

IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center MISSING PERSONS WITH ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

**Model Policy
August 2010**

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for the response and investigation of missing persons with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (AD/D).

II. POLICY

The mindset of a person with AD/D is much different than that of other missing persons. Therefore, questioning, report-taking, investigation and search considerations should be appropriately expanded.

It is the policy of this agency that 1) during agency employee contacts and encounters with older adults, consideration will be given to the potential that the individual is lost but is not yet reported missing, or is spatially disoriented and at high risk of becoming lost, 2) that persons found with AD/D, whether by an agency employee or Good Samaritan, are provided with assistance that is appropriate for the AD/D medical considerations; and 3) that reports of missing persons with AD/D will be treated as an emergency and a search will begin immediately.

III. OVERVIEW OF THE DISEASE

AD/D is hallmarked by memory loss and changes in a person's ability to think clearly; to recognize persons, landmarks, or other familiar objects; and often causes him or her to act irrationally under what most persons would consider normal situations. While AD/D most commonly afflicts older adults, a small percentage of cases include early-onset beginning as early as age 35.

Law enforcement officers may come in contact with persons who manifest symptoms of AD/D in a variety of situations. Those missing with AD/D fall into three categories: 1) individuals who seem normal and oriented during encounters with law enforcement and other persons, and who may not be classified as missing, but whose behaviors suggest that they are lost, or at risk of becoming missing; 2) those who are missing but have not been noticed or reported missing by caregivers; and 3) those who have been reported as missing by caregivers.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Identifying the At-Risk Older Adult

Law enforcement officers may encounter individuals who, while initially coherent, are subsequently recognized as being confused and disoriented. In these situations, officers should ask the individual basic evaluation questions, such as

1. Where are you coming from? Where are you going to?
2. What route are you taking to get there? Who are you meeting?
3. What is your full name, full address and phone number?
4. What day of the week is it? What month is it?

5. Can you tell me what city and state we are in?
 6. What time is it right now? (Answer should be correct within one hour.)
- B. If the individual does not provide correct answers to these questions law enforcement personnel should secure the person at his or her current location and consult with their immediate supervisor on appropriate actions. If a substantial degree of confusion and disorientation is identified, the individual should be temporarily detained in a reasonably comfortable setting and attempts made by officers to locate the individual's family or care facility. If these efforts are not successful, the person should be taken to a local hospital or care facility as available.
- C. Initial Report Taking
1. There is no waiting period for reporting a missing person with AD/D.
 2. The initial report taker shall gather information in order to initiate a response appropriate for the situation. Such information includes the following.
 - a. Name, age and physical description of the subject, a recent photo if available, and the relationship of the reporting party to the missing person.
 - b. Time and place of last known location and description of the clothing the subject was wearing when last seen. Ask if the clothing is weather appropriate.
 - c. The extent of any search for the subject currently being undertaken.
 - d. Whether the person has been missing on prior occasions and where the person has gone in the past or where they were located previously.
 - e. The current physical condition of the subject and whether the person is taking prescription medication or has a co-existing medical condition. If the person takes medication, when was the last dose taken and how long can the person be without experiencing life threatening or other serious consequences?
 - f. Which door or exit did the person leave from?
 - g. Did the person leave on foot or in a car?
 3. In addition, the following questions should be asked:
 - a. Is the person carrying identification, medical alert devices, or similar items?
 - a. Would the person recognize and respond to police officers or someone in uniform? Would the person be fearful of police or uniforms for any reason?
 - b. Does the individual have weapons or access to weapons?
 - c. Is the current location near the person's hometown – could the person have gone to a former residence, workplace, church, or other familiar location?
 - d. What is the person's general daily routine?
 - e. Can he or she still use money and does he or she have any with him/her or be capable of accessing cash?
 - f. What neighbors does he or she know well?
 - g. Are there activities he or she seeks out or enjoys? What would he or she find interesting as it relates to locations?

- h. Does he or she know how to use public transportation? Does he or she use it regularly?
- i. Does the person still remember his or her address or phone number?
- j. Is the person drawn to certain landmarks, buildings, or objects?
- k. Will the person go away from the sun or towards it?
- l. Does the person have fears of crowds, strangers, or certain environments?

D. Preliminary Investigation

1. Responding or assisting officers should

- a. Conduct a full search, as soon as reasonably possible, of the home or care facility and surrounding premises and curtilage, including unusual locations such as false ceilings, A/C venting, toy-boxes, sink basins or cabinets, etc. A search of neighbors' yards should also be conducted.
- b. Initiate a broader search if a thorough search of the home and immediate area is unproductive.
- c. Upon verification of a missing person, complete a "missing – critical" or endangered missing persons report and initiate an alert if Silver Alert, Endangered Persons Alert or similar alerts exist in the area or jurisdiction where the person has been reported missing. Make appropriate entries in state and national information databases in accordance with established procedures (e.g.: adjacent jurisdictions, state or commonwealth department of public safety, National Crime Information Center, fusion centers, LEADS, etc.).
- d. Check for indications of missing personal belongings, particularly money and other valuables.
- e. Check for any suggestion of foul play or accident.
- f. Secure the premises or area where the person was last seen as a crime scene.
- g. Request that one person with whom the missing person is familiar remain at the place last seen in the event the person returns and to serve as a consistent point of contact.

2. In the case of persons designated as "missing- critical," a supervisory officer may:

- a. Request or assign a specific dispatcher to handle calls relative to this case and direct the dispatcher to broadcast all relevant information necessary to identify the missing person to all persons on duty.
- b. Request that the shift commander authorize mobilization of resources necessary for an area search.
- c. Establish an Incident Command Center and implement Incident Command System.
- d. Determine whether to use local media to help locate the missing person and use where deemed necessary with the approval of the law enforcement supervisor and the missing person's family.
- e. Determine the best use of developed communication networks: BOLOs, texting programs, social media, reverse-calling systems, fusion centers, and other outlets.

- f. Conduct outreach through other governmental/contracted employees with radios and vehicles such as parks/facilities, road crews, waste management, and related personnel.

E. Search and Operational Considerations and Guidelines

Law enforcement officers should understand that standard grid-style searches may not be useful with a missing AD/D person. Instead, officers should determine if the person left by car or on foot.

1. If by car, officers should:

- a. Ascertain or approximate the amount of fuel in the vehicle and construct a search radius using this information. If the fuel cannot be approximated, begin a routine search with a 5-mile radius using available officers and volunteers.
- b. Notify adjacent counties.
- c. Initiate credit card and/or bank inquiries to determine if and where purchases have been made since the person was last seen.

2. If on foot, officers should:

- a. Begin a thorough foot search with a 1.5-mile radius using available officers and volunteers.
- b. Consider the dominant-hand theory: that the person will follow the path of their dominant hand, i.e., making right turns, following right, etc.
- c. Call in other available assets, such as search helicopters, volunteer teams, social services, etc.
- d. Search thick vegetation, near bodies of water, near highways, areas that have cover (natural or man-made), and residential yards.
- e. Consider obscure hiding locations: junkyards, drainage trenches, building roofs, abandoned buildings and vehicles, commercial ventilation systems/ducts, etc.
- f. Canvass area businesses and other easily accessible buildings.
- g. Expand radius as time and weather dictate.

3. Search Considerations:

- a. Searchers should be aware that missing persons with AD/D likely will not respond to their name being called. The missing person may perceive that he or she is “in trouble” and further hide or seclude him or herself.
- b. If the person is located, those having initial contact with the person should:
 - (1) Use low, calm voices and short, simple sentences or questions
 - (2) Clearly identify themselves and explain what they are doing
 - (3) Ask permission before touching
 - (4) Use simple instruction and positive reinforcement
 - (5) Allow plenty of time for the person to respond
 - (6) If possible and practical, limit volume of radios and curtail where possible, the use of lights and sirens, as this may further agitate the person
 - (7) Avoid placing the person in handcuffs (in cases of arrest) and use caution when placing the person in a cruiser

F. Ongoing Investigation

Ongoing investigations of missing persons with AD/D should include, but should not be limited to:

1. Requests for the release of dental records and fingerprints, if available.
2. Contact with hospitals and the coroner or medical examiner's office as appropriate for injured or deceased persons fitting the description of the missing person.
3. Continuance of on-going contact by the lead investigator with the missing person's closest relative or responsible party and the assigned dispatcher concerning progress of the investigation.

G. Recovery of Missing Persons and Case Closure

1. Upon location of a missing person, all agencies and information systems previously contacted for assistance shall be notified or updated.
2. Missing persons and their caregivers shall be questioned to establish the circumstances surrounding their disappearance and how future incidents might be prevented.
3. The case report shall include a detailed report on the person's whereabouts, actions and activities during the investigation.
4. After Action Reports (AARs) shall be prepared, and a post-incident briefing shall be conducted to establish Lessons Learned.
5. In cases involving licensed care facilities, officers shall ensure that:
 - a. The facility has taken proper precautions to prevent future incidents.
 - b. Proper reports have been filed to the facility's chain of command – state accrediting agencies, corporate office, insurers, and others.
6. Where indicated, follow-up action shall include filing an abuse and neglect report with the appropriate state agency.
7. Where indicated, criminal charges shall be filed with the prosecutor's office.
8. In cases of death, investigative personnel shall follow-up with the coroner's office in determining the cause of death and identifying available evidence.

Appendix A

Information for Families Caring for Individuals with AD/D

1. Research available identification and tracking systems and encourage use.
2. Install double-sided locks or disguise locks on doors to visually deter the person from using them.
3. Disguise exit doors in the home with curtains, wrapping paper, posters, or other visually distracting objects.
4. Place bells on doors and windows.
5. Remove the person's car if he or she still owns one, and hide keys to other cars in the household.
6. If possible, establish relationships with neighbors and exchange contact information in case of emergency.
7. Establish a schedule and follow it consistently to avoid the person leaving to seek something – food, bathroom, etc. and to avoid the person becoming agitated by a schedule disruption.
8. Prevention Strategies and Suggested Community Outreach:
 - Since searches for missing persons with AD/D are expensive and exhaust many resources, it is advisable to implement prevention techniques within the community:
 - a. Provide families caring for persons with AD/D in the home with information outlining steps to take to prevent the individual from going missing.
 - b. Establish a voluntary registry program for persons at-risk:
 - (1) Offer the program at community events, and use both uniformed and civilian volunteers to solicit people to register.
 - (2) Include fingerprints, recent photos, several contacts including neighbors, medical needs, routes, familiar places, etc.