



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Chapter 10: Missing Persons

Revised:

Last Reviewed: March 26, 2024; and August 11, 2022.

Adopted: June 1, 2023.



I. PURPOSE:

It is the purpose of this policy to establish a standard operating procedure for responding to missing persons.

II. POLICY:

It is the policy of the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) that all TCSG Law Enforcement Agencies thoroughly investigate all cases of missing/unidentified persons and give priority to “at-risk” cases, such as missing children and disabled adults, who have gone missing from, or were last seen on, any TCSG property. Additionally, in cases where persons associated with the college or TCSG have gone missing from a non-TCSG location, TCSG Law Enforcement shall assist the primary investigating agency as much as possible.

III. DEFINITIONS:

- A. **Missing Person:** a person who cannot be located at a particular place or time and is reported to police as missing by a complainant.
- B. **Missing Juvenile:** a person who is under the age of twenty-one (21) and is missing from a specific place or is reported to the police as missing, including runaway, abandonment, abducted, or other missing statuses.
- C. **Disabled Adult:** a person eighteen (18) years of age or older who is incapacitated and/or has diminished mental capacity.

- D. **Unidentified Person:** A juvenile or adult recovered by law enforcement personnel, due to age, mental capacity, or unwillingness, is unable to furnish their identity or address.
- E. **At-risk:** The term “at-risk” refers to:
 - a. A missing juvenile under the age of fourteen (14), or
 - b. A missing person of any age who is:
 - 1. mentally or physically incapacitated,
 - 2. in a life-threatening situation,
 - 3. in the company of others who may cause harm or endanger their welfare,
 - 4. reported missing after a disaster, or
 - 5. whose disappearance involves circumstances that would cause a reasonable person to conclude that the missing person should be considered at risk.

IV. PROCEDURE (GLECP 6.25a-c):

- A. When responding to any missing persons call, the responding officer(s) will respond in a timely manner and is responsible for the following:
 - a. Preserve the scene and notify the on-duty supervisor.
 - b. Gather all essential information, such as:
 - 1. Attempt to determine how long the person has been missing.
 - 2. A complete description of the missing person, including the following:
 - i. Height
 - ii. Weight
 - iii. Hair Color and Eye Color
 - v. Ethnicity
 - vi. Distinguishing scars, marks, or tattoos
 - vii. Last known clothing, including jewelry
 - 3. Description of the vehicle, if applicable.
 - 4. Photograph or video footage of the person, if available.
 - 5. Who saw the person last; when and where.
 - 6. Determine the person’s routine movements.
 - 7. Get a complete description of friends, business associates, and frequent “hangouts.”

8. Get a complete description of the person's vehicle, including the license number, if available.
 9. Any probable causes for the person's absence, e.g., domestic problems, employment problems, etc.
- c. Give updated information to other Officers, if applicable, and relay the information to the local law enforcement agencies as appropriate.
 - d. Determine if the missing person is an "at-risk" person.
 - e. Notify the College Chief of Police, who shall notify the TCSG DPS Chief of Police.
 - f. Identify those at the scene.
 - g. When applicable, commence the initial search of the immediate area.
 - h. Complete a thorough report containing the information gathered, and the actions taken.
 - i. Follow up with the reporting person periodically for any new information and to keep the person informed as appropriate.
- B. TCSG College Law Enforcement will investigate all missing person reports in which the person is missing from or last seen any TCSG property. The Chief of Police or their designee may request the Georgia Bureau of Investigation or local law enforcement to serve as the primary investigating agency when deemed appropriate.:
- a. To ensure those actions are completed when appropriate and required by law, the TCSG agency may assume those responsibilities if necessary.
 - b. For anyone under the age of 21, an entry must be made **immediately**. For all others, an entry must be made within 12 hours (O.C.G.A. 35-3-36, GCIC Council Rule 140-2-.15, Titles 42 USC 5779 and 5780) **(GLECP 6.25f)**
- C. Missing residential students of TCSG colleges having residence facilities:
- a. In incidents where the missing person is a residential student of a TCSG College with residence facilities, the TCSG law enforcement agency of that college will consult with local or state law enforcement to determine which agency shall be the primary investigative agency.

- b. In addition to the other procedures outlined in this chapter, the TCSG law enforcement agency will work with the college's administration to ensure that the requirements of the Clery Act are met, which include:
 - 1. Notification of local law enforcement within 24 hours unless local law enforcement initially determined the student was missing.
 - 2. Notification of the student's identified contact person no later than 24 hours after the student is determined to be missing.
 - 3. For students under 18 years of age and not emancipated, notification of the custodial parent or guardian within 24 hours of the student being reported missing.

D. Special Considerations for at-risk persons (**GLECP 6.25g**):

- a. In addition to the procedures outlined in this chapter, in situations where the missing person is considered at-risk, TCSG law enforcement agencies will also:
 - 1. Broadcast available information to all area law enforcement as soon as possible, including those out of state where appropriate.
 - 2. Work with the primary investigative agency, if your agency is not primary, to evaluate the situation to determine if the Georgia Child Abduction Response Team (CART) may be of assistance. CART is a team of individuals from various state agencies trained and prepared to respond to a missing / endangered or abducted child. CART pulls together resources to aid in the search and rescue effort and to assist the agency of jurisdiction in its investigation.
 - 3. The occurrence of any of the following may initiate investigative and forensic involvement, assistance, or coordination by CART members:
 - i. A non-family abduction of a minor child (under the age of 18); or
 - ii. The abduction of a minor child with endangerment circumstances; or
 - iii. Any other abduction or missing child investigation requires an immediate response to protect the child's well-being.
- b. The primary investigating agency will be responsible for entering missing persons into GCIC and contacting the GBI in cases where an Amber Alert ("Levi's Call") should be issued for an abducted child under 18. For anyone under 21, the entry must be made immediately. For all others, an entry must be made within 12 hours (O.C.G.A. 35-3-36, GCIC Council Rule 140-2-.15, Titles 42 USC 5779 and 5780) (**GLECP 6.25f**).
The following alert criteria must be met:
 - 1. There is a reasonable belief that an abduction has occurred.

2. The child is believed to be in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death.
 3. Enough descriptive information exists about the victim and the abductor.
 4. The victim of the abduction is under the age of eighteen (18).
 5. The abduction must be entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC.)
- c. In cases of a missing disabled adult, contact the GBI regional office to have them evaluate the case to determine if a "Mattie's Call" can be issued. The following alert criteria must be met:
1. There is a reasonable belief that a disabled person is missing and is in immediate danger of serious bodily injury or death.
 2. The disappearance has been verified, and alternative explanations for the disabled person's disappearance have been eliminated.
 3. Sufficient information is available to disseminate to the public that could assist in locating the disabled person.
 4. The missing disabled person must be entered into NCIC.
 5. Statewide broadcasts to law enforcement/911 centers have been issued and contact with local media regarding the missing person.

Follow-up investigations and the organization of searches (other than the immediate area where the incident is reported) will be the responsibility of the primary investigating agency. For those investigations in which a TCSG Law Enforcement agency is not the primary investigation agency, the TCSG agency will assist the primary agency as much as possible when requested. (GLECP 6.25 d,e)

- e. For investigations in which a TCSG law enforcement agency is the primary investigative agency, the investigating officer(s) will:
1. Remain in contact with the reporting person(s) to keep them apprised of the progress of the investigation.
 2. Make reasonable efforts to acquire additional and ongoing information, investigate any possible leads, and integrate any new information into the GCIC computer systems.
 3. Reevaluate all information and search all areas identified as a possible location of the missing person or where the possible evidence is located.
 4. When the missing person has been located, have the information on the person removed from the GCIC computer system and notify all agencies assisting in the investigation.

**SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:
GEORGIA LAW ENFORCEMENT CERTIFICATION PROGRAM
(GLECP) STANDARDS INCLUDED: 6.25**

This policy is for the Law Enforcement Agencies of the Technical College System of Georgia use only and does not apply to any criminal or civil proceeding. The policy shall not be construed as creating a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense concerning third-party claims. Violations of this policy will form the basis for departmental administrative sanctions only. Violations of law will form the basis for civil and criminal sanctions in a recognized judicial setting.