



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. Who can create a missing persons case in NamUs?

Anyone can enter a case (after becoming a registered user). The case and the submitting person (known as the case creator) will be verified prior to information being published. A National Crime Information Center (NCIC) number must be in place before the case is displayed on the NamUs site. This is the official law enforcement tracking number for a missing persons report and can be obtained through a local law enforcement or FBI office. These steps are taken to prevent hoaxes and other fraudulent uses of the site.

2. How does one register to enter a missing persons case into the NamUs database?

You must submit a registration request following the registration link https://www.findthemissing.org/users/new_confirm, or by selecting the 'Register' button on the left navigation bar of the www.findthemissing.org Web site.

3. Who must register to use the Unidentified Persons System (UP)?

Medical examiners and coroners who will be entering case information in the UP system will be required to register as a UP user. Coroners or medical examiners who are not members of the National Association for Medical Examiners (NAME) or the International Association of Medical Examiners and Coroners (IACME) must provide the name of a sponsor who belongs to NAME or IACME. NAME or IACME members do not need a sponsor.

Law enforcement officers must register for full data viewing privileges. When registering, law enforcement personnel must provide the name of the chief medical examiner or coroner serving their jurisdiction.

4. What types of users are using NamUs?

When a person registers, the 'Public User' role is assigned by default. Roles are defined below and anything other than a public user must be verified.

- Public User - general public
- Law Enforcement - Police, missing persons, commander, etc.
- Case Manager - Criminal justice clearinghouse staff and other authorized individuals
- Regional System Administrator - coordinator of the case managers with in the NamUs system. (System administrators are assigned).
- Medical Examiners/Coroners
- Forensic Anthropologists

5. How long does it take to register as a public user?

A public user can register in just a few minutes. The system will send a confirmation email and password. The password will be valid and then users can log in and enter or track cases.

6. After registering as a case manager with NamUs, how long will it take for my registration to be verified?

Although users will receive a password just a few minutes after registering, approval of status as a case manager may take a few business days, due to security verification protocol. Users may create cases during this waiting period, but a different case manager will be verifying new cases. Once a case manager has been approved, extended system responsibilities will apply and the user will be notified via email.

7. What information is required to enter a case into NamUs?

The case specifics listed here are required to create a case on the NamUs system. Be sure to include the NCIC number if possible to assist in verification. The case can be entered, but will not be verified or published without this number.

Required Missing Persons Information:

- First Name
- Last Name
- Age
- Sex
- Race
- Height
- Weight
- City
- State
- Date LKA
- Circumstances
- Hair Color
- Eye Color

Strongly Recommended Information:

- DNA
- Dental records
- Fingerprints

8. What does "Date LKA" mean?

This is the date last known alive.

9. If a missing persons report is filed with a local law enforcement agency, do they automatically post it to NamUs?

Although it's encouraged, this is not required. NamUs provides an opportunity for the general public to assist in solving cases by uploading case information into this national data system.

10. What happens when a case is updated?

Users can log in and check on cases as often as they want and add information. Additional information will be held for verification prior to publishing in order to maintain the highest quality data.

11. What is the 5-Star Profile Strength rating that appears on each case?

The 5-star scale ranks each case in terms of the amount of information it contains that is potentially useful for finding a missing person. The system automatically assigns a number of stars based on the amount and quality of data that is entered by the case owner. Essentially, the more useful identification information contained in a profile, the more likely it is that these specifics can be used to help solve a case.

For example, a case that includes identification information like specific clothing and accessories, dental records, DNA reporting and fingerprints will have more stars than a record containing only basic features like eye and hair color.

The 5-star rating system does not denote any priority level in solving a case, but is used here to encourage users to add as much information as possible.

12. Who can search the unidentified person database?

Anyone can search the UP database, but the level of access to information will vary. Medical examiners, coroners, law enforcement officers and missing person clearinghouses/professionals will have access to all case information. The public will have access to basic case information and limited access to identification photographs.

13. How is a search conducted?

Any member of the public can conduct a search by clicking the "Search" link on the home page. Doing so will take the user to a 'Basic Search' screen on which a search may be conducted for a missing person's race, sex, ethnicity (Hispanic/Latino), date last known to be alive, age when last known alive, and the state in which the person was last known to be alive. These can be searched in any combination and the basic search is designed to display a relatively large group of cases that could be possible matches.

There is also an option to perform an "Advanced Search" in which any combination of information may be searched including clothing, dental characteristics, tattoos, scars and many other possible identifying features.

Further information is contained in the "Search Tips" and "Dental Search Tips" help files on the UP site.

14. How can users improve the chances that their loved one will be found?

Law enforcement agencies need as much information as possible when trying to solve cases.

- Contact information for the missing person's dentist so dental records can be obtained
- Fingerprints (Did the missing person ever get a background check with fingerprints?)
- DNA Samples – For example: a personal item that will provide DNA (hairbrush, toothbrush, etc.) or DNA samples from family members that can be submitted for DNA analysis
- Good, clear photos of the missing person

All of this information can be helpful and there are opportunities to add detailed information of this type into the system.

15. How long does it take for a missing persons case entry to become searchable within the database?

New cases will become searchable as soon they are validated and published by a case manager (usually within a few days).

16. Is a law enforcement user's case information viewable by the public, or can sensitive data be restricted to law enforcement only?

Most general case information is viewable by all users, with some exceptions. Sensitive data entered by law enforcement is shielded from the view of the case creator or general public for security or investigation purposes.

17. To which information does the public have access?

Each case in the UP system contains information in several categories, and the menu bar contains a link to each category.

The public has access to:

- Case Information (Case number, date found etc)
- Decedent Demographics (age, race etc)
- Circumstances
- Body Details (those useful for identification)
- Clothing, hair, and eye details
- Case Identification Photograph, if provided
- Reports (ability to print out a summary of one or more cases)

Registered users have access to the above information plus the following categories:

- Police contact information
- Case Follow Up information

18. Isn't NamUs a duplication of NCIC?

No, the two systems have different objectives.

NCIC (National Crime Information Center) is a computerized database of documented criminal justice information accessible only to law enforcement agencies and their subgroups nationwide.

NamUs is a searchable, online database that serves as a national repository for case information on missing persons and unidentified remains. It can be accessed by anyone including the general public, law enforcement and state and local agencies that are not part of law enforcement such as a county medical examiner. It is designed to facilitate the work of the diverse community of individuals and organizations who investigate missing and unidentified persons.

19. Because anyone can become a case creator and can initiate a missing person's report on NamUs, how are hoax-type cases screened out?

The NamUs system will accept a case, but minimal elements must be fulfilled before it is publicly displayed. The case and the submitting person (known as the case creator) will be verified prior to information being published and the Regional System Administrator (RSA) assigned to the case will place a phone call to the law enforcement agency to validate the case.

20. How does the cross searching tool in NamUs work?

In July 2009, the system was upgraded and now **automatically searches missing persons records against the unidentified persons** records, providing side-by-side comparisons. Cases with similarities are automatically presented to the investigator, **reducing research time** and allowing the investigator to exclude those that do not match. If there are cases that offer solid potential for a match, the investigator will engage forensic services to conduct further identification testing.