

Missing Persons

6.10.01 PURPOSE

This order establishes policy concerning accepting reports of missing persons, specifies when continuous searches are required and provides guidance for handling the initial missing persons investigation.

6.10.02 DEFINITIONS

A. Missing Person

1. Any person who is reported missing to a law enforcement agency.
2. Any child who has been taken, detained, concealed, enticed away, or retained by a parent/family member in violation of the law (Parental Abduction).

B. At Risk – Includes, but is not limited to ([PC §14215](#)):

1. A victim of a crime or foul play.
2. A person missing and in need of immediate medical attention.
3. A missing person with no pattern of running away or disappearing.
4. A missing person who may be the victim of parental abduction ([PC §277 seq.](#)).
5. A mentally impaired missing person, including cognitively impaired or developmentally disabled.

6.10.03 POLICY

Members shall immediately make an incident report in all cases where a concerned individual reports a person missing (including telephone reports), regardless of the residence address or location of the reportee or missing person, the time reported, the age of the missing person, or the length of absence ([PC §14214\(a\)](#)).

6.10.04 PROCEDURES

A. Initial Investigation

1. Checklist – Officers conducting the initial investigation should:
 - a. Confirm the missing person is not currently at:
 - County Jail or Juvenile Justice Center
 - Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital or any other hospital that the reporting party identifies.

- Medical Examiner's Office
 - b. Determine whether the person qualifies as an at-risk missing person.
 - c. Be cognizant of potential crime scene evidence, if applicable.
 - d. Note the physical description, clothing, tattoos, and/or documented identifications (DMV, SFMUG, School ID, etc.) of the missing person.
 - e. Determine whether dental or skeletal x-rays of the missing person are available, and the name and contact information of the doctor or dentist.
 - f. Locate possible destinations, places frequented, schools, addresses of friends and family, and place of employment.
 - g. Gather information regarding the missing person's electronic communications devices such as cell phone number, e-mail address, and social media accounts.
 - h. If available, obtain a current photograph (either an electronic version, hard copy, or social media image) and upload it to the incident report.
 - i. Determine whether a welfare check was conducted of the missing person's residence, business, and/or school and the results of that check.
 - j. Determine their familiarity or frequency of public transportation use.
 - k. Include any relevant information in the report narrative.
2. Notification – The reporting officer shall:
- a. Broadcast a "Be On Look-Out" (BOLO) notification via Dispatch, "on an all," if the person is under 21 years of age or if there is evidence that the missing person is at risk, without delay ([PC § 14211\(d\)](#)).
 - b. As soon as practical, notify Department Operations Center (DOC). DOC shall enter the name of the missing person, and all other required information listed above, into the CLETS Missing/Unidentified Persons System (MUPS) as required by the Department of Justice:
 - i. Within two hours for persons under the age of 21 or at risk ([PC § 14211\(e\)](#)),
 - ii. Within four hours for persons aged 21 or older after accepting the report.
3. Outside Jurisdictions – Contact the appropriate jurisdiction's law enforcement agency and forward a copy of the missing person report within 24 hours when a missing person report is made in San Francisco but the missing person:
- a. Is known to be outside of San Francisco,
 - b. Was last seen outside of San Francisco, or
 - c. Resides outside of San Francisco ([PC §14211\(g\)](#)).

B. Continuous Searches

1. Criteria – Certain circumstances require an immediate and continuous search to be conducted, such as:
- a. The missing person is under the age of 12.

- Infants or children in the company of the missing parent/legal guardian do not meet the criteria unless there is reason to believe that the safety of the child is in jeopardy.
 - b. The missing person is a child with no documented or undocumented pattern of running away or disappearing; the disappearance does not appear to be voluntary; and the child has had no contact with the reporting party.
 - c. The missing person is a dependent adult or lacks the cognitive abilities to care for themselves.
 - d. The missing person is not able to care for their safety based on contemporaneous threats of suicide or self-harm.
 - e. The missing person requires immediate medical attention that if left untreated would cause death or serious risk to their health.
 - f. The member suspects foul play or believes exceptional facts exist.
2. Documentation – Officers should document the search in a supplemental report, articulating the steps that were taken to locate the missing person.
 3. Notification – The officer should immediately notify their supervisor, as well as the Missing Person Unit (MPU) during business hours, or DOC after hours/on the weekends.
 4. Continuous Search Termination – A continuous search can be terminated when the person is located or the Officer-in-Charge of the unit conducting the search receives approval from the Officer-in-Charge of the MPU.

C. Parental Abduction

1. When a parental abduction is reported, the officer shall take a report and notify the District Attorney's Child Abduction Recovery Unit (CARU) for investigation through the DOC.
2. In instances where immediate action is required (e.g., child is in danger; fleeing the country with child), the officer shall take a report and directly contact the CARU, the CARU supervisor, or the MPU (if after hours, contact the unit's on-call Investigator).
 - a. The member must make contact with one of the above units (in the order listed), as this is a time sensitive investigation. Contact DOC for contact information.

D. Child(ren) Missing from a Foster Care Family Home or Childcare Institution

1. When a child is reported missing from a foster care family home or a childcare institution, the officer will request DOC to notify the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and document the notification in the incident report.

E. Found Persons

1. Notification – A missing person needs to be physically seen and identified prior to a “Found Person” report being completed. Notify DOC to remove all entries from the MUPS/NCIC within 24 of the person being found. Notification timelines are outlined in ([PC §14213\(b\)](#)).
 - a. If a missing person is arrested or detained, add the title, “Found Person,” to the report heading and route a copy to the Special Victims Unit.
2. Children – If there is no reason for a custodial arrest, the following options may be used:
 - a. If the child resides in San Francisco, return the child to the verified place of residence.
 - b. Take the child to the district station business office for pickup by a relative or legal guardian providing, the response can be made within two hours (DGO 7.01, *Policies and Procedures for Youth Non-Psychological Detention, Arrest, and Custody*).
 - c. If a relative or legal guardian will not or cannot respond within two hours, take the child to Huckleberry House.
3. Returned Before Reporting – If the missing person returns or is located before the submission of the report, an incident report is still required, title the report “Missing Person” and “Found Person” and include the circumstances in the narrative. If the missing person was a victim of a crime during the time they were missing, a new police report should be made.

6.10.05 AIRPORT BUREAU

Airport Bureau members shall adhere to Airport Bureau policies and San Mateo County procedures for reporting missing and found persons.

References

DGO 7.01 Policies and Procedures for Youth Non-Psychological Detention, Arrest, and Custody
SFPD FTO Manual – Missing Persons

SUMMARY OF DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Missing Persons	Continuous Search	Missing Children	Found Persons	Outside of SF	Departmental Responsibilities	Unit Responsible
X	X	X		X	Check with the County Jail, Juvenile Justice Center, ZSFGH, & the Medical Examiner's Office for knowledge of missing person prior to creating an incident report.	Reporting officer
X	X	X			Conduct initial investigation.	Reporting officer
X	X	X		X	Notify DOC as soon as practical.	Reporting officer
X	X	X		X	Enter the name and other information about the missing person into MUPS. - If under 21 or at risk, within 2 hours - If 21 or older, within 4 hours	DOC
				X	Notify and copy report to departments having jurisdiction over missing person's residence and last sighting within 24 hours.	Reporting officer
	X				Document the search in a supplemental report.	Patrol officer
	X				Reassign the search to another unit at the end of the searching member's watch.	Station OIC
	X				Immediately notify field supervisor, Missing Person Unit (during business hours), and DOC.	Reporting officer
	X				Search termination.	Upon locating the missing person or w/ Missing Person Unit approval
		X			Advise DOC to notify the NCMEC if missing child is from a foster home or childcare institution and document.	Reporting officer
			X		Remove all entries from MUPS upon notification from reporting officer that person is found.	DOC
			X		If the child is found and not arrested, return child to residence, district station for relative or legal guardian, or Huckleberry House without relative or legal guardian.	Reporting officer
			X		Title report "Missing Person" and "Found Person" with details if the person is located before submission of the initial report.	Reporting officer: if the missing person is located before submission of report