

FAMILIES OF MISSING ADULTS: FINDING HELP



Front Cover

The original design of the graphic was created as the logo for the 5th annual National Victims of Crime Awareness Week 2010. The original may be viewed at:

[National Victims of Crime Awareness Week 2010.](#)

The graphic has been modified such that the faces shown are taken from the Ontario's Missing Adults website. These are open cases.

Row 1:

[Michael Bailey](#) – missing since April 2007 from Thunder Bay, Ontario.

[Nation River Lady](#) – unidentified woman discovered May 1975 in Casselman, Ontario.

Row 2:

[Gary Newman](#) – missing since May 2005 from Oshawa, Ontario.

[Alexandra Flanagan](#) – missing July 2007; partial remains located; open homicide investigation.

[Roscoe Echo](#) – unidentified man discovered September 1988 in St. Catharines, Ontario.

[Robbie Aho](#) – missing since October 2009 from Marten River, Ontario.

Row 3:

[Evil Eye Guy](#) – unidentified man discovered in October 1989 near Napanee, Ontario.

[Lois Hanna](#) – missing since July 1988 from Kincardine, Ontario.

Ontario's Missing Adults wishes to acknowledge funding received from the Department of Justice Canada – Victims Fund. Without it, this booklet would not have been possible.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Department of Justice Canada or the Government of Canada.

Questions and comments may be directed to [Lusia Dion](#)

No part of this booklet can be reproduced or modified without the written permission of the Department of Justice Canada or the author, Lusia Dion.

INTRODUCTION	4
MISSING ADULTS	5
Reasons why adults go missing.....	5
CONTACTING POLICE	6
The Family Representative.....	6
Filing a Missing Person Report.....	6
Other Issues to Discuss with Police.....	7
Contact with Police over the Course of the Investigation.....	8
DOCUMENTING YOUR ACTIVITIES	9
REACHING OUT FOR HELP IN LOCATING YOUR LOVED ONE	10
Increasing Awareness through the Media.....	10
Preparing to Engage the Media.....	10
Speak with Police First.....	10
Preparation of Information.....	11
Contacting Traditional Media.....	11
Additional Considerations.....	12
Once an Interview is Granted.....	12
Following the Interview.....	13
Creating Posters.....	13
Using the Internet and Social Media to Increase Awareness.....	14
Using the Internet and Social Media for Conducting Searches.....	14
AGENCIES PROVIDING SEARCH SERVICES	15
Red Cross – Restoring Family Links.....	15
Salvation Army – Family Tracing Service.....	15
SUPPORT FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY	16
Protecting Your Privacy.....	16
Protecting Your Emotional Well-Being Online.....	16
DEVELOPING A SUPPORT NETWORK	17
Online Support Groups.....	17
Taking Care of Yourself.....	17
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	19
Mental Health Service Information Ontario.....	19
Canadian Mental Health Association.....	19
MISSING ADULTS AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM	20
Are Missing Adults Victims of Crime?.....	20
Why is this important?.....	20
Organizations Working with Victims of Crime.....	20

Families of Missing Adults: Finding Help

INTRODUCTION

This booklet is designed to provide information to families of long-term missing adults about:

- Filing a missing person report with police
- Helping in the search for a missing loved one
- Finding support services for family members

Our goal is to provide answers to some of the questions raised by families with long-term missing adults. Our hope is that those with similar questions will find their way to the booklet and have the opportunity to review and digest the information in a place and time that is most comfortable.

The information given represents only a very broad overview of the considerations arising when an adult loved one leaves and does not return within a short period of time. Specific topics such as the psychological effects that long-term disappearances have on family members are important, but beyond the scope of this booklet.

The material selected for inclusion is based on information requests received through Ontario's Missing Adults and the author's personal communication with families and police.

[Ontario's Missing Adults](#) was founded on the belief that locating missing adults requires a team approach between police and families in reaching out to the public for information. Instead of duplicating activities, the work of one group can enhance the activities of the other. The idea of a team approach underlies much of the information presented in the pages that follow.

This booklet has been made available as part of the 5th annual National Victims of Crime Awareness Week (April 18 – 24, 2010). The theme selected for events is "Every Victim Matters". Despite the fact that not all missing adults are victims of crime, until the fate of each missing adult is known, family and friends left behind need information and support.

Each missing adult is important. Equally important are the family members and friends left behind...

...because every victim matters.

MISSING ADULTS

Few people are prepared when a loved one goes missing. Family and friends often find themselves confronted by emotions and situations for which there is no handbook.

While the overwhelming majority of missing persons are located within a short period of time, those who are not become known as the 'long-term missing'. Ontario's Missing Adults considers long-term disappearances to be those where the person has been missing for six months or longer.

Some families live with the uncertainty of their loved one's fate for many years. Sadly, the fates of some missing adult children are not discovered during the lifetime of the parents.

Reasons why adults go missing

One common perception of the missing adult population is that it consists of those who simply choose to walk away from their everyday lives. Certainly some do. However, adults go missing for many reasons. Misadventure and accidents, debts, family issues, mental health issues, addictions and abuse are only a few explanations.

Regardless of when your loved one disappeared, a key first step is to file a missing person report with police. Law enforcement is the single best resource in helping to locate missing persons.

CONTACTING POLICE

The Family Representative

Prior to contacting police, you may wish to select a trusted family member to act as a representative. Doing so does not prevent other family members from providing information to police.

Having a single point of contact reduces the likelihood of conflicting information that could result from dealing with multiple family members.

Designating a family representative ensures that police know who to contact with updates about the investigation. It also allows for the family representative and the officer handling the missing person case to establish a level of comfort and trust in their communications regarding the case.

When contacting police, the name and full contact information for the family representative should be provided. Having a family representative is not a requirement and not having one should not stop you from contacting police. A family representative can be appointed at any time.

If the family representative becomes unavailable, police should be provided with a back up contact. As with any other profession, some police personnel are more communicative than others. Try not to become discouraged. Establishing yourself as the family contact should improve this communication.

For information about what to expect when contacting police, please refer to the [Missing Person's Checklist](#) created by Saskatchewan's Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons.

Filing a Missing Person Report

Even if your loved one has been missing for months, years, or decades, it is still important to file a missing person report.

Police understand that missing adults are not always immediately reported. Some of the reasons for delays in reporting are:

- Estrangement between the missing person and family members
- The relationship is characterized by infrequent contact
- Belief that the missing person will return in time
- Worry of creating legal complications for the missing adult
- Belief that the missing person could be found without police involvement
- Change in concerns about the missing person over time.

Never let embarrassment or concern about not reporting sooner stop you from contacting police.

When speaking with police be as candid as you can about your loved one's lifestyle, habits, and the circumstances surrounding the disappearance. Even if some details are negative, police need to have the information in order to fully understand the circumstances leading to the disappearance.

If you are concerned about some of the information, do not hesitate to discuss your concerns with the officer. It may be possible to keep certain details private and confidential.

Record the full name, rank, badge number and full contact information of the officer taking the missing person report. Be sure to ask for the report number as it may be needed if the original officer/detective is assigned to another division at a later date.

Other Issues to Discuss with Police

Once a missing person report has been filed, you may want to ask about, or clarify, the following:

- What happens immediately after the missing person report is filed?
- Whether any other types of information will be necessary.
- Will the police be making a media release?
- How should the family handle any contact from the media?
- Other actions you have planned to take (poster, Facebook, etc.).
- Who the appropriate person is to contact if you remember additional details.
- Whether the officer has enough information to enter your loved one's case in the Canadian Police Information Centre's (CPIC) database.

!! If not, find out when a more in-depth interview can be expected and the types of information you may need to prepare beforehand. !!

Why is entry in the Canadian Police Information Centre's system important?

Once your loved one's description and status as a missing person is entered into the CPIC database, this information becomes available to all police forces across Canada.

Contact with Police over the Course of the Investigation

At anytime, if you have questions about the status of the investigation, the family representative can contact the officer in charge of the case to ask for an update.

Unfortunately, missing adult investigations may take several years to resolve. If this should happen, discuss a time frame for checking in. This can be done through a telephone conversation, or by email.

- Sometimes the officer or detective is hesitant to contact the family in a long-standing investigation if there is no new information. This lack of communication may stem from the officer's concern about upsetting loved ones. This is something that should be discussed so that family members know that the case has not been forgotten.
- If the situation arises where communication becomes very upsetting, or painful, it may be possible to increase the time between contacts, to have another family member become the main representative, or to have the family initiate the contact.

If you are the family representative, remember to keep police informed of any updates, or changes in your contact information.

If a member of the public contacts you with information, let the officer know what was said. Encourage the person to contact police directly. The police will want to communicate with the person to ask further details.

If the tipster has any concern about confidentiality or anonymity, have her/him submit the tip through Crime Stoppers.

DOCUMENTING YOUR ACTIVITIES

Having a missing loved one is a highly-charged emotional time for everyone involved. To help remember details and steps taken, begin keeping a diary or journal as soon as possible.

Record the details that you relayed to police about your last contact with the missing person. Your memory may fade with time. Ask for a copy of the initial police report to include in your records.

Record the full name, position and full contact information of each person that you dealt with regarding your missing loved one. Also make note of the date and time that the conversation took place.

As soon as possible, document the details of the conversation. Be sure to highlight any follow-up that needs to take place and who will be responsible.

If you are using email to communicate, store all related information in one location by creating a separate folder. You will likely be receiving emails from people whose names you don't immediately recognize. Placing emails in a single location may help to keep information organized. It also helps to create a timeline of your activities.

If family members and friends are helping you reach out to the public through the internet, or other search organizations, ask that contact information for those people be forwarded back to you so that this information can be recorded.

Keep a copy of important names and contact information in a format that is readily available and with you at all times.

Consider creating a separate, dedicated email account for all correspondence. This will allow people to get in touch with you while enabling you to protect your personal contact information.

REACHING OUT FOR HELP IN LOCATING YOUR LOVED ONE

Frequently, family members express a need to participate in the search as a way of coping, keeping actively involved, or ensuring that everything that can be done is being done to locate their loved one.

Although your first thought after contacting police may be to call the media, taking some time to prepare can help to reduce the likelihood of regret later.

Increasing Awareness through the Media

Raising awareness of your loved one's disappearance is a very effective way to increase the likelihood of locating her/him.

Be prepared to lose some of your privacy when reaching out through the media. Bearing this in mind may help to balance the desire to release information with the need to protect yourself, family and your missing relative.

Media includes traditional forms such as television, radio, and newspapers. It also includes the Internet and Social Media. Using different types of media can reach different audiences.

Preparing to Engage the Media

Speak with Police First

Once the decision is made to contact the media, discussing your decision with the police officer or detective handling your case is vital.

If the investigation into your loved one's disappearance is criminal in nature, you may have to wait to approach the media. If involving the media at certain stages interferes with the ongoing investigation, delaying media involvement is crucial. Should this be the case, find out when a less sensitive time can be expected.

When talking about the case, ask whether the officer/detective has an on-going relationship with any reporters that the family could be referred to. If there is no established relationship, ask to speak with the police force's media relations person to see if s/he can recommend someone.

Ask if the officer is willing to participate in a news story.

Find out if the police agency is willing to issue a media release asking for assistance in locating your loved one. Depending on the media outlet's policies, news coverage may require that police issue a media release. This requirement is more typically related to very recent missing person cases.

Verify if any information that police have shared with family members should remain confidential.

Be sure to clarify what contact information should be given for tips and information. Police may have a special phone number for tips. Always include contact information for Crime Stoppers as some people with tips may be worried about anonymity and confidentiality.

Agree to provide police with details about when media outlets cover your loved one's case. Once the story has been released, ask police if the coverage resulted in tips. If tips are generated from a specific location, consider putting up posters in the area.

Preparation of Information

Before actually making contact with the media, it is important to decide what information will be made public and what will remain private.

Although a certain amount of information is necessary, some details may not be needed. Sensitive details may include your loved one's financial status, personal relationships, employment difficulties, health status, mental health concerns, addictions history, or criminal history.

To help decide what to include or exclude, family members may want to consider how their loved one would feel if s/he were to see these details in the media. Would they **endanger, anger or embarrass** your loved one to the point of refusing contact? Always ask yourself whether publicizing certain details is vital to locating the missing person?

If sensitive details are deemed important to include, it may be possible to mention them while still respecting your loved one's privacy. For instance, if your loved one suffers with an illness that is controlled by medication, you may wish to let the media know only that s/he requires daily medication. The specific condition need not be revealed.

Personal identification numbers such as Social Insurance Number (SIN), driver's license, passport number, banking information, Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP), Birth Registration Number or credit card information should **never** be made public. This information should only be shared with police or recognized search agencies. If shared, it should be done privately.

Any information released through any form of media becomes part of the public domain.

Once in the public domain, controlling how it is used or removing it can be impossible.

Contacting Traditional Media

If your loved one's disappearance has not been previously publicized, or not been publicized in a long time, media can be very good at revitalizing interest in the case.

Consider asking for an anniversary piece (e.g., one month, three or six months missing, missing one year), or to mark special holidays (e.g., Christmas, New Year's Eve, Mother's Day, and so on).

Before contacting the media, be prepared to provide a physical description, recent photos and some circumstances surrounding the disappearance. Have phone numbers or details of how to submit tips to police and Crime Stoppers readily available.

Contact the news editor, or news desk of the media outlet to ask for coverage of your loved one's disappearance. Be sure to mention how long s/he has been missing.

Offer to have a family member be interviewed for the story. Having the story told by someone with a personal connection to the missing person can have a greater effect. However, if an interview is not possible, still ask for media coverage of the case.

If possible, ask trusted family members and friends for help in contacting the media. You can also create a poster, or write up, that others can forward to the media on your behalf.

You should include the following information about your missing loved one:

- Recent photos as s/he looks in everyday life
- A physical description including height, weight, hair colour, eye colour and age at the time of the disappearance
- Unique identifiers such as scars, tattoos, facial hair (for males), mannerisms, etc.
- Details about clothing worn at the time of the disappearance, if available
- Date, time, location and other important details about the last known contact
- Do not include your personal contact information (see [Protecting Your Privacy](#))
- Do not include personal identification numbers (see [Preparation of Information](#))
- Police agency and Crime Stoppers contact numbers for anyone with information.

If one media outlet rejects your request, try another. Although you may become discouraged, don't lose hope. The more media outlets you contact, the greater the likelihood that your loved one will receive media coverage.

Additional Considerations

If considering an anniversary story, and time permits, it may be helpful to look at news stories written by crime and human interest reporters. Reviewing how reporters have treated missing person cases and families in the past may help you decide if there are particular reporters, or publications, that you would like to follow-up with.

Select publications/reporters based on whether they seem sensitive/sympathetic, tend not to highlight sensational details, and do not incorporate a lot of personal bias.

Once an Interview is Granted

If you haven't already done so, decide what information you need to share and what you are willing to share.

Request a list of questions that will be asked during the interview. While you may not be given a complete list, you should receive some guidelines about the areas that will be covered in the interview.

You may want to think about your answers, preparing points that you wish to cover may help to reduce anxiety.

During the interview, you may be asked for your opinion about your loved one's fate. If you do not feel comfortable answering this question, repeating the facts can help. By returning to what is known, you reduce the chance of becoming side-tracked by speculation.

While there is a certain 'give and take' during an interview, the interviewee has the right to refuse to answer some questions.

Remember to provide contact details for anyone with information about your loved one – the police agency with jurisdiction in the case and Crime Stoppers (1-800-222-TIPS or 1-800-222-8477).

Following the Interview

Find out when the interview will be made public and let your police contact know.

If the interview is being aired on television or radio – ask the reporter how you can obtain an original copy for your files.

Interviews with the media about your missing loved one can be emotionally taxing. Following the interview, allow yourself time to relax. Try not to go over the interview in your mind, or spend time on what you wish you had said differently. Give yourself credit for your accomplishment. The interview will let more people know about your loved one's disappearance.

Creating Posters

A poster can help inform the public of key details about your missing loved one. Posters can be easily distributed through emails to friends and associates. Referring to a poster is a good way of maintaining consistency in what is being distributed.

In addition to using email to distribute posters, you may wish to have a number of copies printed so that volunteers can place them in areas where your loved one was last seen. Always obtain permission to put up posters if posting in buildings, storefronts, transit stations/stops and other places. This will help to reduce the chances that the posters will be removed.

Allow friends and volunteers help to distribute posters. It will reduce your workload and let those who also care about your loved one help in the search.

If you suspect that your loved one's disappearance may be related to criminal activity, exercise caution when selecting photos to post. Use photos that show only your loved one in order to protect other family members.

Always consider that a person criminally responsible for the disappearance may use your information to avoid detection, monitor the investigation, or create an alibi. Consultation with the investigating police agency is a must if foul play is suspected.

Using the Internet and Social Media to Increase Awareness

Social Media and the Internet can be very effective tools for increasing awareness. Each offers the potential to reach out to those who may not follow traditional media.

The following points relate to popular internet tools such as Facebook and personal websites. Similar to traditional media, protecting your loved one's information and yourself from the start is easier than trying to control released information later.

As with traditional media, never list personal identification numbers such as Social Insurance Number (SIN), driver's license, passport number, banking information, etc., on the Internet. Since identity theft is always a possibility, do not post your loved one's date of birth.

If there is information that you would like only some people to know, consider sharing the information privately.

To help increase exposure, consider using some combination of the keywords listed below and your loved one's name when naming your group:

- Missing Person
- Missing
- Help Find
- Help Us Find

Once you are ready, send a message to all of your friends and contacts asking them to forward a notification to all of their contacts.

Add your loved one's information to complied groups and websites as well. Look for groups that feature missing persons from your city, province, or country and ask that your information be added.

Remember that your loved one may be viewing the information. The [Preparation of Information](#) section in this booklet provides some suggestions about handling sensitive information and details.

Using the Internet and Social Media for Conducting Searches

In addition to posting information, the Internet and Social Media provide a multitude of ways to search for your loved one online.

Search for your loved one using her/his given name(s), nicknames and aliases. Searches using a maiden name or some combination of given names may also yield results.

Monitor groups where your loved one has participated in the past and look for any new messages.

Ask other family members and friends to monitor email accounts or groups as well.

Be sure to check people listings (e.g. [Canada411](#)), or any other directories on a regular basis.

Schools, hobbies, special activities, or organizations that your loved one was involved with, or interested in at the time of disappearance, provide starting points for searches.

Even if your searches do not yield results the first time, repeating the searches on a regular basis may uncover new leads. Automating searches are a possibility as well.

AGENCIES PROVIDING SEARCH SERVICES

Sometimes family members simply lose contact with one another. If this describes your situation, the agencies listed below may help you to reconnect with your loved one. Remember, if you have any concerns for your loved one's well-being or safety, contact police.

Red Cross – Restoring Family Links

The Red Cross provides a search service aimed at reuniting family members who have been separated by war, internal conflicts, natural disasters, and other humanitarian crises.

The Red Cross does not generally conduct search services for those who have lost contact with one another in Canada. The exceptions are cases where the separation occurred before arrival in Canada.

A search can only be initiated by a close family member.

This service is provided free of charge.

For information about the service, please visit [Restoring Family Links](#).

Once the original [Trace Request Form](#) is completed, it should be submitted to the Red Cross office nearest you.

For more information about the Red Cross and the services that it offers, please visit [The Red Cross](#).

Salvation Army – Family Tracing Service

The Salvation Army's Family Tracing Service conducts searches for family members who have become separated both within and outside of Canada.

Requests must be made by a family member.

This service is provided free of charge. However, donations are appreciated.

For further information about the Family Tracing Service, please visit [Family Tracing Service](#).

For information about the Salvation Army and available services, please visit [The Salvation Army](#).

SUPPORT FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY

Protecting Your Privacy

When appealing for information and raising awareness of your loved one's disappearance, it is important to provide people with a way of contacting you to offer support and assistance. It is equally important to protect yourself from unwanted contact or solicitations.

Creating a separate, dedicated email address to use while searching can be done using [YAHOO](#) or [GMAIL](#). As mentioned previously, naming the account as 'HelpFind' plus your loved one's name helps to focus the purpose of the account.

Never post your private phone number, address or place of employment.

Depending on the nature of the disappearance, publicizing your phone number, address, or other personal identifying information may make you and your family vulnerable to potentially dangerous situations.

Before releasing personal information, consider how difficult it will be to re-establish your personal privacy at a later date.

If situations arise where you need to post a non-police phone number, consider getting a dedicated cellular or land-line that can be discontinued once it is no longer necessary.

Protecting Your Emotional Well-Being Online

The Internet and Social Media have become very powerful tools in spreading news of a loved one's disappearance. However, these tools do carry some potential harm to the emotional well-being of families.

For example, if public awareness and participation become very high, the desire for updates, further details and interaction with the family can be overwhelming. There are examples where virtual groups created to increase awareness and support for the family become dominated by rumours and speculation that can be painful to family members.

Since there are many benefits to the family, friends and the investigation itself, rather than argue against using these tools, some precaution can be taken to protect family members from exposure to upsetting dialogue.

When creating personal websites or groups, allow a trusted friend to administer and monitor messages. While this will not prevent harmful dialogue or speculation, it does create a buffer for the family. Family members can then choose to review the comments.

DEVELOPING A SUPPORT NETWORK

A good social support network can be invaluable when living with the disappearance of a loved one. The activities performed by the support network can include sending emails, distributing posters, cooking meals, taking care of children or any other activities. Having a group to help reduce the workload can help the family from becoming overwhelmed.

Depending on the nature of the network, some members may also provide emotional support. This is particularly important because it reduces dependency on a single person or family member to be a support for everyone at all times.

Publicizing your loved one's disappearance in your community increases awareness and enables the community to become part of an extended support network for the family.

Other places where there may be a natural support system for the family may include church groups, hobby or sports groups, professional associations and any number of community groups that family members belong to.

Online Support Groups

While it may be difficult to locate a support network for families with missing adults in smaller communities, the Internet has enabled families to reach across geographic divides and locate others going through the same experience.

Many organizations with a web presence provide support and discussion forums for families with missing loved ones. As well, social media groups also exist that bring families together so that they can share information and experiences.

Ultimately, the decision to share or to participate with such groups, rests with the individual. It is a personal choice. Having a sense of what your needs are may help to identify which organizations/groups will provide the best support.

Taking Care of Yourself

When someone you love first goes missing, daily life may become chaotic as activities become focused on doing all that can be done to locate her/him. If the missing person does not return in a very short period of time, the frantic activity and trauma can be harmful.

With all of the attention focused on the missing person, it is not unusual for family members to place caring for themselves far down the list.

Eating regularly and getting a reasonable amount of sleep are extremely important.

Although regular exercise may not be maintained immediately following the disappearance, it is a good idea to re-establish an exercise routine as soon as possible.

Remember to treat yourself with as much compassion and kindness as you would your best friend.

Recognize that you are doing the absolute best that you can.

You cannot always be strong – allow yourself to lean on others.

If there is something that you haven't done, do not beat yourself up. Ask for help or simply plan to do it in the near future.

Take time to do something special for yourself, whether it is taking a relaxing bath, going for a walk, picking up a new book, or something else, remember to treat yourself.

Remain hopeful and positive.

Create a special place or folder to hold copies of posters, special messages, computer screen captures, or media stories about your loved one. It is easy to think of all that hasn't been done. Instead, revisit your special place or folder when you need to remind yourself of all that you have done and accomplished.

There are situations where family members find it necessary to refocus their lives after a period of time. Shifting priorities may mean closing a website, or group, created about your loved one's disappearance. Allow yourself to take the necessary steps without guilt – taking care of yourself and/or remaining family members is absolutely crucial.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If you are having a difficult time coping with the disappearance of a loved one, you may wish to seek professional counseling. You don't have to do it all on your own.

Your family physician may be able to provide further information or referral.

Mental Health Service Information Ontario

Mental Health Service Information Ontario (MHSIO) is a provincial information and referral service. This 24 hours service is available 7 days a week in over 140 languages to consumers, families, service providers and others needing information about mental health resources.

MHSIO's goal is to provide callers with referrals to services and supports that are designed to meet their unique and individual needs. The MHSIO database contains information on 300 mental health organizations and over 1,000 programs in Ontario.

MHSIO also offers a [Web chat](#) feature that allows individuals to chat directly with a MHSIO advisor.

All services are free, anonymous, and confidential.

On-line: [Mental Health Service Information Ontario](#)

By Phone: 1-866-531-2600

Canadian Mental Health Association

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) offers a wide range of information and services for those living with a mental illness and their families. Also available are reference materials about mental health and dealing with stress.

Programs and services are accessible through 135 regional and community-based locations.

To locate services in your area, please visit the [Canadian Mental Health Association](#).

MISSING ADULTS AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Are Missing Adults Victims of Crime?

The short answer is – not necessarily. One of the challenges in cases involving missing adults is that there is no *Canadian Criminal Code* offence that prevents an adult from voluntarily walking away from her/his life – assuming that the person has not committed a crime.

Adults have the right to leave everyone behind and to start over elsewhere.

Only after the missing person is located, can a definitive determination be made as to whether s/he has been a victim of crime. Until then, everything is speculation.

Why is this important?

Without clarity about whether or not the adult has been the victim of crime, the status of family members within the criminal justice system is uncertain. This has consequences in terms of the services made available to remaining family members.

When a child goes missing, it is understood that family members need support and encouragement. A number of organizations have emerged that provide support services. Yet few dedicated services currently exist for families living with the disappearance of an adult loved one.

The need for services that are appropriate to families with a missing adult is becoming more widely recognized. Unfortunately, these services are not commonly available at this point.

Organizations Working with Victims of Crime

Organizations listed below provide services and support to those victimized by crime. Depending on individual circumstances, these organizations may serve as a good starting point. Each organization has extensive knowledge about programs and services and may be able to provide further information or assistance.

If you are living with the disappearance of a loved one and are having trouble locating support services in your area, these organizations may be able to assist you.

Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC) provides support and guidance to individual victims and their families in order to assist them in obtaining needed services and resources, and campaigns for victims' rights by presenting the interests and perspectives of victims of crime to Government, at all levels.

The CRCVC website also provides valuable links to a number of other organizations and services (under "Links").

Link: [Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime](#)

Phone: In Ottawa at 613- 233-7614 or Toll-Free at 1-877-232-2610

Victim Services Directory – Department of Justice Canada

The Policy Centre for Victim Issues at the Department of Justice Canada maintains the Victim Services Directory. This directory can be search online by city, types of services and types of victimization.

Please visit [Victim Services Directory](#) for further details.

Phone: In Ottawa at 613-952-1110