

No-Body Homicide Investigative Checklist¹

Circumstances of Disappearance

- Was it sudden? Was it suspicious?
- Was it normal pattern of behavior for victim?

Immediate time sensitive issues

- Canvass area for witnesses, evidence.
- Canvass immediate area and entrance/egress points for video surveillance. (Footage may be over written or erased daily.)
- Contact (V) cell phone companies immediately to track cell phone which may be with (V) "via pinging". ("Pinging information may be only available for hours.")
- Contact appropriate company if (V) vehicle is equipped with "Low Jack", "Onstar", "BMW Assist" or other G.P.S. tracking abilities.

Search Effort for (V)

- Create a master plan for search efforts both private and public.
- Consider use of canines, helicopters, mounted patrol etc.
- Create a master search log and keep track of time, location, area searched and resources used.
- Send out press releases on (V)' disappearance.
- Utilize TV, radio and print media to help locate (V).
- Utilize internet webpage's such as "youtube.com" "Myspace.com" and missing person's websites with picture of (V) and links to law enforcement website.
- Keep file with articles, stories and log times of (V) story on the air.
- Develop protocol for taking tips and following up on leads from public.
- Utilize tracking program to track tips and link them together.

Contact V's work, friends, family, and people significant to (V)

- Contact spouse, significant other, previous partners.
- Interview people (V) worked with, what was (V)'s job, routine, behavior, has (V) missed work before, etc?
- Identify friends, family and other significant people and contact them.

¹ Please be advised that this is not an exhaustive list, and that each case has its own set of separate facts.

- Were there people, belongings or pets (V) cared about, wouldn't leave?
- How often did (V) remain in contact with these people?
- How did (V) communicate with these people, email, text messaging, pager messaging, home or cell phone calls, Nextell "Direct Connect", face to face, instant messenger, VOIP and letters or notes.
- Was it unusual for (V) to disappear without communication?
- How frequent did (V) remain in contact and is it unusual for them not to hear from (V)?
- Contact everyone in (V)'s address book, email lists, home phone directory, cell phone directory, instant messenger list, pager, etc.
- Ask everyone you contact to notify you immediately if they hear from (V) and provide them with your contact information.

State of Mind Evidence

- Identify those in contact with (V) leading up to disappearance.
- Ask for and procure any recent voice messages, emails, letters and notes, instant messages from V prior to disappearance.
- Obtain and examine (V)'s personal calendar, blackberry, diary, computer, etc.
- Interview (V)'s neighbors regarding their recent observations, habits of (V), anything unusual, etc.
- What were (V)'s activities leading up to disappearance?
- What was (V)'s demeanor, mental state, intentions, plans?
- What events in the future was (V) planning for?
- What steps did the (V) take towards his/her plans towards their future?
- Document any significant missed events that (V) missed post-disappearance.
- Was any indication that (V) suicidal?
- Was there any indication (V) wanted to disappear, assume a new identity?
- Was there any indication (V) was scared, threatened, or running from someone?
- Procure any recent photos, recordings, video evidence of (V) that reflects on mental state.

Personal Items Left Behind

- Were everyday important items left behind, i.e. wallet, purse, car, medicine, clothes, toiletries, eyeglasses, contacts, important documents, etc.? If so, photograph and seize.
- Obtain items such as hair brushes, tooth brushes, curling irons or any other items that may contain (V) DNA for comparison at a later date if needed. **(Have a detective different than the one processing the crime scene collect the above items to minimize contamination arguments or transfer of evidence arguments in trial.)**
- What about treasured items, i.e. photos, pets, heirlooms, good luck charms, etc. - things important to (V)? (Document and photograph.)

Phone Records

- Examine cell phone if found for recent incoming/outgoing calls or “direct connects”, text messages, instant messages, internet activity and or emails.
- Obtain warrant to examine phone records to include incoming/outgoing calls, text messages, direct connect communications, internet browsing, instant messaging and cell tower information.
- Call everyone in on phone listing leading up to disappearance.
- Obtain phone records at least 6 months prior to disappearance to review patterns of communication and to aid in determining frequency of calls, persons called or calling and locations where (V) frequently visits via cell tower information.
- Consider keeping the (V) phone account active to monitor incoming voice messages and monitor incoming call history.

Financial Information and Records

- Identify all sources of income, bank accounts, credit cards and access to funds.
- Make contact with individual at institution who can monitor activity for you.
- Obtain warrant and examine records for any activity, consider going back at least 6 months for historical information.
- Consider keeping account open with limited funds to track potential location of victim and or suspect information.
- Did (V) have access to significant funds to disappear?
- Any evidence that funds were taken out upon disappearance?
- Was money left behind in the account?
- Does (V) have any unclaimed assets left behind, i.e. worker’s comp, retirement, disability, bank account proceeds, tax return refunds, ownership in real estate, etc.
- Obtain credit reports from all three major credit bureaus

Email Accounts

- Obtain warrant and examine records for any logging in by account holder post disappearance; keep current up to trial
- Obtain warrant for emails before (V)’s disappearance and after
- Review headers for addresses to contact

Obtain (V)’s Computer

- Begin forensic analysis for emails, content document, websites visited, instant messaging etc.
- Any indication (V) was attempting to disappear, change identity, etc.
- Any indication of threats, enemies, problems, etc.
- Examine for state of mind evidence

Missing Person Investigation

- APBs, BOLOS – document all activities done
- Critical Reach Bulletins with current picture of (V) – distribute and document
- Be sure distribution lists are documented and complete; confirm receipt
- Check all hospitals (medical and psych), jails, shelters in area
- Check local and nearby coroner's offices for possible unidentified dead bodies.
- Run (V) in DMV and CLETS database.
- Enter (V) information NCIC.
- Enter (V) with DOJ Missing Persons Unit.
- Procure ASAP evidence that could contain (V)'s DNA.
- (toothbrush, hair brush, comb, work out clothes, gloves, water bottles, mouthwash bottles, etc.)
- Submit (V)'s DNA to DOJ Richmond.
- Consider making and storing in evidence a scent pad for possible canine tracking, line up.
- Develop contacts in Department of Homeland Security.
- Any record of travel by (V), taxi, airline, ocean liner, etc.
- Contact US State Department for passport information.
- Did (V) have a passport and any record of use?
- Notify private missing person's organizations of disappearance, i.e. North American Missing Persons Network, National Center for Missing Adults, The Carol Sund/Carrington Memorial Reward Foundation, etc.
- Run victim in private data bases, Accurint, Lexis/Nexis.
- Contact state Employment Development Department for background and check for (V).

Do a Complete Victimology

- Obtain employment, relationship, residence, schooling history.
- What financial obligations, commitments did (V) have?
- What was (V)'s habits, rituals, personality, strengths and weaknesses?
- Contact medical providers for information.
- Identify and interview (V)'s physician, therapist, counselor, etc.