



THE MISSING PERSONS GUIDE

FOR DURHAM REGION

Durham Regional Police Service
Victim Services of Durham Region

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PREFACE

The Durham Regional Police (DRPS) and Victim Services of the Durham Region (VSDR) understand the overwhelming stress and uncertainty that comes when someone you know goes missing. In these moments, it can be difficult to know what steps to take.

This guide will help everyone involved in a missing person's case — from the initial report, through the investigation, and even after the case is concluded.

Our goal is to provide clear, practical information that supports families, friends, and caregivers throughout each stage of this challenging process. Whether you are seeking guidance on how to make a report, trying to understand the investigation process, or looking for emotional and community support, this guide is here to help.

We want you to know that you are not alone. We are here to support you with clarity and compassion during this overwhelming and frightening time.



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This Missing Persons Guide was created on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, one of the signatories of the Williams Treaties. Durham Region is situated within the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg Nation and is part of the broader territory connected to the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Today, Durham Region is home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, and we recognize their ongoing presence, resilience, and stewardship of this land.

We acknowledge the disproportionate number of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people, as well as the systemic barriers faced by marginalized communities in accessing justice and support. These challenges are deeply rooted in the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism. In recognition of this, we are committed to supporting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action, working towards healing, justice, and equity for Indigenous peoples and all marginalized communities.

In partnership with Victim Services Durham Region, Durham Regional Police Service is dedicated to fostering trust, enhancing the handling of missing person cases, ensuring that every report is addressed promptly, respectfully, and with compassion. This guide aims to provide straightforward, and easy-to-understand information for families, friends, and anyone affected by a missing person.



Introduction

When someone you know goes missing, the experience can be overwhelming and it's often difficult to know where to begin or who to turn to for help. *The Missing Persons Guide for Durham Region* was co-created by the Durham Regional Police Service (DRPS) and Victim Services of Durham Region (VSDR) to support individuals and families through every stage of a missing person case – from the moment of reporting, throughout the investigation, and even after the case is resolved.

This guide is intended to offer clarity, comfort, and practical information to help individuals navigate an incredibly difficult time.

This guide draws on research to inform best practices and provide meaningful support to those affected by missing person cases.

Key resources that contributed to its development include *Missing People: A Guide for Family Members and Service Providers (2014)*, the *Community Resource Guide published by the Native Women's Association of Canada (2012)*, the *Community Guide to Report a Person Missing from the Toronto Police Service (2025)*, and the *Information for Families of Missing Persons (RCMP)*.

Important Information

If you are concerned for someone's immediate safety or well-being, **call 9-1-1** right away.

For non-urgent situations, you can contact the **DRPS non-emergency line at 905-579-1520** to request a wellness check.

In all missing persons investigations, DRPS officers remain committed to finding the individual. A case will not be closed until the person has been located and their identity has been confirmed – either in person by a uniformed officer or through another reliable method deemed acceptable by police.

“

This guide is intended to offer clarity, comfort, and practical information to help individuals navigate an incredibly difficult time.

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If you are concerned for someone's immediate safety or well-being, call 9-1-1 right away.

Staying Organized During a Missing Persons Case



Being involved in a missing persons case can feel overwhelming, especially as you receive a large amount of information in a short period of time. To help you stay organized and feel more in control, we encourage you to use the following page to record important contacts, details, and updates related to your case.

Keeping track of key information can be useful when speaking with police, support services, or other professionals involved.

The following form can be downloaded online at: www.drps.ca/missingpersons

This form does not replace an official police report.





Victim Services of Durham Region (VSDR)

PHONE: 905-721-4226

EMAIL: victimsupport@drps.ca

WEBSITE: www.victimservicesdurham.ca

This form can also be downloaded and printed online at www.drps.ca/missingpersons

This does not replace an official police report.

Your Support Worker's Name: _____

POLICE INFORMATION

Police Service Name: _____

Report/Incident Number: _____

Officer in Charge: _____

Officer's Phone Number: _____

Officer's Email: _____

NOTES:

(Use this space to keep track of updates, conversations, next steps or questions.)

Definitions and Key Information

Understanding the language and roles involved in a missing person's case can help families and communities navigate the process with greater clarity. Below is a list of key definitions you may come across.

ACRONYM GLOSSARY

- **AMBER:** America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response
- **CIC:** Crisis Intervention Counsellor
- **CIB:** Criminal Investigative Branch
- **CYFSA:** Child, Youth and Family Services Act
- **DRPS:** Durham Regional Police Service
- **MCSC:** Missing Children Society of Canada
- **NCMPUR:** National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains
- **VSDR:** Victim Services of Durham Region

AMBER Alert

An AMBER Alert is an emergency public broadcast system activated in cases of suspected child abduction. In Ontario, if specific criteria are met, the Durham Regional Police Service may request that the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) issue an alert.

It is important to note that an AMBER Alert is not issued for all missing children. In 2018, Canada had approximately 42,000 missing children reports — less than 1% resulted in an AMBER Alert.

Criteria for an AMBER Alert:

- Police confirm that an abduction has occurred
- The victim is a child or an individual with a proven physical or mental disability
- There is concern that the victim is in immediate danger of serious physical harm
- There is sufficient information that, if shared publicly, could help safely locate the victim

As a stopgap for cases that do not meet the Amber Alert criteria, the DRPS entered into a partnership with the Missing Children Society of Canada (MCSC) and may issue 'Child Search Alerts' for missing persons under 18 years old, which meet certain criteria.

Please refer to pages 29 & 30 for further information on the MCSC.

Definitions and Key Information

Child abduction [Criminal Code of Canada, s.281(1)]

Child abduction is defined as removing, luring, concealing, detaining, or harbouring a child with the intent to deny custody or parental rights to the lawful guardian or caregiver.

Criminal Investigative Branch (CIB)

Investigators assigned to the CIB will investigate missing person occurrences. Each missing person case will be assigned to a lead Detective or Detective Constable within the identified city or township. DRPS has five (5) CIB Divisions:

- East Division (905-579-1520 ext. 1605)
- Central East Division (905-579-1520 ext. 1705)
- Central West Division (905-579-1520 ext. 1805)
- West Division (905-579-1520 ext. 1905)
- North Division (905-579-1520 ext. 1505)

Crisis Intervention Counsellor (CIC)

A Crisis Intervention Counsellor is a trained professional with VSDR who provides emotional support, information, and guidance to families, individuals, and communities during and after a missing person report. CICs use a trauma-informed and client-centered approach.

Note: CICs are not police officers, and the information shared with them is confidential—except in situations where there is a legal duty to report.

Duty to report

While most conversations with a Crisis Intervention Counsellor are kept confidential, CICs are legally obligated to report certain disclosures.

In Ontario, anyone — including professionals — must report suspected child abuse or neglect to a Children's Aid Society. If someone is in immediate danger, the police must be contacted.

Under Section 125 of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017 (CYFSA), all individuals have a legal responsibility to report if they believe a child is or may be in need of protection.

Definitions and Key Information

Missing Person (Defined under the Missing Persons Act, 2018 and adopted by the DRPS)

A person is considered missing if both of the following circumstances exist with respect to the person:

1. The person's whereabouts are unknown and,
 - i. the person has not been in contact with people who would likely be in contact with the person,
 - or
 - ii. it is reasonable in the circumstances to fear for the person's safety because of the circumstances surrounding the person's absence or because of any other prescribed considerations.
2. A member of a police service is unable to locate the person after making reasonable efforts to do so.

Missing Person Coordinator

A missing person coordinator is a sworn officer with DRPS responsible for ensuring quality assurance, investigative excellence and risk management for all missing person investigations. The Missing Person Coordinator oversees and case-manages all missing person investigations.

Vulnerable person

A vulnerable person is someone who, due to age, disability, or other circumstances (whether temporary or permanent):

- Depends on others for care or support, or
- Is at greater risk of being harmed, particularly by someone in a position of trust or authority

Populations that may be considered vulnerable include:

- Individuals with neurodivergence (for example, autism or ADHD)
- People with developmental disabilities or cognitive impairments
- Individuals with mental health conditions
- Children and youth in care
- Older adults, including those living with dementia or Alzheimer's disease
- People who are unsheltered
- Those experiencing addiction or substance use issues
- Newcomers, immigrants, or individuals who do not speak English or French

Definitions and Key Information

Accessibility at DRPS

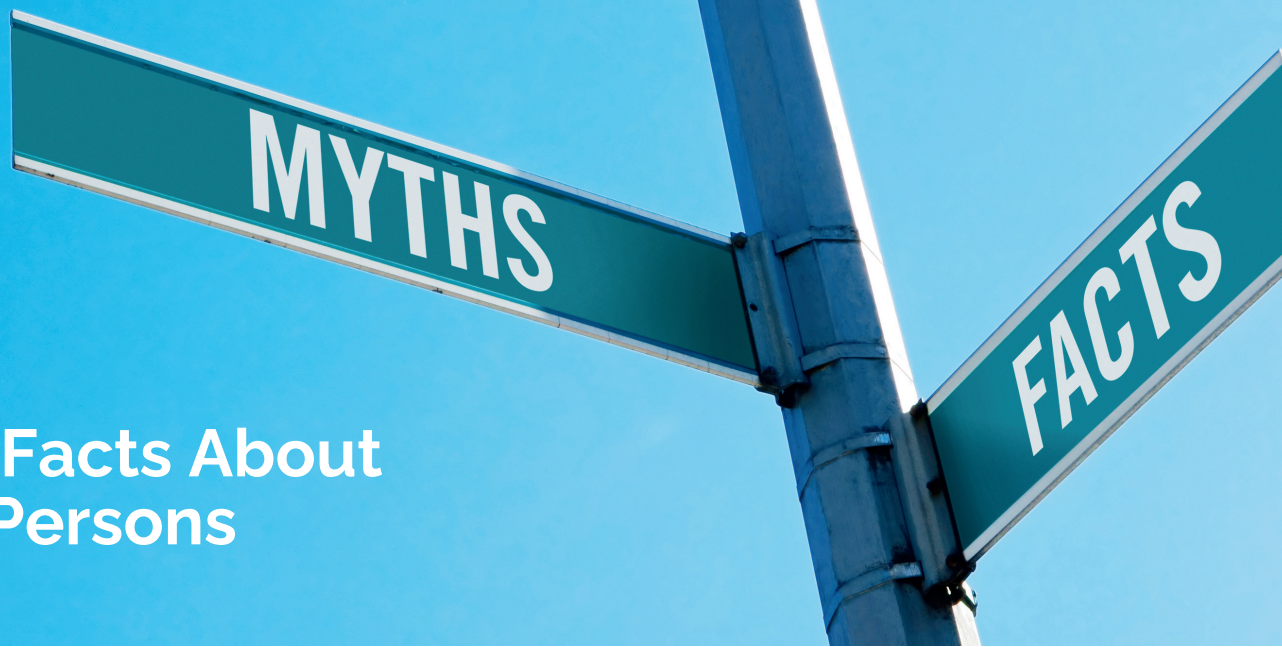
DRPS continues to enhance accessibility efforts to ensure inclusive and equitable support for all individuals. Accessibility supports may include:

- Language interpretation services, including American Sign Language (ASL)
- Visual communication tools
- Voice-enhancing devices at police stations
- Ongoing accessibility training for officers and staff



If you or someone you know needs accessibility accommodations, please contact **Victim Services of Durham Region**.

Telephone: (905) 721-4226
E-mail: victimservices@drps.ca



Myths & Facts About Missing Persons

Understanding the truth about missing persons cases can help reduce fear, stigma, and misinformation.

Below are some common myths and their corresponding facts:

✗ Myth: Most people reported missing are never found.

✓ Fact: More than 90% of individuals reported missing in Canada are safely located.

✗ Myth: You should not call 9-1-1 to report someone missing.

✓ Fact: Call 9-1-1- if you are concerned for someone's immediate safety or well-being. If the situation is less urgent, contact the non-emergency police line at 905-579-1520.

✗ Myth: Photos shared with police can be used in other criminal investigations.

✓ Fact: Photos provided during a missing persons investigation are used solely for the purpose of locating the individual and cannot be used in other criminal investigations.

✗ Myth: Adults with mental health or substance use challenges will not be taken seriously if they go missing.

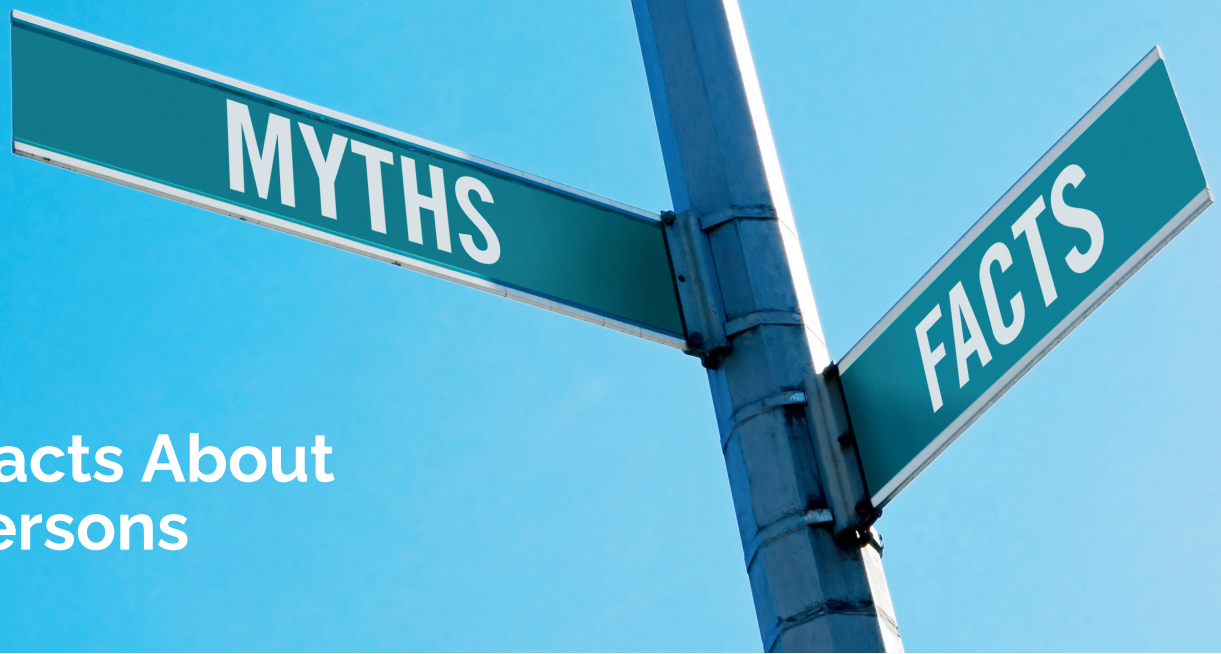
✓ Fact: Every missing persons case is treated seriously and investigated, regardless of the individual's background or circumstances.

✗ Myth: You must wait 24 hours before reporting someone missing.

✓ Fact: You can and should report someone missing immediately. Early reporting improves the chances of a safe return.

✗ Myth: People who go missing repeatedly are labeled as "runaways."

✓ Fact: All individuals reported missing are classified as "missing persons," regardless of how many times they have gone missing.



Myths & Facts About Missing Persons

✘ Myth: Only a direct family member can report someone missing.

✔ Fact: Anyone can report a person missing — whether you are a friend, neighbour, coworker, or concerned community member.

✘ Myth: Reporting someone missing is a burden to police.

✔ Fact: Public reports are crucial to missing persons investigations. Police rely on community members to help ensure the safety of others.

✘ Myth: Police won't act right away after a person is reported missing.

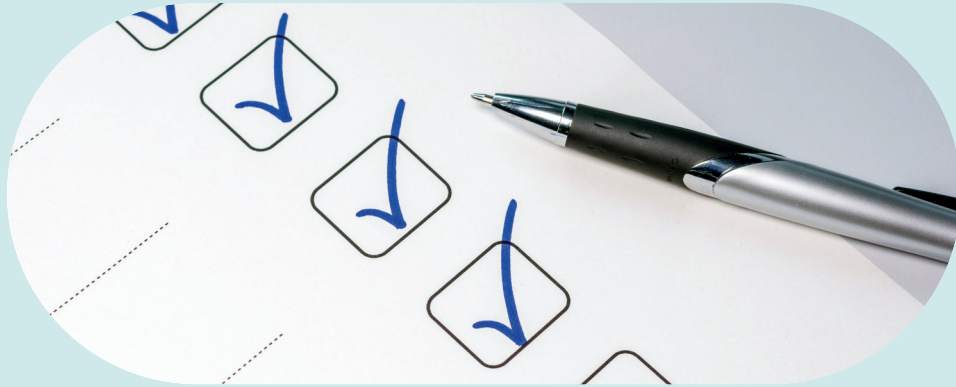
✔ Fact: A missing persons investigation begins as soon as the report is made. Police treat all reports with urgency and care.

✘ Myth: DNA samples collected in missing persons cases can be kept or used for research.

✔ Fact: DNA collected during a missing persons investigation is strictly used to assist in identification. Once the case is resolved, all DNA samples are destroyed in accordance with established protocols.

WHAT TO DO

When Someone Goes Missing



If you believe someone is missing or are concerned for their safety, it's important to act quickly. Early reporting gives police the best chance to locate the individual and ensure their well-being.

- Report them missing right away. You do not need to wait 24 hours to contact the police. The sooner a missing person is reported, the sooner an investigation can begin.
- Call 9-1-1 if there is immediate concern for the person's safety. If the situation is not urgent, contact the Durham Regional Police non-emergency line at 905-579-1520.
- You do not need to be a family member to report someone missing. Anyone — including friends, coworkers, neighbours, or support workers — can file a report.
- A person's age does not determine whether they can be reported missing. Children, adults, and older adults can all be reported missing at any time.

Before and after contacting police, you can also:

- Reach out to friends, family, or individuals close to the person to see if anyone has heard from them or knows their whereabouts.
- Check if anyone has access to a location-sharing app on the person's phone (e.g., Find My iPhone, AirTags, Life360, or Google Maps location sharing).
- Gather any relevant information or materials, especially if the person is considered vulnerable due to age, health, or other circumstances.
- If you have access, review video footage (from a doorbell camera, security system, or local business) near the person's last known location.
- Inform police right away if any footage exists so they can collect and preserve it as part of their investigation.



Special Considerations for Vulnerable People

➤ Vulnerable Person Registry

Durham Regional Police Service (DRPS) offers an online registry that helps law enforcement in situations involving vulnerable individuals.

By registering—with a recent photo and key information about routines and special needs—police can coordinate search efforts more effectively if the person is ever missing. This complements other programs like the Alzheimer's Society or MedicAlert.

[DRPS - Vulnerable Person Registry](http://www.drps.ca/vpr) (available online at www.drps.ca/vpr)

➤ Autism Registry

There is a specialized registry for individuals living with autism. This ensures officers have critical communication and care information ready, improving their response during a crisis or emergency.

[DRPS - Autism Registry](http://www.drps.ca/autismregistry) (available online at www.drps.ca/autismregistry)

Children

If you believe a child (person under 18) may be missing, you can first conduct a quick preliminary search at home. Check places where a child might hide—even potential danger zones like closets, fridges, laundry machines, crawlspaces, and wrapped spaces—and make some noise in case the child is asleep. Ensure you search inside and around the residence/property. After this search, always report the child missing to police to initiate a full investigation.



Older Adults and those with Cognitive Impairments

For seniors, particularly those living with dementia or Alzheimer's, missing persons cases are treated as high priority. Officers consider cognitive and physical vulnerabilities during their investigations. Medical alert systems are often leveraged to assist in locating these individuals more quickly. If the person lives in a long-term care or retirement facility, contact the facility to understand its internal missing persons protocol.



Special Considerations for **Vulnerable People**

➤ **Long Term Care Facilities - “Code Yellow” Protocol**

In Durham Region, long-term care homes follow a “code yellow” procedure when a resident is unaccounted for:

- Staff notify the registered nurse (RN) responsible for the resident's area.
- The RN and staff conduct an immediate search.
- If the search is unsuccessful, the emergency coordinator (EC) and RN escalate the response, which may include reviewing records, checking sign-in logs, viewing security footage, consulting residents or programming staff, and contacting the substitute decision-maker.
- If the resident remains missing after 30 minutes, staff must notify police and assist with a coordinated external search—providing photos and relevant details.

DRPS - Vulnerable Person Registry (available online at www.drps.ca/vpr)



Preparing to File a Missing Person Report



When reporting someone missing, it is important to record all information to assist police in finding them quickly and safely.

Record the following important information to assist police.
This form can be downloaded online at www.drps.ca/missingpersons

This form does not replace an official police report.

Name, Information and Description of Missing Person

- Find a recent photo (include date of photo taken of missing person)
- Full name
- Preferred name
- Date of birth
- Address
- Living situation (e.g., alone, with roommates, or in care)
- Ethnicity
- Identified sex / gender
- Physical description
 - Height
 - Weight - describe build
 - Complexion
 - Hair style and colour
 - Eye colour
 - Distinguishing features and locations (scars, birth marks, moles, piercings etc.)
 - Tattoos (describe words, design, location on body)

Clothing Worn

(Describe clothing worn by missing person - include labels, brands, colour etc)

- Shirt / Sweater
- Pants, Skirt
- Outerwear (type of jacket)
- Headware (type of hat)
- Gloves
- Footwear
- Jewellery
- Other clothing

Preparing to File a Missing Person Report



Please record the following important information to assist police:

Circumstances of Disappearance

- Current Date
- Your Name / Relationship to Missing Person
- Date missing person was last seen
- Time missing person was last seen
- Name of person who last saw missing person (include relationship to missing person).
- State possible reason for disappearance and why you believe this
- Location missing person was last seen (include address if known)
- Direction of travel missing person was last seen travelling (include street/intersection if known)
- Means of travel (example: foot, transit, vehicle - include description of vehicle, make, model, license plate # etc.)

Contact and Social Media Information

- Does the missing person have access to a mobile phone?
- If yes, include their phone number and carrier (if known - such as Bell / Lucky, Freedom, Rogers / Fido, Telus / Fido etc.)
- Type of phone (Apple iPhone, Samsung, Google Pixel etc.)
- Known email addresses
- Facebook handle
- Instagram handle
- X handle
- Snapchat handle
- TikTok handle
- Any other social media handles (such as WeChat etc.)
- Include all social media passwords, if known

Preparing to File a Missing Person Report



Please record the following important information to assist police:

Tracking / Transportation

- Does the missing person have any tracking devices (Apple Watch, Air Tags etc.) If yes, provide details
- Does the missing person have access to a vehicle? If yes, include:
 - Vehicle make
 - Vehicle model
 - Vehicle plate number
- Is the missing person familiar with transit? If yes, provide details

Medical / Risk Assessment

- Physicians Name, Address and Contact Number
- Dentist Name, Address and Contact Number
- Do any health conditions exist for the missing person?
 - If yes, state conditions
- Medication(s), dosage, frequency and pharmacy location

Financial

- Does the missing person have a bank account or credit cards?
 - If yes, state financial institution (such as BMO, CIBC, ScotiaBank, TD etc.) and account number if known
 - Credit cards held (including institutions, such as BMO, CIBC etc.)

Previous Addresses of Missing Person

School / Employment

- Is the missing person currently enrolled in school?
 - If yes, include name and address location
- Is the missing person currently employed?
 - If yes, include name and address location

Preparing to File a Missing Person Report



Please record the following important information to assist police:

Additional Details

- Hobbies
- Habits
- Places frequently visited
- Significant places of interest
- Previous locations located (especially incidents not previously reported to police).

Family / Friends Information

- Names of family, friends and include their relationship to the missing person

Additional Risk Factors

- State any additional risk factors you think police should be made aware of



» What Happens After You Make a **Report**

Once you have filed a missing person report:

1

You will be given an incident number for reference



2

Police will begin searching the last known location of the individual, including their residence or the place they were last seen.



3

Follow-up actions will be taken based on the information you provide police



If the missing person is not located at that time or shortly thereafter, the case will be transferred immediately to a member of the **Criminal Investigative Branch (CIB)** for continued investigation.

The **Missing Persons Coordinator** will also monitor, review, and support the case alongside CIB to ensure a coordinated and thorough response.

Following-Up

If you would like to check on the status of the investigation, you can contact the officer in charge or the Criminal Investigative Branch by calling the **DRPS non-emergency line at 905-579-1520**.



How You Can Help



While it's important to let officers lead the investigation, you can still play a vital role by:

- Sharing any new information
- Letting the investigator know immediately if the missing person contacts you or is located
- Providing clear details about when, where, and how contact occurred

This information can greatly assist officers in ensuring the person's safety and closing the case. Your cooperation is invaluable and the investigating team will treat your contributions with care and respect.

Investigation Process

Making a Report

Occurs when police are officially informed when someone is missing - as detailed in the previous section.

The Durham Regional Police Service responds in-person with a uniformed member to every missing person report. The DRPS recognizes the importance of every missing person and ensures a uniformed member meets with you to obtain all information and conduct the appropriate immediate searches.

Ensure you share your thoughts on where and what may have happened to the person you are reporting missing. Studies show this information is crucial to assist police in determining an investigative direction in locating the missing person.



Review & Investigative Process

DRPS has a robust missing person investigative process. Initial investigative process includes:

- Upon contacting DRPS to make a report, the DRPS Communications member will triage your information for the appropriate police response;
- A uniform member will be dispatched and will respond in-person to every missing person report
- An extensive initial report will be obtained
- The missing person will be placed on a police database called the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC), so police agencies across Canada will be aware, should interaction occur with the reported missing person
- A police supervisor will review the case to understand the circumstances, assess any risks to the missing person's safety, and decide on the appropriate resources and response. Possible responses include:
 - Aerial search using drones or helicopters
 - Ground search
 - Search with Kg units
 - Further discussion with trained investigators

Investigation Process

Risk Assessment

The DRPS uses a unique 20-point risk factor list to appropriately assess a missing person investigation. This 20-point risk factor list was created using various metrics including:

- Past Inquests (such as the Missing and Missed Report);
- Missing person literature; and,
- Past missing person investigations.

The risk factor list includes, but not limited to:

- Indications of a crime are present
- No contact with family
- No cell phone activity;
- Change in social media behaviour
- From a marginalized community
- Experienced loss of a significant other;
- No previous history of missing;
- Indications of suicide are present.

It is important to note, the missing person investigation will not be treated any differently if none of the 20-point list is identified. The list simply provides DRPS members an extra level of awareness.

At DRPS, every missing person is treated as high-risk unless information reasonably supports an alternative approach.

The Search

Officers will start by searching the area where the person was last seen. If the person was last seen at home, police will conduct a thorough search of the residence, checking places such as under beds, inside closets, rooms, and the exterior of the premise.

If the initial search is unsuccessful, a supervisor will coordinate a wider search, usually within a 300-meter radius of the last known location. Missing people are sometimes found within this radius early in the investigation'

Public Notification

Police may release the first name and photo of the missing person if they believe there is a risk to the individual's safety. However, this does not happen in every case.

Read more about Public Notifications in the 'Media Releases' portion of this document.

DRPS may also place a missing child (missing persons under 18) on the Missing Children Society of Canada (MCSC) Child Search Network if certain criteria are met. See pages 29 & 30 to learn more about this partnership and how the MCSC works.

Investigation Process

Ongoing Investigation

If the missing person is not located during the initial investigation by uniformed DRPS members, the report will be immediately assigned to a DRPS investigative member (Detective or Detective Constable) who is assigned to the Criminal Investigative Branch (CIB). The Missing Persons Coordinator will also monitor the missing person file closely.

CIB Investigators follow a unique and structured 'MP Investigative Checklist' to guide the investigation and monitors the case closely to ensure all leads are pursued. Supervisors monitor the case closely to ensure all leads are pursued.

The MP Investigative Checklist reduces investigative gaps and contains all known possible tools and techniques to assist investigators and locate a missing person as quickly as possible.

Investigative actions may include:

- Expanding the search area
- Requesting and reviewing video footage
- Obtaining legal authorization to access records under the Missing Persons Act on Ontario
- Contacting community agencies and using social media
- Interviewing persons who may have useful information

Officers also strive to respect religious and cultural considerations throughout the process.

When a Person is Found

Once located, the person's identity will be confirmed by a uniformed officer, either in person or through other reliable means. After confirmation, Victim Services Durham Region (VSDR) may be notified.

A Crisis Intervention Counsellor (CIC) will try to complete a voluntary return interview and offer support (in cases assigned to VSDR).

Monitoring & Support

The officer in charge will close the case once the individual is safely returned. *The person and their family may be offered connections to resources and supports to help prevent future disappearances.

**Not all missing person cases will be referred to VSDR. Cases will be assessed by the Missing Persons Coordinator who may refer the case to VSDR based situational factors present. Factors include the nature of the incident and the circumstances involved.*

Additional Information

Does Previous History Affect the Investigation?

No. A missing person's history—whether previous disappearances, criminal record, or legal issues—does not change how the case is handled. Every case is treated with the same care, respect, and urgency.

What if the Missing Person has an Outstanding Warrant?

The case is treated like any other missing person's report. Sometimes, the individual may not want to be found because of the warrant. If contact is made verbally with the missing person, officers will decide—based on the situation—whether to continue the investigation. This decision is made at the discretion of the police.

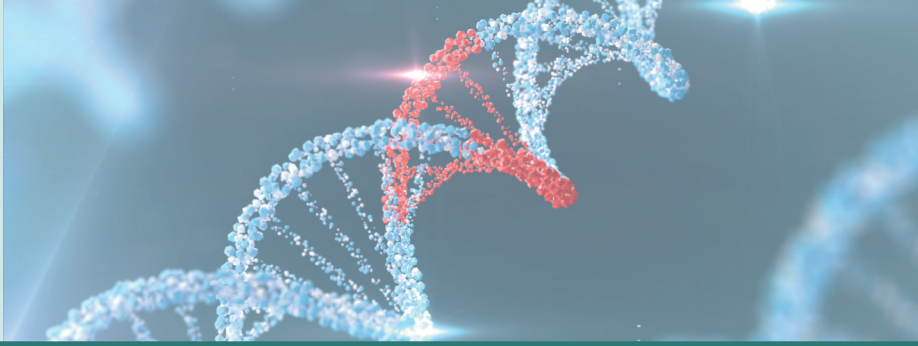
Why is the Missing Persons Coordinator embedded within the Homicide Unit?

In Durham, the Missing Persons Coordinator works closely with the homicide unit on missing persons cases. While it might sound alarming to hear that the homicide unit is included, their involvement reflects the seriousness, coordination, and thoroughness applied to these investigations.

Partnering with the homicide unit allows the Missing Persons Coordinator to:

- Access officers with extensive expertise in urgent and complex investigations
- Conduct structured and comprehensive investigations similar to major case protocols
- Utilize national resources critical to missing persons cases, such as the National Center for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains (NCMPUR)
- Ensure consistent and clear communication between police officers and the family members throughout the investigation

Why Police May Request DNA Samples

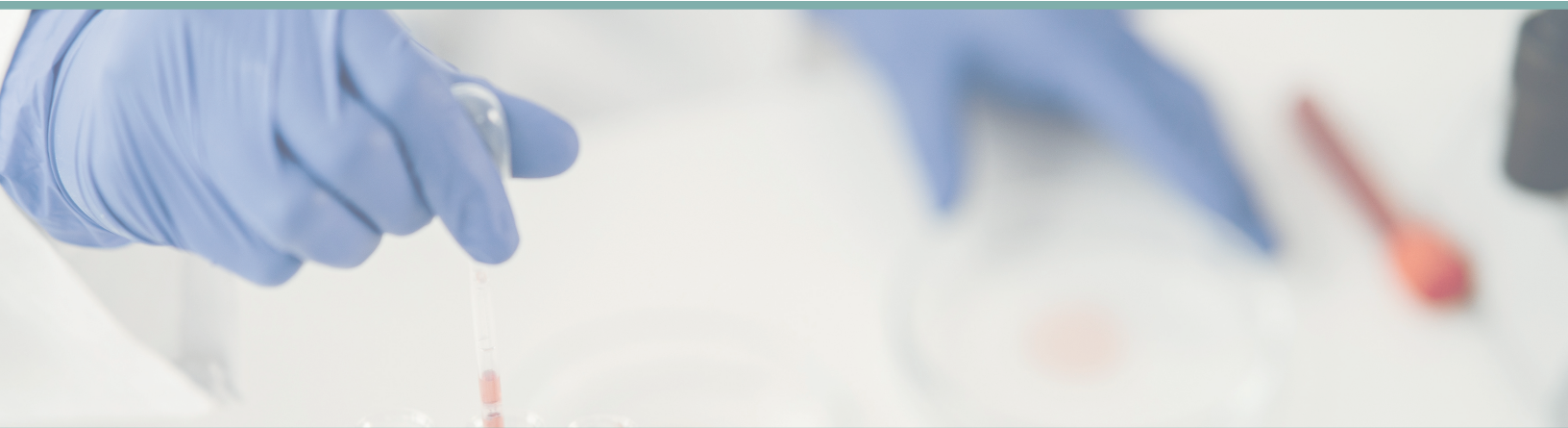


In some cases, police may ask for a DNA sample either from personal items belonging to the missing person or directly from immediate family members. This helps confirm the missing person's identity during the investigation.

Items that may be collected include:

- The missing person's toothbrush, shaving blades, other items where the missing person's DNA is likely to be located
- Dental records
- Blood samples from close family members

Being asked for a DNA sample can feel overwhelming, but this process is handled with the utmost respect and care by police. Participation is always voluntary and, when used, DNA can be a vital tool in helping officers locate and identify your loved one.



Communication During the Missing Person Investigation

• [often as a] door : he went into the com
• (of two people) be ab
communication
(noun) the imparting or e
tries will

When someone you know goes missing, staying informed and involved can be very important for family and friends.

- Loved ones can contact the officer in charge of the case to get updates and maintain communication throughout the investigation.
- Coordination may also occur through the missing persons coordinator.

DRPS understands the significant emotions family and / or friends may feel when a person is missing and is aware the importance of providing updates on the investigation in a timely manner.

If possible, identify a single point of contact within the family for communication with the assigned police investigator.

Support is available for families during this difficult time:

- Officers may refer families to VSDR for assistance.
- You can also reach out to Victim Services directly at (905) 721-4226 or online at victimservicesdurham.ca/contact
- Once connected, a CIC will provide ongoing support to families throughout the investigation.



Missing Children Society of Canada



Missing Children Society of Canada

The Durham Regional Police Service (DRPS) partnered with Missing Children Society of Canada (MCSC) to utilize an important tool to locate missing children. For missing children cases, a media release may not always be issued. Instead, some cases are shared quickly through a progressive web application called 'Rescu'.

In some cases, 'Child Search Alerts' may be issued, serving as stopgap notification, similar to Amber Alerts for high-risk missing youth in the Durham Region.

What is MCSC?

MCSC is a national organization that supports families and police by increasing exposure to missing children cases and providing a network of resources.

MCSC Rescu Application

MCSC Rescu is an easy-to-use application created for MCSC by Esri Canada and is populated with information on missing children cases pulled from databases by technology developed by Microsoft that sends missing child alerts to users.

People can access MCSC rescu on their phones and other devices by visiting rescu.mcsc.ca, where they see continuously updated information from police on missing children in Canada. Active cases are divided by region and tips on specific cases can be submitted with one click on the platform's case page. Critically, users are also invited to share that case page to their contacts, through networks, including text, email and other social media such as Instagram, Facebook and X.

Rescu users can also register to receive SMS alerts on cases in their area police deem critical that do not meet the specific criteria required to become an AMBER Alert.

Missing Children Society of Canada

How the MCSC Application Works

Scan the QR code below to download the MCSC Rescu app and stay informed.



SCAN HERE

The Durham Regional Police Service may sometimes add missing children (persons under 18 years old) to the MCSC Rescu application. Persons are added based on criteria which will guide investigators whether to add a missing child on the application.

Adding a missing child to the Rescu application may be done prior to issuing a media release; as the circumstances may not warrant a release to the media. Once added to the MCSC Rescue application, the MCSC will release the information on the Rescue application and will push the information, via social media channels, for greater public exposure.

For particularly 'high-risk' missing youth, police can also trigger a push notification, called 'Child Search Alerts' to all smartphones to receive the Rescu app information. The notification will appear similar to an Amber Alert on your smartphone.

How can I receive these 'Child Search Alerts'?

You must register your phone number with the MCSC to ensure you receive these Alerts.

Learn more about the MCSC at www.mcsc.ca and <https://rescu.mcsc.ca>



SUPPORT & ADVOCACY

When someone close to you goes missing, it can bring emotional hardship—stress, confusion, sadness, and uncertainty are common feelings. During this difficult time, knowing about the support available to you is crucial.

The Durham Regional Police Service (DRPS) has partnered with Victim Services Durham Region (VSDR) to provide immediate crisis support for those affected by missing person incidents. Support is available not only during the investigation but also once the missing person is safely located.

How Victim Services Durham Region Can Help:

- Provide emotional support to families and loved ones
- Conduct comprehensive needs assessments and connect you to community resources
- Assist with safety planning to reduce the risk of repeat incidents
- Conduct return interviews with the missing person after their safe return
- Help you understand and navigate the investigation process
- Act as a liaison between police services and families to facilitate communication

If you or someone you know needs support during a missing person investigation, Victim Services Durham Region is here to help.

Emotional Impacts

When someone goes missing, it can bring a wide range of emotions, such as:

- Guilt
- Shame
- Caregiver fatigue
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Sadness
- Frustration
- Detachment

Everyone experiences stress and emotions differently—there is no “right” or “wrong” way to feel in a missing person’s case. What matters most is that support is available to help.

Remember:

- Each missing person case is treated as unique, regardless of how many times the person has gone missing.
- Police are here to help—never hesitate to call.



SUPPORT & ADVOCACY

Ambiguous Loss

Ambiguous loss is a term coined by Pauline Boss, PhD in the 1970s to describe losses that are unclear or unconfirmed.

When someone you love goes missing, you may experience significant feelings of loss and trauma. There is no right or wrong way to deal with the disappearance of a loved one. The experience you are feeling is known as "Ambiguous Loss".

This type of Ambiguous Loss means your missing loved one is physically absent, but there is still a psychological presence with you. Your grief is "frozen" because there is no certainty of your loss.

This is different from loss or grief associated with death.

Ambiguous loss is often described as a very traumatic and complex loss:

- Your loss is uncertain; you do not know if your missing loved one is alive or deceased;
- Your grief is frozen, unresolved, and you may feel numb, stuck in time and living in limbo;
- There is no closure; no finality; no validation or acknowledgement of your loss;
- Your life carries on while you try to make sense of what is happening.

Finding ways to live with the uncertainty to your life is vital for your health and well-being. Your life will continue while the 'uncertainty' remains. You can learn to live with the uncertainty and deal with the changes in you and your family moving forward.

When someone you love goes missing, you may begin an emotional journey, which is unique to 'missing' and different from other types of loss. Traditional models of grief and loss do not apply to those who are impacted by missing.

With the uncertainty of not knowing what has happened to your loved one, there may also be stronger emotions that come to the surface. You may feel some or all of the following:

- self-blame
- guilt
- doubt
- confusion
- distress
- fear
- frustration
- anger
- sadness.



SUPPORT & ADVOCACY

These emotions are normal and you have the right to feel exactly as you do.

Ways to Cope:

- Reduce stress – physically and emotionally. Acknowledge the pain of not knowing
- Connect with others in your community who have missing persons and know you are not alone
- Share what you are going through with family and friends so they too can support you
- Reach out to your local Victim Services who may offer support and referral services;
- Learn as much as you can to help you understand how you can help yourself.



If you need support, please contact
Victim Services Durham Region at 905-721-4226
to connect with a crisis intervention counsellor.

If you are in crisis or having overwhelming thoughts
that require immediate attention, please call:

Crisis Intervention Team: 905-576-8711 ext. 4384
Durham Distress Center (24/7): 1-800-452-0688

What If You Were Reported Missing?



Being reported missing is not a crime. You will not be in trouble or face legal consequences simply because someone was concerned for your safety and contacted the police.

▶ What If You Left Willingly?

If you chose to leave your situation and were reported missing, you might not want others to know where you are—or why you left. That's okay.

Even if you left willingly, it is important to let police know you are safe. Doing so helps close the investigation and ensures police resources can be redirected where they are most needed.

You can:

- Contact the officer or investigations team directly to confirm your identity.
- Share only what you're comfortable sharing—you do not need to disclose personal or private reasons for leaving.
- Request that your location or other details remain confidential.

Once police have confirmed your safety and gathered the necessary information, they can close your missing person file. If you choose not to provide all the required information, officers will document you have made contact and your stated preferences. However, the file may remain open, until police have what they need to close it officially.

▶ You're In Control

Your privacy matters. Police will respect your wishes as much as possible while still following protocol. Reaching out helps bring clarity to the case and prevents further concern for your safety.

Completing a Return Interview: What to Expect

Being found after going missing can feel overwhelming—and that's completely normal. Police and crisis support workers are here to ensure you are safe, respected, and supported.

What If You Were Reported Missing?



▶ **What Happens When You're Located**

Once you are found, a police officer will typically meet with you to:

- Confirm your safety and well-being
- Ensure that you were not being held against your will

You may be asked questions about where you were or why you left, but you are not required to share anything you're not comfortable disclosing.

▶ **Support from Victim Services Durham Region**

If you choose, you can be connected with a Crisis Intervention Counsellor (CIC) from Victim Services Durham Region (VSDR). Anything you share with them is confidential and will not be passed on without your explicit consent.

▶ **The Return Interview**

As part of your support, the CIC may (with your consent) ask five brief questions. This return interview helps police and support teams better understand your situation and improve their trauma-informed approach to future cases.

You may answer only what you feel comfortable with. Your answers will only be shared with the police officer assigned to your case if you give verbal consent.

▶ **The Five Questions You May Be Asked:**

1. What was the reason you went missing?
2. Where were you during the time you were missing?
3. Who were you with while you were missing?
4. What activities were you involved in during that time?
5. Is there anything else you feel is important to share with Durham Regional Police?

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the tireless efforts of the **Durham Regional Police Service (DRPS)** and their commitment to ensuring that every missing persons case is treated with the urgency, compassion, and professionalism it deserves. Through coordinated investigations, community outreach, and trauma-informed practices, DRPS works to ensure the safety and well-being of all individuals in the Durham Region.

We also extend our deepest gratitude to **Victim Services of Durham Region (VSDR)** for their crucial role in providing emotional support, crisis intervention, and advocacy for both missing persons and their loved ones. Their work offers a compassionate bridge between families and law enforcement, ensuring that no one has to navigate the trauma of a missing person case alone.

Together, DRPS and VSDR exemplify what it means to serve and support a community—with care, dignity, and unwavering dedication. Their collaboration ensures not only effective investigations but also human-centered support for every individual impacted by these deeply personal events.

If you or someone you know is affected by a missing persons case, remember: you are not alone, and support is always available.



Resources

Crisis Lines (24/7 Support)

- **Community Crisis Response Service (COPE):** 1-855-310-COPE (2673)
- **Suicide Crisis Helpline (Canada-wide):** 9-8-8
- **Kids Help Phone:** 1-800-668-6868
- **Distress Centre Durham:** 905-430-2522 or 1-800-452-0688
- **Mobile Crisis Services (Adults, Youth, Children):** 905-668-0483 or 1-800-742-1890
- **Lakeridge Health Crisis Services:** 905-576-8711
- **Hope for Wellness Help Line (Indigenous-specific):** 1-855-242-3310

Counselling & Mental Health Services

General / All Ages

- **Durham Community Health Centre**
1-877-227-3217
durhamchc.ca
Clinical care, mental health, wellness, and chronic disease support.
- **Cope Mental Health**
[Community Care Durham – COPE](#)
Community-based groups and individual support (16+)
- **Canadian Mental Health Association (Durham):** 905-436-8760
- **Durham Mental Health Services (DMHS):** 905-666-0831 or 1-800-742-1890
- **Family Services Durham:** 905-666-6240 or 1-866-840-6697
- **Renewal Psychotherapy (CFS Durham)**
Oshawa: 905-725-3513 | Ajax: 905-428-1984
cfsdurham.com – [Renewal Psychotherapy](#)
Individual, couple, and family counselling.
- **One Stop Talk (Free Online Counselling for Youth & Parents)**
1-855-416-8255
onestoptalk.ca

Resources

Youth & Child Services

- **Frontenac Youth Services (Ages 12–18):**
905-723-2802
frontenacyouthservices.org
- **Kinark Child & Youth Services**
kinark.on.ca
- **Autism Services:** 1-800-283-3377
- **Child & Youth Mental Health / Youth Justice:** 1-888-454-6275
- **Durham Youth Walk-In Counselling (Ages 3–19)**
TAMI Durham – Walk-In Clinic
- **Durham Region Crisis Response (Under 18):** 905-666-0483
- **Resources for Exceptional Children & Youth Durham:** 905-427-8862
- **Durham Children's Aid Society:** 905-433-1551

Resources for the Aging Population

- **Seniors Support Program (55+ in Durham Housing):** 905-666-0483 or 1-800-742-1890
- **Alzheimer Society of Durham Region**
1-888-301-1106
alzheimer.ca/Durham
- **Region of Durham – Seniors' Safety Advisor:** 905-668-7711 ext. 2460
- **Seniors Crime Stoppers:** 1-800-222-8477

Find Local Services: 211 Ontario

- Call or text **2-1-1**
211ontario.ca
Search for community resources in your area.



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