make people more vulnerable to getting lost or being in danger if they go missing:

- Children and youth considered to be at at-risk.
- People who have survived or been victims of abuse, neglect, or interpersonal violence, including domestic violence and abuse.
- Victims and/or survivors of human trafficking.
- People who work in the sex trade.
- People with addictions or those who use a high volume of illicit drugs and alcohol.
- Elderly people with dementia or medical needs.
- People with intellectual or cognitive disabilities.
- People with physical disabilities including those who require mobility aids and people who are deaf or blind.
- People with serious medical conditions requiring regular medication.
- Hikers, hunters, fishers, or snowmobilers who may get lost in the wilderness.

Children and Youth Missing from Care

Children and youth make up the majority of missing persons reports in Saskatchewan. Thankfully, most missing youth are found safe within 48 hours.

Data from the Government of Canada Missing Persons website shows there were 1,876 adults and 5,702 reports of children and youth missing in Saskatchewan in 2023. According to the 2023 Fast Fact Sheet on [Publications \(canadasmissing.ca\)](https://publications.gc.ca/canadasmissing), 73% of all missing children and youth in 2023 were identified as runaways and many were reported missing multiple times a year.

Amber Alerts

The AMBER ALERT system uses an official protocol to activate an urgent public appeal for information in child abduction cases by using widespread media broadcasts and public alerts on phones. They are only used for cases meeting specific criteria.

Agencies can help families understand the special circumstances which may lead to an Amber Alert in Canada. An Amber Alert is only activated by law enforcement when ALL of the following four criteria are met:

- 1) Police have confirmed that an abduction has taken place.
- 2) The victim is a child or has a proven physical or cognitive/intellectual disability.
- 3) There is reason to believe the victim is in danger of serious physical injury or harm.
- 4) There is information available that, if broadcasted to the public, could assist in the safe recovery of the victim (ex: description of a vehicle or person suspected of the abduction).

Saskatoon Operation Runaway Risk Assessment Tool

In 2018-19, the Saskatoon Police Service partnered with the Ministry of Social Services and EGADZ Youth Centre to launch a pilot project to develop a Missing Youth Risk Assessment to address the issue of youth reported missing from care. The Risk Assessment was developed directly with input from youth and informed by their lived experiences.

In 2022 EGADZ launched an app that builds on the risk assessment tool to help youth workers directly engaging with youth determine if they are at risk or if they are simply staying with friends when they do not return to their residence or check in with their care provider. If the assessment guides the worker to report the young person missing, the worker can easily share all relevant information with their local police services with a click of a button. There are plans to expand the tool to other agencies across the province.

In 2023 EGADZ operated My Homes reported 322 Missing Person incidents to the Saskatoon Police Service representing a 41% decrease in reporting since 2021. During this time the app has assisted workers in properly assessing risk while at the same time providing police with the necessary information to conduct a missing person investigation.

In 2024 the Ministry of Social Services approved the app for use in other homes and it is now being used in additional locations.

Understanding Key Risk Factors

Police agencies receive thousands of missing persons reports in Saskatchewan every year, thankfully most of those cases are not criminal and the person is found safe within 48 hours. Understanding key risk factors for missing persons can help identify why someone may have gone missing and how to respond appropriately.

There are many different reasons people go missing, and these reasons can change in cases where people go missing multiple times. People may go missing because of accidents, getting lost in the wilderness, dementia, cognitive disabilities, mental health issues, or foul play.

Some people go missing intentionally – choosing not to be found. People who go missing intentionally may leave because of a relationship breakdown or personal issue, if they are dealing with addictions or substance abuse, trying to escape interpersonal violence and abuse, or if they live a transient lifestyle and have lost contact with family and friends.

Dementia and Getting Lost

People with dementia or Alzheimer's Disease are at higher risk of going missing. For instance, 60 per cent of people living with dementia go missing at least once and at least five per cent get lost repeatedly. Familiar surroundings may suddenly become strange to them. They may get disoriented and become unable to find their way home.

The Alzheimer's Society of Saskatchewan can support families with safety plans and even tracking devices to help protect people living with dementia from going missing. Statistics show 89 per cent of people living with dementia who become lost will be found within 1.6 km from the point where they were last seen. Locating devices can maintain a person's safety and independence while providing peace of mind for their family and caregivers.

Understanding Personal Circumstances

After receiving a report of a missing person, police may ask questions to understand the missing person's situation, habits and other personal circumstances or characteristics that may help to locate them.

- What was the person doing prior to going missing?
- Does the missing person have a significant other?
- Has there been any stressful events in the person's life?
- How would they typically deal with stress?

- Are there any concerns about mental health conditions?
- Is there any history of suicide attempts or self-harm?
- Does the person have any addictions or substance abuse issues with alcohol or drugs?
- Do they have any underlying medical conditions or health concerns?
- For women, is there any possibility they may be pregnant?
- What are the person's hobbies or interests? (Examples: camping, hiking, art, music, etc.)
- Has the person gone missing before?
 - Did they ever mention that they might repeat this behaviour and leave again?
 - Was there a note left in previous occasions?
 - Where did the missing person go the last time they left, and for how long?
 - Where were they found previously?

Voluntary Disappearances

There are some cases when a person may choose to leave or disappear and cut off all contact with their relatives or acquaintances. They may have a variety of personal reasons for leaving ranging from escaping interpersonal violence and abuse, to coping with addictions, or the breakdown of personal relationships.

Regardless of whether the person disappeared voluntarily, police will not stop the investigation until they have been located.

If the person went missing voluntarily and does not want other people to know where they are located, the family, friends or persons making the report should be prepared to be told only that the missing person was found alive and well. For privacy reasons, no other information can be shared in this situation regarding the missing person's location or reasons for leaving.

2) Reporting a Missing Person

If you believe that someone is missing, it is important to file a missing person's report with the local police right away. You do not have to wait 24 hours. The sooner a report is filed, the earlier the police can start looking into the case. You also do not have to be a family member. Anyone can file a missing persons report, whether it be a friend, coworker, neighbour or even a community agency.

As an agency, it is important to emphasize the need for timely reporting if a person is believed to be missing. Some people may be hesitant to report their missing relatives or friends to the police fearing that may escalate the situation.

They may feel shame or reluctance in situations where they are estranged or have a complicated relationship or a recent fight with the person. **If the family is uncomfortable filing the report, the agency may take the responsibility of notifying the police.**

Myths and Facts about Missing Persons Cases

Myth: You must wait 24 hours to report someone missing.

Fact: REPORT A MISSING PERSON IMMEDIATELY. Remember: "a day delayed is another day missing" as the evidence trail goes colder.

Myth: You must be family to report someone missing

Fact: ANYONE CAN REPORT SOMEONE MISSING. This includes co-workers, friends, and neighbors.

Myth: You must report to the police jurisdiction wherever that person went missing from.

Fact: REPORT TO THE NEAREST POLICE STATION.

Myth: You cannot report someone missing if they have been found before.

Fact: Not every event surrounding a missing person is the same. REPORT SOMEONE MISSING NO MATTER WHAT HAS OCCURRED IN THE PAST.

Myth: Police will not investigate missing persons with high-risk lifestyles.

Fact: ALL missing person reports are investigated, and ALL unsolved missing person investigations remain active until there is a final outcome to the case.

When a person goes missing it is a profoundly emotional experience for the family, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances left behind. They may face a lot of questions from friends, neighbours, and police, and perhaps from the media and the public. These experiences can

lead to a sense of desperation, confusion and even isolation. There is no universal way to respond to the disappearance of a person. Instead, what makes sense depends on individual needs, experiences, and circumstances.

Key Information for Police

In the initial stage of the investigation families and friends of the missing person should prepare to provide information about the missing person and answer questions from police investigators. It is important for families and friends to be honest when responding to these questions. They should not fear repercussions from police regarding reporting things like illicit drug use.

When a Missing Persons Report is filed, police may ask a wide range of questions such as:

- Basic contact information for the missing person
- Basic information, such as birth date, nicknames, current and previous addresses, current and former employers
- Physical description including: height, weight, age, build, hair colour and length, eye colour, distinguishing birthmarks, tattoos, piercings, or facial hair.
- A recent photo of the missing person
- Information about the last time the person was seen including:
 - Last known location and time they were last seen;
 - Who they were with;
 - What they were wearing, anything they may be carrying;
 - What they were doing or planning to do;
 - Information about their typical transportation or vehicle.
- Social media platforms used to communicate including Facebook or Instagram profiles, Twitter, etc.
- Health and medical conditions including medications.
- Dementia or physical or cognitive disabilities
- Concerns with mental illness
- Addictions, substance abuse or drug use
- Potential contacts and friends and locations

Additional questions or considerations

- **Money** – Does the missing person have access to money or credit cards? Where applicable, parents/guardians should find out if the missing person accessed bank accounts through ATM withdrawals or if money is missing.
- **Transportation** – Does the missing person have access to a vehicle (directly or through a friend)?

- If so, is that vehicle still present? Is the missing person familiar with public transportation?
- **Clothing/toiletries** – does the evidence suggest that the missing person has intentionally left? Missing clothes, toiletries, cosmetics, medication, or other items of personal significance often indicate preparation.
- **Social Media** – does the missing person use social media? Have they done so recently (e.g. updating Facebook status)? Can you provide a list of social media platforms that the missing person used? This includes Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and other social media communications platforms, but can also include buy and sell apps, dating/relationship apps or others.
- **Inconsistent behaviour outside the norm.** Any out of character behaviour may suggest distress or the possibility of an accident or foul play.

3) Supporting the Search and Investigation

Communication with Police

After the missing persons report is filed, the family can request the following information from police:

- Missing Persons Case File Number
- Lead Investigator name, rank, badge number and contact information.

Primary Contact: To simplify communication with the family or loved ones, the police may request a designated primary contact with basic contact information such as a name, phone number and/or email addresses. The Primary Contact should be a member of the family or a friend of the missing person who is willing to act as a liaison between the family and the police. **If members of the family or friends are unable or unwilling to take on this role, an agency representative may agree to serve as a contact instead.**

The designated Primary Contact is responsible to request updates from the lead investigator and to relay any questions about the status of the investigation. In the unfortunate event that the case remains open for months, and/or transitions to a long-term investigation, the primary contact should arrange a regular time to check in with police to ensure family, friends and relevant people are kept updated and informed about the investigation.

What can family and friends do right away to support the police investigation?

Immediately secure the personal belongings and living space of the missing person until the police provide further direction. This includes:

- Items such as a hairbrush, a toothbrush, or undergarments. Personal items are important because investigators may need to use them for DNA analysis.
- Any electronic equipment such as a cell phone, tablet, or computer. Note the model of the cell phone and the service provider.
- If possible, a list of all online aliases or nicknames and usernames with passwords used in online chat rooms and social media apps and websites such as Facebook, Instagram, Threads, Twitter, Skype, Snapchat, Zoom, WhatsApp.
- Any personal documents such as banking and credit card statements as well as bank card information.
- Any written material such as a journal.

Contact any friends, family or acquaintances who might have any ideas about where the missing person may be.

- Start with those closest to the missing person. Create a record (logbook) of each person contacted and when they were contacted.
- If you learn any additional information, write it down in the logbook and **pass it on to the police.**
- Put up flyers with a picture of the missing person around your community or share missing persons posts from the police agency on social media.
- Inform relevant persons about the disappearance of the missing person including the missing person's employer, their bank, and their family physician when appropriate.
- If a child is missing, contact their school and update them on the situation.

Supporting the Police Search

In addition to collecting information, police will lead an extensive search. **It is important to allow the police to direct the search effort to ensure it is properly coordinated and any evidence found within the search site is protected and preserved.** The police may enlist the help of trained volunteers through local chapters of the Search and Rescue Saskatchewan Association of Volunteer to support search efforts.

Social Media, Flyers, and Media Relations

Depending on the circumstances surrounding a disappearance, social media, flyers, or posters can help with the search.

- When distributing information on social media every effort should be made to share information that has already been created by police as opposed to creating new content or posts.

- If there are any errors in content created by police or the information changes, police should be contacted promptly to ensure the revision is made.
- Social media posts should clearly identify the agency of jurisdiction, contact information for the agency and direction to contact police directly with any updates.
- Always discuss and coordinate poster distribution plans with police.
- Use recent pictures that resemble the missing person and try to include multiple angles including photos showing distinguishing marks or tattoos.
- Make multiple copies and electronic copies of photos and videos.
- Help the family prepare a media kit using the Media Relations toolkit.

Public Tips

Any person with information should be encouraged to contact police directly so they can ask for further details.

Anonymous tips can be submitted to Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477.

If a member of the public contacts an agency or family member with any information, it is critical to provide it to police as soon as possible. If a family member, friend, or agency receives any information they should record the time, date and person who provided it. They should attempt to identify the source of the information only if it is safe to do so.

No one should fear repercussions from law enforcement when providing information or tips. It is important to be honest about things like gang activity, street drug use, or significant others. Being honest and open about these details is critical to help bring the missing home.

Managing Public Donations

People and community groups who want to support the search efforts may wish to donate money.

Donations may be tied to a specific purpose for the search or applied to outstanding expenses. Either way, it is important to accurately record all incoming and outgoing transactions to ensure the effective use of funds. Some suggestions on how to use financial donations include:

- Paying for fuel and transportation costs.
- Billboard signs and posters for public awareness.
- Supplies for volunteers such as food, nametags, first aid kits, water, blankets, cameras, flashlights, radios etc.

- Supporting family members who are unable to work by paying for bills, buying groceries, and supporting the needs of children.
- Providing a financial reward for information pertaining to the case.

Families are under no obligation to fundraise, especially if they do not feel comfortable that the fundraiser honours the missing person. Discourage families from accepting donations with conditions attached such as promising the first interview to tell their story.

Setting up a community not-for-profit bank account may be useful for managing monetary donations. This can provide a safe and secure way to collect donations and increase options available for accepting funds including cheques or e-transfers. Online banking also improves transparency and accountability by tracking transactions. All major banks in Canada offer not-for-profit bank accounts but they vary in terms of service fees and the level of monthly services provided.

Third Party Organizations

Third parties may reach out to families offering to help or support the search for their missing loved one. It is up to families to decide to accept help from Elders, national or provincial agencies, for-profit organizations, or mediums or psychics. Before deciding to accept these offers, they may want to consider the following:

- What is the reputation of the organization?
- What service do they offer and how will it benefit the search?
- Do members of the organization have any training or background knowledge about missing persons cases. For example: are they trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, or do they have special training for ground search support?
- Does the organization have an intake process and what is the purpose of the information they are gathering from the family?
- Do they require or expect any monetary compensation at any point and if not, how are they funded? Are there any hidden costs such as travel expenses?
- Is the organization asking for verbal or written consent from the family?
- Will their involvement potentially interfere with any police efforts?

The family may wish to consult with the lead investigator to ensure their efforts do not interfere with any part of the ongoing police investigation.

4) Services for Families and Friends of Missing Persons

Families and friends of missing persons may look for different kinds of support from family, friends and/or various agencies. Agencies can play an important role in providing practical and emotional support. It is important to recognize that every situation is different.

- Always respect the family's wishes regarding privacy. Do NOT share information with the media, extended family, or friends without prior approval.
- Agencies may help prepare families to meet with an investigator by going through questions police may ask.
- The agency may offer to take notes on behalf of the family during the meeting; this allows people to concentrate on the interview or information from police. This applies to different circumstances and not all families will accept this offer.
- You can support families with coping strategies by focusing on surviving each day and drawing strength from what needs to be done the next day.
- Concentrate on the fact the person is missing as the traumatic event, not on what may or may not have happened to them.
- Do not refer to the missing person in the past tense.

Police-based Victim Services and Missing Person Liaisons

Police-based Victim Services programs are available in all Saskatchewan communities to support families of persons who are missing with case updates, information, and referrals to other agencies and community resources.

Specialized Missing Persons Liaisons are available in Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and Regina through police-based Victim Services to coordinate with police, communities, and other agencies to provide direct supports to families of missing persons. They also work with Indigenous Resource Officers to provide culturally appropriate responses for Indigenous families.

Missing Persons Cases are referred to Victims Services by police if they:

- Are suspicious or unusual in nature.
- Involve Major Crime Unit investigations.
- Require search and rescue.
- Involve distraught family members or individuals requiring support.
- Or if any involved person or family person requests help from Victims Services.

Family Information Liaison Unit (FILU)

The Family Information Liaison Unit (FILU) is a federally funded program that connects Indigenous families with agencies who can provide information about their missing loved one. FILU is a “one stop information service” that works with several government and non-government agencies to support families in their quest for answers.

Canadian Benefit for Parents of Young Victims of Crime

The Canadian Benefit for Parents of Young Victims of Crime is a federal income support available to parents or legal guardians who have taken time off work to deal with the death or disappearance of their child. Eligible parents or legal guardians can receive \$450.00 per week for a maximum of 35 weeks over a two-year period. Prior to mentioning this benefit to families, it is important to ensure that the family meets the eligibility criteria. For more information about eligibility, and instructions on how to apply please search online at Canada.ca for Parents of Young Victims of Crime.

When the missing return home

In Canada, more than 95 per cent of missing person cases are resolved. However, having a loved one go missing and then return can be complicated. Families may experience anxiety that the person will disappear again. They may observe that the experience changed the person who was missing or feel that the social dynamics of family relationships or friendships have changed.

In cases where the missing person was a victim of a crime, the psychological trauma can create a sense of continuing loss, and the person may return noticeably different from when they went missing.

Return Interviews

Upon the return of a person who was missing, it may be helpful to have a private session with a trained professional where they can talk without their family present. Family may be encouraged to participate in their own facilitated session with a trained professional to prepare them for what they might hear. These sessions can provide a better sense of potential issues and prepare them for trauma responses that might occur when the family and the missing person are reunited.

If requested/permitted by the family, a **return interview** can help agencies prioritize what services or resources the missing person and their family may need for coping in the future. A return interview may also allow for therapeutic intervention which addresses current

issues while identifying emergent issues and generating strategies to minimize the risk of that individual going missing again. The agency should advise participants in the return interview to engage the missing person with sensitivity and try to take the person's concerns seriously.

Including the returned person in gatherings with family and friends may help to resolve some of the challenges within the family. The missing person should be given a positive welcome and the opportunity to talk to a person they choose about what they experienced while they were gone. This conversation may be informal and spontaneous, or it could involve a planned family gathering or a "return interview" where the returned missing person is allowed (***not pressured***) to tell their story and family members are encouraged to share what happened to them while the missing person was away.

Supporting Children or Youth

If an agency becomes aware that the person was a victim of crime during the disappearance, the agency should either inform the police or encourage the person to inform the police. **An agency which deals with children/youth is required, under *The Child and Family Services Act*, to report suspected/alleged child abuse to child protection authorities.**

An agency may assist in a return interview to:

- Ensure that the young person's experience is documented and to understand the reasons for the disappearance.
- Listen and establish the views and wishes of the child or young person; and
- Provide information and explanation of options to support the youth/child with decision making.

If an interpreter is used during the interview, it is important that the interpreter use the exact words of the child or young person, and not a translation of what they think the child or young person meant to say. To avoid misinterpreting a child/youth's words, it is best practice to use an interpreter with no personal connection to the returned young person.

It's important to remember that each situation is unique and there is no "one size fits all" approach to reunification of family members. Professionals and agencies involved in helping the family and the returning individual are encouraged to provide as much support.

5) Long Term Missing Persons

People who have been missing for longer than six months are considered to be long-term missing persons. Their names, photos and details are listed online on the [Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police Database](#).

Although people sometimes refer to long term, unresolved cases of missing persons as “cold cases”, it is important to know that missing persons cases are never closed until they are resolved. All long-term missing persons cases remain open, and police will never stop investigating until that person is found or identified. All leads will be followed up on, no matter how old they may be. **Anyone with a tip about a missing person should contact the police or Crimestoppers at 1-800-222-8477.**

If a new tip or lead reactivates an investigation, families may relive the crisis and experience a period of heightened hope. This can be especially traumatic if the lead proves unhelpful. **Agencies can support the family with counseling or referrals to other agencies which provide counseling.**

Ambiguous Loss

The unresolved grief family and friends can experience when someone goes missing is known as ambiguous loss. In its simplest terms, ambiguous loss may be defined as “here, but not here”. Pauline Boss, who coined this term, notes that “with ambiguous loss, there is no closure; the challenge is to learn how to live with the ambiguity”. When someone is missing, there is no sense of closure. The sense of not knowing and continuing hope that the person will be found does not allow the family/friends to move on as they could after a death. Family and friends may experience many conflicting emotions which creates ongoing stress and trauma. They may fear the person will never come home, feel angry because their loved one is missing, wish they had closure, and feel guilty at experiencing these emotions.

Age progression photos

If the person has been missing for at least two years, families can distribute age progressed photos and updated case information to refresh people’s memories and renew interest in the case. The National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains (<http://www.canadasmissing.ca>) provides computer age progression service for all Canadian law enforcement agencies across Canada.

Honouring the Missing

If a person goes missing for an extended period, families and friends may wish to commemorate the positives of the person's life. These tributes may focus on the person (such as birthdays, anniversaries) rather than the fact the person is missing. Others may wish to use the anniversaries of the person going missing to remind the public of the case and appeal for new leads.

Agencies can help the families by organizing and participating in these events or encouraging families to contact other agencies which organize vigils to honour the missing.

Families may wish to participate in events around Missing Persons Week held annually in early May to connect and network with others with shared experiences. These events or walks can provide another opportunity to honour their loved ones and raise awareness.

The Missing Persons and Presumption of Death Act

The Missing Persons and Presumption of Death Act was introduced in 2009 and establishes how the property of a missing person is administered, adopts presumption of death provisions, and sets out how family members and law enforcement can access information about a missing person.

The Act defines a missing person as someone who:

- Has not been heard from for at least three months, despite reasonable efforts to locate the person; or
- Is declared by the court to be a missing person in the event there is an urgent need for a property guardian to preserve the estate or the support of dependants of that person.

Amendments to the Act came into force in March 2019. These amendments recognize that, in cases where a person is reported missing but there is no reason to suspect a crime, police cannot rely on the *Criminal Code* to access certain information pertaining to that individual which can stall a missing person investigation.

The amendments to the Act allow law enforcement agencies to:

- obtain a search order where a missing minor or vulnerable person is believed to be in a building;
- access a broader range of records including global positioning tracking records, employment records and school records;

- access information about a person who might be in the company of a missing minor or vulnerable person; and
- make an emergency demand for records where certain criteria are met.

If an agency is contacted by a member of the family of the missing person who wishes to file for presumption of death (and thereby a death certificate), they should be advised to first consult legal counsel to file for the presumption of death.

Managing Financial and Property Matters for a Missing Person

People who are missing for an extended period of time may leave behind practical, financial and legal matters that need to be addressed, particularly if they have dependents to support.

The Missing Persons and Presumption of Death Act, 2009 also sets out the legislative procedures to declare someone as missing and provide for the appointment of a Property Guardian for the missing person's estate.

Persons who may apply for declaration and appointment as a property guardian are listed by priority:

- a) The spouse of the missing person;
- b) A child of the missing person;
- c) A parent or legal guardian of the missing person;
- d) A brother or sister of the missing person;
- e) A grandchild, great-grandchild or grandparent of the missing person;
- f) A nephew, niece, uncle or aunt of the missing person;
- g) Any other person who, in the opinion of the court, has a sufficient interest in the estate of the missing person;
- h) The public guardian and trustee.

Once a property guardian has been appointed, they may:

- a) Do anything respecting the estate of the missing person that the missing person could do except:
 - i. Make a will; or
 - ii. Change an election or designation made by the missing person.
- b) Sign documents under the authority as the property guardian.
- c) Apply to the court to authorize the sale, lease or other disposition of the missing person's property if the court is satisfied that this act is required in the interests of the estates of the missing person.

The judge of the court may also order any person or any public body, including the Crown, to provide the public guardian, or any other person whom the judge considers appropriate with any of the following information with respect to the missing person:

- a. Financial information;
- b. Information respecting accounts and transactions;
- c. Telephone or electronic communication records;
- d. Health information;
- e. Identification information, including a photograph;
- f. Any other information that the judge considers appropriate.

The property guardian also has the authority to spend money from the estate of the missing person for the purposes of:

- a. Locating the missing person.
- b. Determining if the missing person is alive or dead.
- c. Maintaining or educating the missing person's dependents.

6) Missing Persons Agency Resources

Missing Persons Partnership Contact List

Organization/Purpose	Address and Contact
Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan Supports people living with dementia and their families.	306-949-4141 office@alzheimer.sk.ca 301-2550 12 th Avenue Regina SK S4P 3X1
Caring Hearts Provides support groups, education and counselling for people experiencing grief and loss.	306-523-2780 contactus@caringheartssk.ca 2310 Smith Street Regina SK S4P 2P6
Estevan Police Service	(306) 634-4767 301 11 th Avenue Estevan, SK S4A 1C7

Family Information Liaison Unit (FILU) Provides dedicated services to families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and LGBTQ+ people to connect to organizations with information about their loved one.	1-833-529-6486 FILU@gov.sk.ca 6 th Floor 1874 Scarth Street Regina, SK S4P 4B3
Saskatchewan First Nations Women's Commission The Saskatchewan First Nations Women's Commission (SFNWC) is the recognized regional voice for the advancement of First Nations women's and children's rights in Saskatchewan.	Representatives from First Nations across the province.
Government of Saskatchewan Chairs the SMPP	Ministry of Justice and Attorney General
Métis Nation-Saskatchewan	306-343-8285 310 20 th Street East Saskatoon, SK S7K 0A7
Missing Persons Liaisons	Regina 306-777-6372 Saskatoon 306-975-8400 Prince Albert 306-953-4357
Police Based Victims Services	Victims Services are available through Police and RCMP detachments across Saskatchewan. Find the directory on Saskatchewan.ca
Regina Police Service	306-777-6500 1717 Osler Street Regina, SK Online Reporting
Regina Treaty Status Indian Services	306-332-8200 740 Sioux Ave Box 985 Fort Qu'Appelle, SK S0G 1S0

<u>Royal Canadian Mounted Police</u>	<u>Saskatchewan Missing Persons</u> Call 1-800-222-8477 Contact <u>Your Local Detachment</u> to report a missing person.
<u>Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police</u>	1-306-693-2826 #6-21 Iris Drive Moose Jaw, SK S6J OA1
<u>Saskatchewan Coroners Service</u>	306-787-5541 <u>coroner@gov.sk.ca</u> Regina Office 1-866-592-7845 Saskatoon Office 1-888-824-0491
<u>Saskatoon Police Service</u>	<u>(306) 975-8300</u> 76 25th St East Saskatoon SK S7K 3P9
<u>Search and Rescue Saskatchewan Association of Volunteers</u>	1-36-992-5912 <u>sarsavemail@gmail.com</u> Chapters are Located across SK
<u>STOPS to Violence</u>	306-565-3199 <u>info@stopstoviolence.com</u>
<u>Weyburn Police Service</u>	306-848-3250 <u>policeservice@weyburnpolice.ca</u> 400 Coteau Avenue Weyburn, SK S4H 3R6

Missing Persons Checklist

- 1) If you suspect a person is missing, contact your local police agency immediately to file a missing persons report. You can also contact a police agency in a different area if you believe they may be there.
- 2) When you file a missing persons report, the police will ask you many questions. This checklist will give you an idea of information that can help police with the search and investigation.
- 3) Do not wait or delay calling police if you don't have all of the information.

Basic information about the Missing Person

- ☐ Full name
- ☐ Date of birth
- ☐ Birthplace
- ☐ Nicknames
- ☐ Current and previous addresses
- ☐ Names of other people who lived at those addresses.
- ☐ Current and former employers
- ☐ Spouses

- ☐ **Information about the last time the Missing Person was seen:**
- ☐ The time and location of where they were last seen.
- ☐ The name of the individual who last saw the missing person.
- ☐ The name of the individual who last talked at length with the missing person.
- ☐ The direction the missing person was traveling the last time seen.
- ☐ The attitude of the missing person the last time seen.
- ☐ Was the missing person complaining of or concerned about anything before they went missing?

Clothing that the Missing Person was wearing the last time they were seen.

- ☐ Style and colour of shirt and pants
- ☐ Style and colour of jacket or outerwear or gloves
- ☐ Type of footwear
- ☐ Do they wear a hat?
- ☐ Type of glasses
- ☐ What if anything would the missing person be carrying (i.e.: luggage, guitar, laptop, etc.)

Habits and Personality of the Missing Person

- ☐ Does the individual smoke? If yes, what brand of cigarettes?
- ☐ Do they drink alcohol – what kind?
- ☐ Does the individual use recreational drugs?
- ☐ Are they a member of a gang?
- ☐ What type of recreation or activities does the individual engage in, including hobbies?
- ☐ Do they have specific routines, for instance a favourite coffee shop?
- ☐ Does the individual have particular banking habits?
- ☐ What type of personality does the individual have? Is the individual outgoing or quiet?
- ☐ Are there any concerns with mental health such as anxiety, depression, self-harm, suicidal thoughts?
- ☐ What are the personal values and philosophy of the individual – are they drawn to a particular religion or faith that might make them go on a journey?

Potential People that the Individual would contact.

- ☐ List all the missing person's friends and any acquaintances who they may try to contact.
- ☐ Try to include addresses and telephone numbers for those people.

Social Media

- ☐ What social media platforms does the missing person use?
- ☐ How frequently does the missing person utilize the platforms?
- ☐ When was the last time the missing person posted on any of the platforms?
- ☐ What are the usernames the missing person uses on each of the platforms?
- ☐ What are the passwords (if known) to the platforms?

Trip Plans of the Missing Person the day they went missing.

- ☐ What were the missing person's plans and/or activities on the day they went missing?
- ☐ Where were they going and why were they going there?
- ☐ If the individual was traveling by car, can you provide the make and model number, license plate number, as well as registration (if possible).
- ☐ Provide information about any other vehicles or mode of travel the missing person may have access too.

Overall health and condition of the missing person

- ☐ Physical condition
- ☐ Are there any known medical conditions?
- ☐ Are they taking any medications?
- ☐ Do they have any physical disabilities?

- ❑ Do they have any cognitive or intellectual disabilities?
- ❑ Is there any concern about mental illness or diagnosis?
- ❑ Do they suffer from dementia, Alzheimer's disease or memory loss?
 - If so, are they registered on MedicAlert Safely Home?
 - What is their registration number and are they wearing a MedicAlert Safely Home ID bracelet or carrying an ID card?
- ❑ Health Card number
- ❑ Name of family doctor and dentist if possible.

First Steps to Support the Police Investigation

- ❑ Secure the personal belongings and living space of the missing person until the police provide further direction. Below is a list of items of importance.
- ❑ Items such as a hairbrush, a toothbrush, or undergarments in case investigators need to do DNA analysis.
- ❑ Any electronic equipment such as a cell phone, tablet, or computer. What is the make of phone and the cell phone provider?
- ❑ Do you know if the person was active on social media?
- ❑ Any personal documents such as banking statements and credit card statements as well as all bank card information.
- ❑ Any written material, such as a journal or blog post.
- ❑ To make things more manageable, start a journal or notebook. Write down all information about the missing person's case in the journal.
- ❑ The police will likely request that someone from the family volunteer to be a **Primary Contact** or spokesperson for the family to deal with police investigators. This simplifies the relationship between police officers and the family. Police officers will update one person with respect to the investigation and will know who to contact when information is needed from the family. Talk with your family and close friends about who will be your family's contact person with the police. If the members of your family are feeling overwhelmed, you may decide that a close friend should be the contact person.

What your family can do:

- ❑ Conduct a telephone search. Phone friends or acquaintances that may have information about where the missing person is. Write all of the information down in your journal.
- ❑ If you find out any additional information from telephone inquiries, pass it on to police. Distribute a flyer with a photograph of the missing person around your community.

- ❑ Tell all necessary people about the disappearance of the missing person. This may include the missing person's employer, their bank, and their doctor. If the missing person is a child, you will need to contact the school they are attending.
- ❑ If it applies to your situation, arrange for the payment of the missing person's mortgage, rent or bills. You may require legal advice on how to proceed.

Taking care of yourself and your family.

- ❑ Ask yourself if you need to take an extended leave from work. If you do, talk to your employer about what options might be available.
- ❑ If you feel you need an extension on bill payments, then ask about what options are available.
- ❑ Try to eat, sleep, and exercise on a regular basis. Although you may not feel that you have time it is important to take care of yourself.
- ❑ Try not to blame yourself for the disappearance of your loved one. Treat yourself with as much kindness as you can in these difficult times.
- ❑ Try to realize your limits. Be easy on yourself if you are unable to provide what is needed in all situations. You may, for instance, be unable to provide emotional support to all of the members of your family. Don't feel guilty about seeking professional counseling services to help yourself and your family deal with the wide range of emotions that are being experienced.
- ❑ Don't feel guilty if you have to return to work. This does not mean that you have given up on the search for your loved one.

Missing Persons Agency Support Checklist and Resources

Advise client of the limitations of your agency's ability to help.

- ❑ Advise and help prepare the client to file a missing person report;
- ❑ Review Missing Person Checklist of questions;
- ❑ Ask for the case file number and the contact information of the investigator.

After filing the missing persons report

- ❑ Advise your client to contact their closest police-based victim services unit.
- ❑ Help them connect with Victims Services if they wish to find specialized support.
- ❑ Ask whether they would like to access any counseling or healing services.
- ❑ Help connect them to other agencies or Indigenous organizations that provide these services and supports. SMPP partners such as Caring Hearts Inc., the Family Information Liaison Unit, Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, and Metis-Nation

Saskatchewan may be able to provide services or make suggestions about other services.

Supporting the Search

- Always consult police about public awareness strategies
- Help create, print, and distribute posters/flyers after checking with police.
- Use the Media Toolkit to work with reporters and news agencies to help generate public awareness through news stories.
- Direct tips/information to **Crimestoppers** at **1-800-222-8477**.
- Social media platforms can be an invaluable tool to spread awareness about a missing person quickly. However, it's important to remember any information and photos posted online can be copied and are not easy to remove. Using social media also requires careful monitoring and follow up.
 - Posting information on a reputable police agency or missing persons website then sharing that link can help with the ability to take it down once a person is found.

Specialized Support Services

- **Family Information Liaison Unit (FILU)** work directly with families in a culturally grounded, trauma-informed way to help families locate information from agencies such as Social Services, the Coroners Service, Prosecutions and Police when legislation allows. They can also help families make connections to cultural advisors, Elders, counselling services or other supports depending on their wishes.
- **Missing Persons Liaisons (MPLs)** work out of Police-Based Victims Service Units in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert to provide specialized services for support, information, and referrals to address the unique needs of families of missing persons. They also provide training to all police-based victims services programs to provide supports and referrals.

Counselling and Healing Supports

- **Caring Hearts Inc.** offers an “Ambiguous Loss” webinar and a “Supporting Families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and other Missing Persons” manual. They provide specialized services including support groups and counseling for families of all missing persons.