



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Developmental Services

Missing Person Protocol

These guidelines apply to individuals supported by DDS who are reported as “missing.” A person is considered missing when they are unaccounted for and their location is unknown, taking into consideration typical behavior and level of community independence. If a person is in immediate jeopardy because of medical concerns or other needed supervision, that person should be considered missing as soon as his or her whereabouts are unknown.

1. Contact local law enforcement and share the individual’s **Emergency Fact Sheet**

- DDS individuals may be reported to police as a missing person before 24 hours has elapsed
- Communicate risks to police so that urgency is understood (advocacy may be required for police action)
- Ask about using local and state police social media pages to quickly spread the word
- Coordinate contacting local media outlets with important information about the missing person

2. Action Steps to Consider

- Call the individual’s cell phone (if they have one)
- Contact the individual’s guardian(s)
- Contact friends and family and usual places they visit
- Check all social media accounts of the missing person for recent activity
- Message the individual using social media to inquire as to their whereabouts and well-being
- Contact area hospitals
- Activate personal GPS enabled device the person may have
- Assess the possibility of checking bank account activity or cell phone usage

3. Notifications

The **Provider** is responsible for:

- Notifying the Area Office
- Notifying guardian(s)

The **Area Office** is responsible for:

- Informing the Regional Director or designee
- Ensuring the incident is entered into HCSIS in a timely fashion

The **Regional Director** is responsible for:

- Notifying the Regional Risk Manager
- Notifying Central Office (if risk of serious harm is determined)
 - Emails to Central Office should include the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Chief of Staff, Director of Risk Management, and Ombudsman
 - Information to provide Central Office includes:
 - Full name and living arrangements of the missing person
 - A description of details and events surrounding the missing person incident
 - Any involvement of law enforcement, media, or another EOHHS agency
 - Actions taken to resolve the situation and proposed next steps
 - Any special circumstances or potential risk issues
- Updates to Central Office as action steps are taken, contact is made, or person is found

The **DDS Chief of Staff or designee** is responsible for:

- Filing an EOHHS Critical Incident Report with the Secretary’s Office as appropriate, including any required notifications to the Office of the Child Advocate, Department of Children and Families, EOHHS General Counsel, and EOHHS Human Resources Director