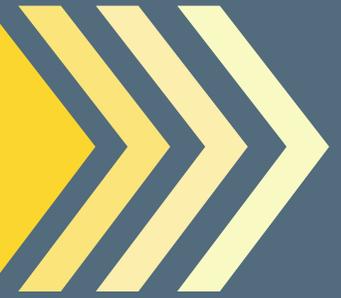


Sign up to receive email alerts at <http://www.missingchildrenalert.com> and follow us on Facebook and X.



Florida Missing Endangered Persons Information  
Clearinghouse Advisory Board

**MISSING &  
ENDANGERED**



# NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2024 / ISSUE 12



# WHAT IS THE Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse Advisory Board ?

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse Advisory Board (MEPICAB) was established in 1996 to address issues regarding Florida's missing children. It was later expanded to include missing endangered adults and seniors. The MEPICAB meets quarterly to implement plans and policies that create strategies to raise awareness of the high number of children and endangered adults that go missing every year. The Board's mission is to support awareness, education and training for the prevention, response and recovery of missing and endangered persons.

Board members represent a diverse group of law enforcement officials, government agencies, impacted families, non-profit organizations, private sector partners and community members interested in missing person issues.

Missing & Endangered





# Summer Safety in Florida

Summer is one of the most exciting times of the year with children on summer break and families traveling. Most families take advantage of Florida's warm weather by enjoying the beaches, springs, and pools. So before you swim, let's talk about water safety.

Did you know that swimming vouchers for young children are provided by the Florida Department of Health (DOH)?

Beginning July 1st, swimming lessons will be more accessible for Florida's families. Senate Bill 544 was signed by Governor DeSantis to provide swimming lesson vouchers for children ages 4 and under who are at the highest risk of drowning. The vouchers are available to low income families. DOH operates the program and is working to establish swimming lessons in every Florida county. Further information and updates can be found at <https://www.watersmartfl.com/>.

## Water Safety Tips for the Summer!

- Always wear a properly fitted life jacket while on a boat. Children under age 6 are required to wear a lifejacket while on vessels in Florida.
- Prevent unsupervised access to water. Use barriers or fences to avoid unsupervised access to pools or other bodies of water.
- Supervise children who are playing near or in water.
- Monitor the weather and evacuate the water and pool deck when there is lightning or thunder.
- If caught in a rip current, stay calm. Don't swim against the current, but rather parallel to the shore until free of the current.
- Bring a floatation device to water activities in case one is needed or someone tires.



## Summer Safety in Florida

### Outdoor Safety Tips

**Remember to wear sunblock! Sunblock and hats are your friends during the summer.** The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children wear sunscreen with 15 to 50 SPF. Sunscreen should be applied every two hours or as soon as possible after swimming or sweating. **Beware:** the most harmful ultraviolet rays are strongest from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Do you like to play in the sand at beaches?** Sandcastles and sand holes are fun to dig and build but you should always be cautious. Sand holes are known to collapse and cause more fatalities than shark attacks in the U.S. Avoid digging deeper than knee-high and burying people in the sand. It is always important to supervise children playing in the sand in case of a collapse.

**Stay hydrated!** Drink water to stay hydrated. You may prefer soda, juices, or sports drinks, but drinks with sugar should be avoided while playing in the sun. Drinks with sugar may lead to fluid loss and make dehydration symptoms worse. Remember you will need additional water for high activity games, hot and humid weather, and if you have certain medical conditions. Make sure to carry plenty of water to all your events.

**Do you plan on going to a playground this summer?** Adult supervision is strongly encouraged at playgrounds. Adults should check playground equipment is safe before use. The summer heat can quickly make playgrounds dangerous. Make sure the equipment is properly maintained and has a protective surface covering the ground and equipment. The equipment should be cool to the touch to prevent burns. Also check that no ropes, tethers or similar items are attached to the playground equipment as these may pose additional risk to children at play. Trampolines are a popular outdoor activity, however children have an increased risk of serious injury on trampolines. Adults should always supervise children and only allow one child to use the trampoline at a time.

**Firework safety in Florida.** Always prioritize the safety of yourself and others when using fireworks. Fireworks can cause severe and life threatening injuries. Only allow an experienced, responsible adult to handle fireworks and only purchase and use legal fireworks. Always use fireworks outdoors in an open clear area away from homes, brush and other flammable materials. Never lean over or pick up lit fireworks. After the firework has finished burning, douse it with water before throwing it away to prevent a trash fire, and always keep a bucket of water or garden hose nearby to prevent a fire. The safest way to enjoy fireworks is to attend firework displays run by local professionals.

We hope these simple summer safety tips will help you and your families have a fun and safe summer.



# Summer Safety in Florida

## Summer Camp Precautions!

School is out and summer is here, and so are the summer programs and camps. There may be some summer camps nearby that you think your child would enjoy, but are unsure if it would be a safe and positive experience for them. Research the summer programs and camps in your area before you send your child to them. Look up their accreditation status, insurance status, policies, and procedures beforehand.

**Accreditation:** Confirm the program is accredited with the American Camp Association (ACA). The ACA standards focus on health, safety, and risk management. Although it is not required for a camp to be accredited, it is recommended as it ensures minimum standards. For a camp to receive accreditation, it must receive scheduled, voluntary visits from ACA staff who certifies the camp is compliant with the mandatory standards. The accreditation status of all camps can be verified at any time through the ACA website or by calling 1-800-428-CAMP.

**Insurance Status, Policies and Procedures:** Before you send your child to camp, ensure the camp is insured in the event of injury or other circumstances. Also check the camp's policies and procedures especially referencing health and safety issues to ensure you will be contacted if an injury occurs and what happens if the child needs a doctor. It is important to understand how matters like sickness, discipline, check in/out, medication needs, and emergencies are handled and not make assumptions. The Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), sections 409.175 and 409.435 Florida Statutes regulates summer programs and camps. Summer camp personnel must undergo a background screening. However, did you know volunteers that work less than 10 hours a month do not have to have a background check? Does your camp background everyone regardless of time worked, or is there someone at the camp with a criminal background volunteering that no one knows about because they work less than 10 hours a month? With this knowledge, you will be able to confidently select the perfect summer program.

Once you find a camp that is safe and fun, remember to inform your child of their future summer plans. By explaining the fun activities the camp has planned, it may excite your child about going and will also give them an idea of what to expect. If you worry that your child may become homesick, acknowledge their feelings, but also remind them of the positive things they will experience, like making lasting memories and new friends. New experiences may cause anxiety when your child does not know what to expect. With preparation, summer programs and camps can play an enormous role in your child's individual growth and development!



Maurice was last seen in 1983, leaving his home in Ft. Lauderdale, FL to attend basketball practice.

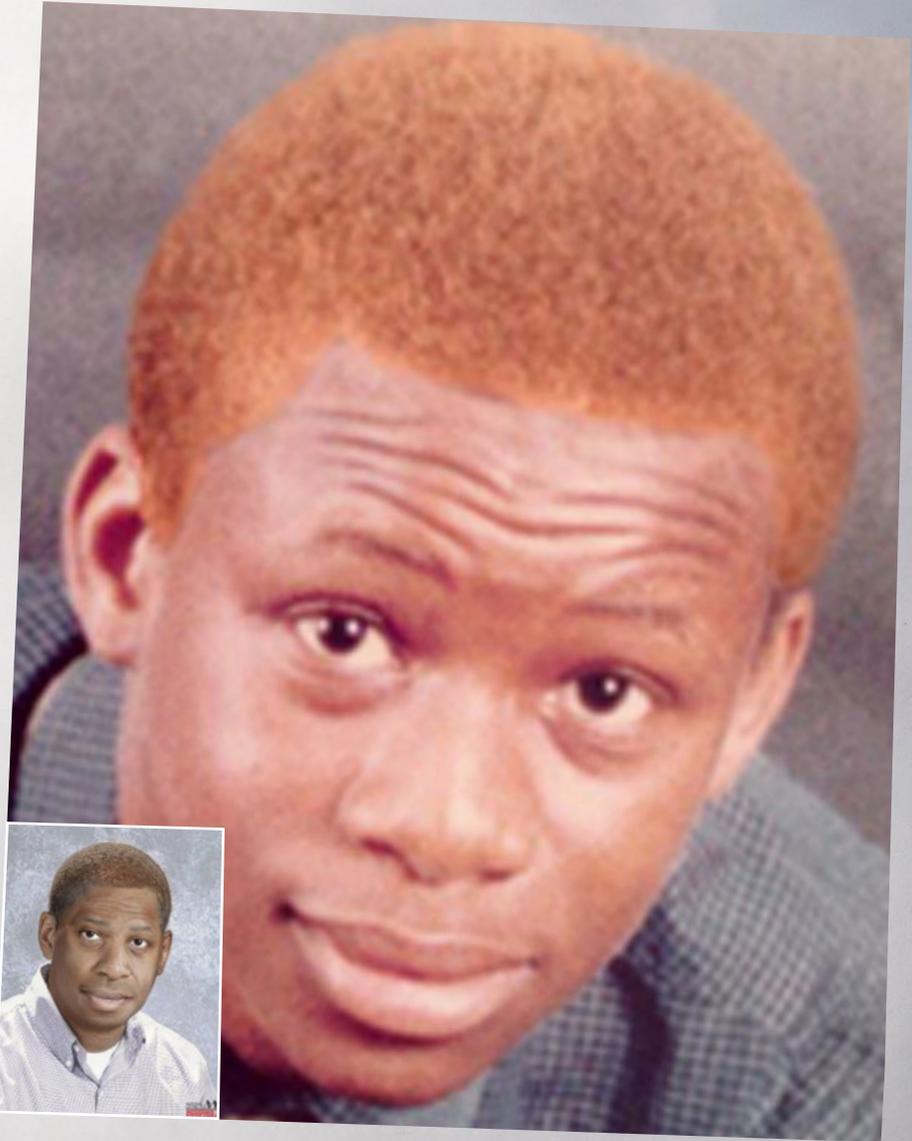
His black hair had red tips at the time of his disappearance.

Maurice's photo is shown age-progressed to 43 years. This case remains unsolved.



# MISSING

## Maurice Jefferson



If you have any information about this case, please contact the Broward County Sheriff's Office at 954-321-4251 or the FDLE MEPIC Hotline at 1-888-FL MISSING (1-888-356-4774).



# Training for First Responders on Autism and Intellectual Disabilities

By: Torica Exume, Ph.D., Clinical Researcher

The probability of a first responder encountering an individual on the autism spectrum is on the rise. Police officers handle diverse emergency situations daily, each with unique circumstances and involving individuals with distinct traits. While well-trained for most cases, their approach may not suit those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), leading to potential tragic outcomes like injury or loss of life. Whether the emergency pertains to a medical issue or a behavioral crisis, having a thorough understanding of ASD/IDD and potential behaviors associated with them is essential for achieving a positive outcome in any situation.

Individuals diagnosed with ASD/IDD may experience heightened emotional reactions during volatile and stressful circumstances. For someone with ASD/IDD, comprehending emergencies can be challenging. Furthermore, individuals with ASD/IDD may not readily respond to verbal instructions, might react with a startle response to physical touch, may flee when approached, or could exhibit self-injurious or aggressive behavior.

While there are several reports on training for law enforcement personnel, fewer reports address training for mobile crisis units, hospital emergency department staff, 911 operators, and fire/Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) units, all of whom play crucial roles in promptly and appropriately treating individuals with IDD in mental health crises.

Florida Atlantic University Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (FAU CARD) has been awarded a grant from the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) that will enable FAU CARD to create and deliver training sessions for law enforcement officers and first responders, including emergency medical personnel, firefighters, and other relevant responders. These training sessions aim to equip responders with the necessary skills to effectively and safely engage with individuals who have ASD/IDD.

These training components will include verbal communication techniques, the use of augmentative devices, appropriate de-escalation methods, behavior management strategies, and safe physical intervention practices tailored to accommodate physical limitations. This project will also establish an advisory committee, examine state legislative regulations and policies related to the training of law enforcement and emergency personnel on IDD and co-existing mental health conditions.

Ideally, FAU CARD's training program will include a detailed step-by-step curriculum with multiple training topics (with explanations, videos, modeling, role-playing, discussions, feedback, pre- and post-testing) for law enforcement officers and emergency medical specialists to not only identify ASD/IDD individuals, but now select from a wide range of techniques to use to effectively and empathetically respond to individuals with ASD/IDD to foster trust and increase positive interactions.





# Florida Missing Children's Day and the Florida Missing Children's Day Foundation

Florida Missing Children's Day (FMCD) is an annual ceremony held on the second Monday of September to honor the families of missing children as well as law enforcement officers and citizens who have made significant contributions protecting Florida's children and citizens.

FMCD is hosted by the FMCD Foundation (FMCDF), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The FMCDF is tasked with providing funding and promotional support for FMCD activities and education. The event is sponsored entirely by donations. Any person, business or agency interested in donating to the Foundation can visit their website at [www.FMCDF.org](http://www.FMCDF.org) or scan the below QR code. This year, FMCD will be held on September 9, 2024, at the Tallahassee Automobile Museum. The public is invited to attend FMCD events. Information regarding the event details is posted on the FMCD Foundation's website.

Please join us at  
**Florida Missing Children's Day**  
Monday, September 9, 2024  
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.  
Tallahassee Automobile Museum  
6800 Mahan Drive  
Tallahassee, Florida 32308



Presented by the  
Florida Missing Children's  
Day Foundation  
and the  
Missing Endangered Persons  
Information Clearinghouse  
Advisory Board

*A Time of Remembrance, Recognition, and Hope*

Please RSVP by August 16, 2024 by emailing [fmcd@fdle.state.fl.us](mailto:fmcd@fdle.state.fl.us) or by calling 1-888-356-4774



# The Florida Capitol

## 2024

# LEGISLATIVE SESSION

## Impacts to FDLE's Enforcement & Investigative Support Bureau

The 2024 legislative session saw a variety of bills that impact FDLE's Enforcement & Investigative Support Bureau (EIS), which houses MEPIC, the sexual offender/predator registry, the career offender registry, and the Unidentified Deceased Initiative. These bills have been signed by the Governor and take effect this year.

### House Bill (HB) 937 – Purple Alerts, (Effective July 1)

- Amends the Purple Alert to better align with the Silver Alert. A state Purple Alert will be issued by MEPIC when an identifiable vehicle is involved. MEPIC will coordinate the activation of dynamic message signs on state highways, coordinate broadcast of the alert on state lottery terminals, and notify subscribers.
- For an alert with no identifiable vehicle, alert dissemination will be limited to local distribution where the person may reasonably be. Local law enforcement shall contact media outlets, inform all on-duty law enforcement of the missing adult, and communicate the report to other law enforcement agencies in the county.
- MEPIC will not be involved in issuing a local alert but may still open a MEPIC analytical assistance case if requested by local law enforcement.

### HB 305 – Offenses Involving Children, (Effective July 1)

- Adds a new qualifying offense to the single strike provision of the Sexual Predators Act.
- A person can meet the criteria as a sexual predator if they were convicted of a capital, life, or first-degree felony violation (or an attempt) of Human Trafficking, section 787.06(3)(f) or (3)(g), Florida Statutes, where the victim is a minor.

### HB 1235 – Sexual Predators and Sexual Offenders, (Effective October 1)

- Allows registrants not on supervision to update any changes to “vehicles owned” online in lieu of in person to the sheriff’s office.
- Updates reporting for out of state travel and international travel. A registrant establishing a residence in another state must report at least 48 hours before the date they are leaving Florida. All travel outside of the United States must be reported, regardless of whether residency is established.
- Establishes that transient check-in information shall be gathered in a manner prescribed by FDLE, rather than each sheriff’s office determining how to conduct check-ins.
- Allows county or local law enforcement agencies to send address verification correspondence to registrants and requires a response within 3 weeks.
- Specifies that each instance of failure to register or report changes to the required information specified constitutes a separate offense.

### HB 1389 – Digital Voyeurism, (Effective October 1)

- Amends the offense of s. 810.145(8) from “Video Voyeurism” to “Digital Voyeurism.” This offense qualifies for sexual offender registration.



There were several other bills that do not directly impact EIS operations, but still involve the protection of children.

**HB 1281 – Interception and Disclosure of Oral Communications**, (Effective April 26)

- Amends s. 943.03 to allow a parent/guardian of a minor to intercept and record any oral communication if the child is a party to the communication and the parent/guardian has reasonable grounds to believe the recording will capture a statement by another party that they will or have committed an unlawful sexual act or an unlawful act of physical force or violence against the child.
- Any recording that captures such a statement must be provided to law enforcement and may be used as evidence of intent to commit the unlawful act. It may not be otherwise disseminated or shared.

**HB 3 – Online Access to Materials Harmful to Minors**, (Effective July 1)

- Creates s. 501.1736, Social Media Use for Minors, which requires social media platforms to prohibit a minor under 14 years old from becoming an account holder. Social media platforms shall terminate accounts held by those under 14 and allow those under 14 or their parent/guardian to request termination. All personal information held by the platform related to the terminated account shall be permanently deleted.
- Those who are 14 or 15 may be account holders with parent/guardian consent. Accounts without parental consent will be terminated or can request to be terminated.

**SB 1680 – Advanced Technology**, (Effective July 1)

- Creates s. 827.072, Generated Child Pornography, defined as any image that has been created, altered, adapted, or modified by electronic, mechanical, or other computer-generated means to portray a fictitious person, who a reasonable person would regard as being a real person younger than 18 years of age, engaged in sexual conduct.
- Possession, control, creation, or intentional viewing of generated child pornography is a 3rd degree felony.

**HB 1545 – Child Exploitation Offenses**, (Effective October 1)

- Creates s. 847.01385, Harmful Communication to a Minor. An adult who engages in a pattern of communication to a minor that includes explicit and detailed verbal descriptions or narrative accounts of sexual activity, sexual conduct, or sexual excitement and that is harmful to minors commits a 3rd degree felony.



# FortifyFL: A School Safety Tool

FortifyFL is an application that was created and funded by the 2018 Florida Legislature as part of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act. The application was named by students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. The Office of Attorney General, Department of Education and Florida Department of Law Enforcement coordinated its development and roll-out.

Anyone can submit a tip regarding school safety via the FortifyFL app for any public school, public charter or private K-12 school in the State of Florida. Tips can be submitted anonymously, and all tips are immediately sent to the school and local law enforcement. Tips submitted range from concerns of bullying and harassment to troubled students considering self-harm to threats involving firearms. FortifyFL tips are investigated and generally result in intervention and even arrest.

Section 943.082, Florida Statutes, is the law behind FortifyFL and it includes referral to law enforcement for any person who knowingly submits a false tip through the app.

This application has saved student lives in Florida. Mental health crises, student drug use, child abuse and neglect, suspected child trafficking, threats of violence – these have all been reported through FortifyFL. Every Floridian should be aware of this application and its usefulness in preventing violence in our schools.

More information on this school safety tool as well as links to download the FortifyFL app can be found at <https://getfortifyfl.com/>



HOME FEATURES HOW IT WORKS

## Suspicious Activity Reporting App

FortifyFL is a suspicious activity reporting tool that allows you to instantly relay information to appropriate law enforcement agencies and school officials.





# MEPIC, an Assisting Investigative Resource

Continued from Spring 2024 Issue

Your missing loved one has already been reported missing to local law enforcement, and they have begun searching for your loved one after uploading the case details into the Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC). At this time, the local agency may contact the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's (FDLE) Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse (MEPIC) to request an AMBER Alert, Missing Child Alert, Purple Alert or Silver Alert. In some cases, an alert may be withheld if its issuance could place the missing person in danger, or if other investigative techniques are being used for tracking. For this reason, it is crucial that all requests for alerts are only made through law enforcement agencies.

When an alert is issued, a MEPIC case is automatically generated and all supporting investigative services are enacted to aid the local law enforcement agency in their investigation. When cases are opened with MEPIC they are highlighted on FDLE's missing persons website and flyers, receive ongoing analytical checks, and their information is flagged in certain databases. MEPIC cases also receive secondary analytic and investigative services that develop leads for the primary investigative agency. MEPIC may act as a liaison to other agencies when needed.

If your missing loved one was not issued an alert and you are interested in MEPIC opening a case in support of your local investigative agency, first search the missing person's name in the MEPIC website, <https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MCICSearch/Search.asp>, to see if your local agency has already requested MEPIC assistance. If your missing loved one appears in the search results, no further action is necessary. If you would like additional assistance or resources regarding the case, you may contact the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC). NCMEC case resources can be located at <https://www.missingkids.org/ourwork/caseresources>.

**MEPIC**

*Continues on next page*



If your missing loved one does not appear in the MEPIC search **AND** the individual is younger than 26 years of age, you may call MEPIC directly at 1-888-FL MISSING (1-888-356-4774) to request to open a case. Please be prepared to provide information and a photograph of the missing person. While anyone with knowledge of the missing person may request a case be opened, once a case is opened all communication and leads are facilitated through the investigative agency, not the individual who requested the case opening. It is important to note that FDLE is a law enforcement agency and your missing loved one's case is considered an active investigation. If you desire an update regarding your missing loved one, please contact your local investigating agency to communicate with the investigator working the case specifically.



If your missing loved one is not in the MEPIC search **AND** the individual is 26 years of age or older, contact the local law enforcement agency handling your missing loved one's case and request that they contact MEPIC directly regarding potentially opening a case. Florida Statute 937.022(3)(b)3., states:

Only the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the case may submit a missing endangered person report to the clearinghouse involving a missing adult age 26 years or older who is suspected by a law enforcement agency of being endangered or the victim of criminal activity.

In other words, for missing person cases involving an individual 26 or older:

1. Only law enforcement can request a MEPIC case opening,
2. Law enforcement must provide a reason they believe the missing person is in danger; or
3. The missing person appears to be the victim of a crime in which their safety cannot be determined and may be the reason they are missing

If your local law enforcement agency previously contacted MEPIC to open a case and the case did not meet MEPIC case criteria, they may contact MEPIC later if additional information is obtained. The level of danger or "being endangered" is left to law enforcement discretion and is typically deferred to the local investigative agency to establish. Examples of endangerment may include missing under suspicious or unexplained circumstances such as: missing work without explanation, leaving food on the stove or out, leaving a phone or wallet behind, leaving pets behind, disappearing before testifying against someone in a court of law, leaving behind young children, no prior history of being out of touch or leaving for short or long periods of time, history of domestic disputes within the household, not being reported missing for long periods of time despite living with someone else, not cashing checks or withdrawing money from banking accounts, leaving behind prescription medications required for basic functioning, a severe physical, mental, emotional or communication impairment that places them at elevated risk without assistance, complaints of violence or arguments from neighbors, suicidal ideation, withdrawing large sums of cash, purchasing suspicious items such as guns, rope or other items, or extreme environmental factors.