

# WOLFEBORO POLICE DEPARTMENT

## SOP 4.23

**Date Issued: 12/27/2019**

**Review: 03/05/2021**

[Note: This written directive is for the internal governance of the Wolfeboro Police Department and, as provided by RSA 516:36, is not intended and should not be interpreted to establish a higher standard of care in any civil or criminal action than would otherwise be applicable under existing law.]

**By Order of:**  
**Dean J. Rondeau, Chief of Police**

### MISSING PERSONS

**Policy** The Wolfeboro Police Department will investigate all reports of missing persons thoroughly, to include the careful recording and investigation of the factual circumstances surrounding the disappearance and give particular attention in cases involving: missing children, persons who may be mentally and/or physically impaired, persons who are incapable of caring for themselves, and/or children or adults who are either unidentified or unidentifiable to determine if they are classified as missing.

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**Purpose** The purpose of this directive is to cover the following:

Reporting Procedures	Investigative
Out of State Cases	Competent Missing Persons
Abandoned or Found Children	Definitions

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**Definitions** *Missing Person:* Any person missing from their lawful place of abode and a concern is reported by a relative or legal guardian.

**Responsibilities** Wolfeboro Central Dispatch will collect and disseminate necessary information upon receiving a missing person call.

The responding officers will assess the situation, notify a supervisor, and begin efforts to locate the missing person.

Supervisors will ensure that the appropriate personnel are responding to the call for the level of response that the circumstances dictate. The supervisor will personally respond to the scene when required.

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School Resource Officer will respond to the call to investigate children missing from public schools.

**Action**      Reporting and Classification

Missing person reports involve individuals who voluntarily leave home for personal reasons disappear for unexplained reasons, or who may be considered at risk. The role of the initial responding officer is critical in identifying the circumstances surrounding missing persons and in identifying those cases when an individual may be in jeopardy.

There is no waiting period for reporting a missing person.

An individual may be declared “missing” when his or her whereabouts is unknown and unexplainable for a period of time that is regarded by knowledgeable parties as highly unusual or suspicious in consideration of the person’s behavior patterns, plans, or routines.

Officers should be aware that they might encounter several types of missing-child cases, each with their own unique response requirements. They include:

The non-family abduction in which a child is taken by an unknown individual, through force or persuasion, usually in furtherance of additional victimization;

The family abduction in which, a non-custodial family member flees with a child, usually in direct violation of a court-ordered custody arrangement;

The runaway child, most often a teenager, who leaves home voluntarily for a variety of reasons;

The lost or otherwise missing child, who becomes separated from parents or caretakers under circumstances not indicating the likelihood of an abduction or voluntary absence; and

The thrown-away whose caretaker makes no effort to recover the child who has run away or who has been abandoned or deserted.

An officer will notify his or her supervisor of missing person(s) that satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

Information that the missing person may be the victim of foul play;

Because of age (juvenile or elderly), the person may be unable to properly safeguard or care for him or herself;

The person suffers from diminished mental capacity or medical conditions that are potentially life threatening if left untreated or unattended;

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The person is a patient at a mental institution and is considered potentially dangerous to himself or herself, and/or to others;

The person has demonstrated the potential for suicide; and

Reports of juveniles who have voluntarily left home (e.g., “runaways”) should be classified as such only after thorough investigation.

Wolfeboro Central Dispatch should attempt to obtain as much information as possible regarding the missing person with special attention to the above criteria. The call taker should obtain a complete physical description; including clothing the missing person was last seen wearing and broadcast a lookout on all radio frequencies.

**Investigation  
Procedures**

The responding officer will complete an incident report during the preliminary investigation to include the following information:

Name, age, sex, race and physical description of the missing person, and relationship of the reporting party to the missing person;

Time, date, and place of last known location and the identity of anyone accompanying the missing person prior to their disappearance;

Indications of missing personal belongings, particularly money, and other valuables;

The extent of any previously conducted search or inquiries;

Whether the missing person has been missing on prior occasions, and the degree to which the absence departs from established behavior patterns, habits, or plans;

Whether the missing person has been involved recently in domestic incidents; suffered emotional trauma or a life crisis; demonstrated unusual, uncharacteristic, or bizarre behavior; is dependent on drugs or alcohol; or has a history of mental illness;

The current physical condition of the missing person and whether the person is currently on prescription medication;

Any suggestions of foul play or accident

A search will be organized and performed under the direction of the on-scene supervisor when information is received that a missing person may be in a given geographical area.

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Tracking dogs may be requested during a search of missing persons.

Some searches may require support from more than one public safety agency. Such operations will be coordinated between the supervisors.

**Non-Critical Missing Child - Initial Investigation**

Responding Officer's Responsibilities:

The responding officer will initiate an immediate investigation in an attempt to locate the missing child and relay such information through the on-duty field supervisor.

Obtain and document any leads as to the possible location (e.g., child's destination, mode of travel, routes, etc.).

The identity and location where the missing child was last seen, and the identity of the person who last saw the missing child.

Names and telephone numbers of relatives and friends, and any other information which may assist in locating the missing child.

A broadcast made from Wolfeboro Central Dispatch with a description of the missing child and any known circumstances.

Officers will also disseminate information to adjacent agencies, and to the law enforcement agencies in the jurisdiction of any known or suspected destinations of the missing child.

Locations will be lawfully searched, if the complainant indicates a probable location or locations.

Interviews with the reporting person, parents, siblings, friends, or any other persons who may have knowledge of the whereabouts of the missing child. These interviews may be made by telephone or in person, but all interviews and attempts to interview will be documented.

Obtain a photograph, if possible, of the missing child and forward the photograph to SVU, so missing person posters can be generated for distribution.

Initiate an incident report, with a narrative summary of all actions taken by the reporting officer, and any related actions known to have been taken by others including an initial physical description of the missing child, and clothing description. The officer should also inquire about and document any recent disciplinary or behavioral issues at home or at school.

### **Missing Person Critical**

Critical care will be considered for the following:

- Juveniles under ten (10) years of age.
- Elderly person sixty (60) years of age or over.
- Senile or disturbed individuals.
- Medical concerns.
- Any age whenever there is a real or suspected danger.

Immediately contact supervisor

Responding Officers' Responsibilities:

Upon receiving a report of a critical missing child, the responding officer shall follow steps listed below. Ensure that the supervisor(s) are notified to respond to the scene. In cooperation with assisting officers, available investigators and supervisors, the responding officers should follow all below listed steps.

Interview parents, guardians, and/or person making the initial report;

Confirm the child is in fact missing;

- a. When a small child is involved, there should always be a physical search, especially of the home and immediate area where the child lives or was last seen.
- b. The search should start at the last known location and spiral outward. This search should be made even if the parent or guardian has already conducted a search; and
- c. Officers and investigators should understand that small children might hide and refuse to answer when their names are called.

An officer should go to the child's home and remain in that area with relatives to protect as a potential crime scene until properly relieved. If assistance with this task is needed, request another officer to assist;

Verify the child's custody status;

Identify the circumstances of the disappearance;

Determine when, where, and by whom the missing child was last seen;

Interview the individuals who last had contact with the child;

Identify the child's zone of safety for his or her age and developmental stage;

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Based on the available information, make an initial determination of the type of incident whether nonfamily abduction, family abduction, runaway, or lost, injured, or otherwise missing;

Obtain a detailed description of the missing child, abductor, and any vehicles used;

Secure photograph and/or videos of the missing child or abductor;

Relay detailed description information to Communications for a lookout broadcast and updates to be given out citywide every hour;

Brief and bring up to date all additional responding units;

The field officer will interview all parties at the scene, and ensure the identifying information is properly recorded. To aid in the process, if possible, take pictures or record video images of everyone present;

- a. Note name, address, home or cellular numbers of each person;
- b. Determine each person's relationship to the child;
- c. Document information each person may have about the child's disappearance;
- d. Determine when and where each person last saw the child;
- e. Ask each person what they think happened to the child;
- f. Obtain names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the child's friends, associates, and other relatives and friends of the family.

Continue to keep Wolfeboro Central Dispatch apprised of all appropriate developing information for broadcast updates;

Obtain a signed Consent to Search form and note permission to search home or building where incident took place;

Conduct an immediate, thorough search of the missing child's home; even if the child was reported missing from a different location;

An officer will remain at the scene to protect the scene and area of the child's home (including the child's personal articles such as hairbrush, dairy, photographs, and items with the child's fingerprints, footprints and/or teeth impressions) so evidence is not destroyed during or after the initial search; and to help ensure items which could help in the search for and or to identify the child are preserved. Determine if any of the child's personal items are missing. If possible, photograph or video record the area;

Evaluate the contents and appearance of the child's room and/or residence;

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Inquire if the child has access to the internet and evaluate its role in the disappearance;

Ascertain if the child has a cellular telephone or other electronic communications device;

Extend search to surrounding areas including vehicles and other places of concealment.

Treat areas of interest as potential crime scenes and secure for crime scene processing;

Determine if surveillance or security cameras in the vicinity may have captured information about the child's disappearance;

Interview other family members, friends, and associates of the child, and friends of the family to determine:

- a. When each last saw the child;
- b. What they think happened to the child.

Ensure information regarding the missing child is entered into NCIC Missing

The officer will complete Missing reports and the appropriate paperwork before the end of their shift.

**Detective Responsibilities**

Obtain briefing from the first responding officer and other on-scene personnel.

Verify the accuracy of all descriptive information and other details developed during the preliminary investigation.

Initiate a neighborhood canvass using all available resources and utilizing questionnaires.

Obtain a brief, recent history of family dynamics.

Correct and investigate the reasons for conflicting information offered by witnesses and other individuals, if any.

Collect articles of the child's clothing for scent tracking purposes.

Review and evaluate all available information and evidence collected.

Secure the child's latest medical and dental records.

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Contact landfill management and request they segregate garbage and dumping containers from key investigative areas in cases where it is suspected there may be imminent danger to the missing child.

Develop and execute an investigative plan.

Conduct a criminal history check on all principal suspects and participants in the investigation.

Determine what additional resources and specialized services are required.

Prepare and update bulletins for local law enforcement agencies.

If a juvenile is reported missing either from school or fails to return home from school, the School Resource Officer will have the initial responsibility for the investigation.

If the initial investigation reveals that either the missing juvenile was transported to the school or was present at the school but was not observed being transported home from school, the School Resource Officer will retain primary responsibility for the investigation.

If the child was transported from the school and properly delivered (to the correct bus stop or designated location) and then becomes missing, School Resource Officer will have primary responsibility for the investigation with assistance from the Patrol Officers.

**Supervisor Responsibilities:**

The on-duty supervisor will respond to the scene and ensure that the below steps are completed as soon as possible.

Obtain a briefing from the first responding officer and other personnel at the scene.

Remain on the scene off all missing person incidents until the person is either located or until relieved by superior officer.

Determine if additional personnel are needed to assist in the investigation.

Establish a command post away from the child's residence.

Confirm all the required resources, equipment, and assistance necessary to conduct an efficient investigation have been requested and expedite their availability.

Ensure coordination and cooperation among all law enforcement personnel involved in the investigation and search efforts.



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Ensure all agency policies and procedures are in compliance.

Verify that all required notifications are made.

Be available to make any decisions or determinations as they develop.

Use media including radio, television, and newspapers to assist in the search throughout the duration of the case (Other immediate community notification systems, e.g., twitter, facebook, community e-mail systems).

**Unidentified Found Child Investigation**

Responding Officers' Responsibilities;

Upon receiving a report of an unidentified found child the responding officer will initiate an immediate investigation in an attempt to identify the child and relay such information through the supervisor. This investigation will include the following actions:

An initial physical description of the child;

The identity and location where the child were located, and the identity of the person who located the child;

A broadcast made over the patrol frequency with a description of the located child and any known circumstances;

Officers will also disseminate information to adjacent agencies;

Wolfeboro Central Dispatch must enter information in SPOTS/NCIC and is responsible for removing info once notified the person has been located

Take a photograph of the child and forward the photograph to Wolfeboro Central Dispatch, so Children services;

Initiate an incident report, with a narrative summary of all actions taken by the reporting officer, and any related actions known to have been taken by others.

**Missing Adult (Non-critical)**

Field Officers' Responsibilities

A field officer will respond to the scene of all 911 calls reporting a missing person, and will immediately give the description of the adult and other pertinent information to Wolfeboro Central Dispatch to all radio frequencies.

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The responding officer will obtain as much information as possible concerning the whereabouts and description of the adult, including the circumstances surrounding the events related to the person's missing status. This should include prior missing reports, vehicle description, license plate information, clothing, cell phone numbers, and favorite locations the missing adult might frequent. This information should be included in detail in the Incident Report.

The responding field officer will immediately contact his or her supervisor and update the supervisor of the missing adult, and the circumstances involved.

Officer will contact the reporting person to determine if the missing adult is competent, if the person left voluntarily, and the possible reasons for the disappearance. The investigator will also ensure a full description of the missing person, and any other pertinent information has been included in the report.

Ensure the missing person has been placed into NCIC.

Check driver's license records, and criminal histories;

Interview employers, co-workers, and neighbors if circumstances dictate;

Check all credit cards, debit cards, and/or bank account activity;

Obtain cellular phone records if circumstances dictate;

Contact the reporting person to determine if any more pertinent information can be gathered;

11. Document all actions taken in an incident report; and

**Critical Missing Adult**

**Field Officer Responsibilities**

If a missing adult is suspected of being the victim of foul play, or suffers from diminished mental capacity, or medical conditions that are potentially life threatening if left untreated or unattended, the responding officer will immediately:

Notify their on-duty supervisor;

Gather information on the missing adult, to include age, race, sex, weight, height, hair, clothing description, vehicle if driven, mental and medical conditions, and any other specific information that relates to foul play;

Participate in a canvass of the area or possible locations where the adult might be;

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Identify any witnesses who may have knowledge of the adult's whereabouts;

Complete a detailed incident report.

When notified about a critical missing adult, the on-duty supervisor will:

Respond to the scene and remain on scene until relieved by superior officer.

Conduct a canvass and search of the area or possible locations. Documentation should be made of all personnel who participate in the canvass and search, what addresses were visited on the canvass, the area that was searched, the times of the search, and any other pertinent information relating to the search. The search and canvass will continue until all the immediate neighborhood has been searched and all leads have been exhausted;

**Recovery of Missing Adults**

Field Officer

Competent adults, having left home for personal reasons, cannot be forced to return home. When such individuals are located, the officer will:

Advise them that they are the subject of a missing person's investigation;

Question the missing adult to establish the circumstances surrounding their disappearance, and whether criminal activity was involved;

Ask if they desire the reporting party or next-of-kin to be notified of their whereabouts;

Confirm the missing person through NCIC to ensure the entry is cleared as mandated by NCIC policies and procedures;

Complete offense or supplemental report indicating that the missing person has been located, and circumstances in which they were located; and

**Child Abductions (AMBER ALERT)**

There must be confirmed child abduction.

The circumstances surrounding the abduction must indicate that the child is in "imminent danger" of bodily injury or death.

3. The child must be 17 years of age or younger.

4. There must be enough descriptive information to believe that an immediate

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broadcast alert will help.

Immediately enter AMBER Alert data into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) system. Text information describing the circumstances surrounding the abduction of the child should be entered, and the case flagged as a Child Abduction. The notation on the entry should be sufficient to explain the circumstances of the disappearance of the child.

**Reporting Procedures**

Once it is determined that a person is missing, the following steps are to be taken:

**Non-critical**

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Interview complainant & obtain following on the Missing Person - Identifying information - Health, habits & history - Names & addresses of friends & relatives where person might be found - Any information on where the person was going or might go
2	Check Hospitals
3	Check area Police Departments– send out BOLO
4	Follow up on any leads
5	Maintain contact with the complainant, in case subject returns

**Critical**

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Follow initial steps
2	Notify the on-call Supervisor
3	Prepare an immediate BOLO – Regional plus Broadcast
4	Canvas area for information
5	Supervisor will set up investigative plan
6	Chief notified
7	Additional officers to be called in

Critical cases must be dealt with immediately as most leads are obtained in the first couple of hours after an individual is missing.

**Follow up Investigation Procedures**

A designated officer will be assigned to the case by a Supervisor. Time is critical in these cases and officers will give these cases priority. Whenever anyone receives additional information, or the subject is located, it shall be added to the report and the officer assigned the case is notified. Provide as much information on the subject’s whereabouts, if they are located. Complainant and/or reporting person shall be kept informed and advised of our efforts.

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**Out of State Cases** Reports shall only be taken for subjects missing from Wolfeboro.

- Complainants in other cases shall be directed to the proper authority.
- This agency will assist until the other jurisdiction is able to take the report.
- Information placed on log.

Located subjects from another jurisdiction

- Notify reporting agency.
- Incident report completed.

Juveniles from out of state

- May not be returned to the complainant if the juveniles object.
- Must comply with the Interstate Compact on Juveniles.
- Contact Patrol Supervisor.

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**Competent Missing Persons** A competent adult cannot be forced to return home  
Advise them that they are the subject of a missing person report

- If they want the complainant to know their whereabouts.
- If they do not want anyone to know, officer shall confirm their safety and well being.
- Notify the complainant they have been located and are safe.
- Do not disclose their whereabouts.
- If complainant insist, inform them that disclosure would be an invasion of privacy.

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**Dispatcher (BCSO)** Must enter information in SPOTS/NCIC and is responsible for removing info once notified the person has been located.

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**Abandoned or Lost Children** In cases of child abandonment or lost children, sworn members of the police department shall respond in the following manner:

- Attempt to identify the child and custodial parent(s) or guardian (if not already established)
- Summons Alton Fire & Rescue to evaluate the child's medical condition and determine if additional medical treatment is required.
- Notify DCYF Service. (24 hour in-take number)
- Arrangement should be made to relinquish the child to a Children Services representative without delay or parent if child is cleared to return home.