

Missing and Endangered Persons Information  
Clearinghouse Advisory Board

# MISSING & ENDANGERED

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Issue 4

Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse  
Advisory Board  
2331 Phillips Road  
Tallahassee, FL 32308  
<https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/mcicsearch/AdvisoryBoard.asp>

**AS OF 6/1/2021, THERE  
WERE:**

**5 AMBER Alerts with Four Recoveries**

**27 Missing Child Alerts with Twenty-two Recoveries**

**130 Silver Alerts with One Hundred and Twenty-nine Recoveries**

**15 RECOVERIES WERE DIRECTLY  
ATTRIBUTED TO THE FLORIDA ALERT  
SYSTEM.**

## What is MEPICAB?

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse Advisory Board (MEPICAB) was created in 1996 to address issues dealing with Florida's missing children. The MEPICAB is a diverse mix of law enforcement officials, victims' parents, government agencies, missing children non-profit organizations, and community members interested in missing children issues.

The Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse Advisory Board's mission is to support awareness, education, and training for the prevention, response, and recovery of missing and endangered persons.

The Advisory Board meets quarterly to discuss and implement plans and policies to combat and create an awareness of the large number of children that go missing every year. Board members are chosen by FDLE's Commissioner from around the state to provide a balanced representation of Florida.

## Want to support Florida Missing Children's Day?

Florida Missing Children's Day (FMCD) is an annual ceremony that will be held on September 13, 2021, to honor the families of missing children as well as law enforcement officers and citizens who have made significant contributions protecting Florida's citizens.

Any person, business, or agency interested in donating to the Florida Missing Children's Day Foundation for 2021 can visit the FMCD Foundation [website](#).



# MISSING & ENDANGERED

## A Florida Missing Children's Day Remembrance

By John Robertson, Membership Services Director, Florida Network for Youth and Family Services, MEPICAB member since 2011

The second Monday in September of each year has been designated as "Florida Missing Children's Day (FMCD)" by the Florida Legislature. FMCD's objective is to raise awareness of Florida's currently missing children, to educate the public on child safety and abduction prevention, and to recognize those individuals who have made outstanding contributions to missing children issues.

September in North Florida is a fickle weather month. The close summer heat can still bear down or an early cold front can bring a chilly, soaking rain. It doesn't matter though. Ceremony attendees come together to mourn and remember. It's a hard day, and so important.

The membership of the MEPIC Advisory Board is a diverse panoply of expertise. We are victim advocates, family of missing persons, law enforcement, social services, private enterprise, information technology, and academia to name a few. Our time together is busy, the agenda crowded with big objectives and minutiae alike, and everything feels so urgent it doesn't feel like we have the option to pause and reflect.

I like to be at FMCD early, and watch the FDLE staff pull the pieces together. Coordinating busloads of children in matching t-shirts, shepherding the families who have come to share their grief with us, and arranging chairs on the dais for the morning's speakers. Hundreds of small tasks come together, which is our way of showing we care.

My colleagues arrive to join me, and we sit together, humble in our understanding of the day. Beneath a large tent I see familiar faces of the other board members, surrounded by their colleagues as well, and I feel a rush of gratitude that there are so many to share such a heavy burden. The governor, first lady, and leaders from many state agencies take their seats on the stage. The ceremony begins.

We honor the missing by recognizing the heroic work of school bus drivers, law enforcement professionals, and ordinary citizens who took extraordinary action to protect a child. We honor them in song, and artwork, and essays read by contest winners from across the state. We bow our heads as the processional of families, escorted by an honor guard, places yellow roses by the photos of their missing loved ones, a white rose for those who have been located deceased. At some point, the only part of this ceremony that cannot be planned always happens. The baying of the bloodhounds, assembled on the steps of the old capitol, is what truly represents the feelings of Missing Children's Day for me. Their mournful howls echo through the air, carrying both our sadness, and our hope, that the missing will be found.



## From Only Children to All Endangered Persons By Hilary Sessions

The Missing Children Information Clearinghouse (MCIC) began operations in 1983 and was designed to help locate and recover children under the ages of 18. In 1989, Tiffany Sessions disappeared at the age of 20 and in 2006, Jennifer Kesse disappeared at the age of 24. When these young women disappeared, law enforcement did not conduct searches as the law did not cover adult individuals that went missing. The parents of these individuals advocated for law enforcement assistance in locating their children as they believed their children would not just go missing and not contact them. Their parents put together a Florida bill and testified with the Florida House and Senate during the legislative process to expand the MCIC.

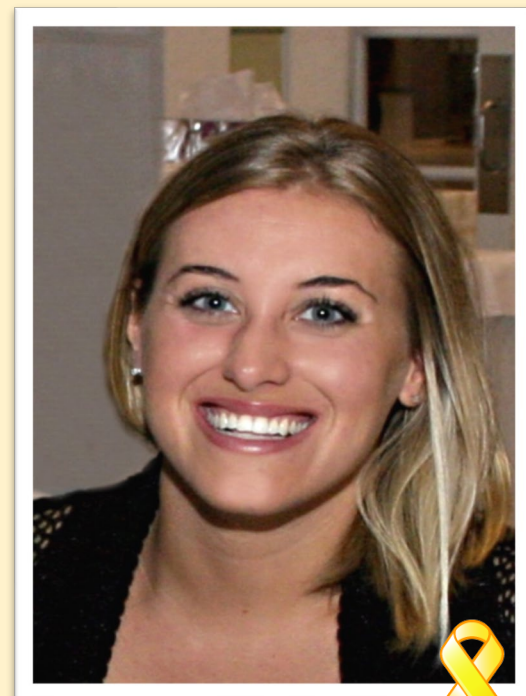
In 2008, the Jennifer Kesse Tiffany Sessions Missing Persons Act was signed which expanded the MCIC to include adults under the definition of missing endangered persons. The law added a provision for young adults ages 18 to 25, a provision for missing adults 26 years or older that may be endangered or a victim of criminal activity, required the DNA collection from individuals missing over 90 days, and required all missing children and missing endangered persons to be added to the Florida Crime Information Center and the National Crime Information Center databases. The law also changed the name of the Missing Children Information Clearinghouse to the Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse and would allow Florida's Governor Charlie Crist to sign an Executive Order for the Florida Silver Alert Plan effective October 8, 2008 to include provisions for individuals that are 60 or older and have an irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties (i.e. dementia, Alzheimer's, etc.) or under extraordinary circumstances when a person 18 to 59 has irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties and law enforcement has determined the missing person lacks the capacity to consent.

## Remembering Jennifer Kesse

Jennifer Kesse disappeared on 1/24/2006 from Orlando, Florida after she did not arrive at work. Three days after Jennifer Kesse's disappearance, her car was found parked less than a mile from her residence at an apartment complex.

An unidentified person of interest and possible suspect was photographed parking Jennifer Kesse's vehicle and walking away. The unidentified person was approximately 5'3 to 5'5 and was wearing white clothes similar to a painter or a manual worker. Prior to Kesse's disappearance, she had complained about some construction workers that were working on her apartment complex and were making her uneasy.

Jennifer Kesse and the unidentified suspect have not been found. If you have any information on this case, please contact MEPIC at 1-888-FL-MISSING (1-888-356-4774).



## 2021 Legislative Update Regarding Missing Endangered Persons

Signed into law on June 16, Senate Bill 184 establishes the Florida Purple Alert by amending ss. 937.0201, 937.021, and 937.022, Florida Statutes, and creating s. 937.0205, Florida Statutes, requiring FDLE, in cooperation with the Department of Transportation (DOT), Department of Highway Safety & Motor Vehicles (DHSMV), Department of Lottery (DOL), and local law enforcement agencies, to establish and implement a Purple Alert for **missing adults** who have

1. a mental or cognitive disability that is not Alzheimer's disease or a dementia-related disorder; an intellectual disability or a developmental disability, as those terms are defined in s. 393.063, FS; a brain injury; another physical, mental, or emotional disability that is not related to substance abuse; or a combination of any of these;
2. Whose disappearance indicates a credible threat of immediate danger or serious bodily harm to himself or herself, as determined by the local law enforcement agency;
3. Who cannot be returned to safety without law enforcement intervention; and
4. Who does not meet the criteria for activation of a local Silver Alert or the Silver Alert Plan of the Department of Law Enforcement.

The Purple Alert system was designed to help **adults who have a brain injury, a physical disability, a mental disability or an emotional disability that is not related to substance abuse**. The Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse already has an Enhanced Missing Child Alert which is often used for children who wander off and have a disability or autism; and a Silver Alert for a person 18 to 59 who law enforcement has determined the missing person lacks the capacity to consent and a person who has an irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties (e.g. Alzheimer's disease or dementia).

Under the new Purple Alert bill, local law enforcement agencies of jurisdiction must notify the media and subscribers in the jurisdiction(s) where the missing adult is believed to or may be located. Local law enforcement may also request that the notification be broadcast on lottery terminals within the geographic regions where the missing adult may reasonably be. When a vehicle is involved, FDLE must coordinate with DOT and DHSMV for the activation of dynamic message signs on state highways and the immediate broadcast of information to the public regarding the missing adult.

The bill also specifies that the Purple Alert shall safeguard the privacy rights and related health and diagnostic information of the missing adult to the greatest extent practicable. Additionally, the alert must include procedures to monitor the use, activation and results of alerts and a strategy for informing and educating law enforcement, the media and other stakeholders regarding the alert. The implementation of Purple Alerts is effective July 1, 2022.

## Inclusive Disability Interaction Tips

- ✦ If you offer assistance to a person with a disability, wait until the person accepts. Listen to or ask for instructions if needed.
- ✦ Listen attentively when a person's speech is slow or different. Be patient and wait for them to finish, rather than speaking for or correcting them.
- ✦ If a person with a disability has equipment, it is considered part of their personal space. Never move their equipment without their permission.

## Myths and Misconceptions about Missing Persons Cases

By FDLE

There are many myths and misconceptions regarding missing person cases. Dispelling some of these common misconceptions makes it easier to understand these types of cases.

1. There is a waiting period before you can report a missing person.

- **False.** Many families and friends believe that a person must be missing for a certain amount of time before they can report them missing to law enforcement. This is not the case. **A person can be reported missing at any point, regardless of how long they've been missing.** In fact, according to criminology experts, “the countdown to finding a missing person begins the moment someone concerned for his or her well-being alerts law enforcement. Investigators are essentially working against the clock, as with each passing hour decreases the likelihood that the subject will be found.”



2. Runaway children are not in danger.

- **False.** Many children who run away find themselves in extremely risky situations for which they are completely unprepared. Some of these situations include: sexual abuse and exploitation including trafficking\*, drug and alcohol abuse, criminal activity, mental health problems, homelessness, and malnutrition.

\*The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) assisted law enforcement with more than 29,800 cases of missing children. 91% of the cases were runaways. **Of the 26,500 runaways reported to NCMEC in 2020, 1 in 6 were likely victims of child sex trafficking.**

3. Most child kidnapping are committed by strangers.

- **False.** NCMEC reports that abductions by strangers are the rarest type of cases of missing children. **Less than 1%** of cases are nonfamily abductions. In 2020, there were over 600 attempted abductions reported to NCMEC, the most common lures reported were offering the child a ride, offering the child candy or sweets, asking the child questions, offering the child money, and using an animal to interest a child.

\*Continued on next page.



## Myths and Misconceptions about Missing Persons Cases Continued...

4. A missing adult case cannot be opened since adults are allowed to leave without notification.

- **False.** Anyone can be filed as a missing person regardless of age, relationship, or the nature of the case. According to National Crime Information Center data, for the calendar years of 2011 through 2020, there were 438,293 individual records in the Missing Person File. Of these, 112,003 (26%) were for missing adults ages 18 and older.

5. Family abductions are low risk for children.

- **False.** Of the 29,859 cases of missing children reported to NCMEC in 2020, 4.8% were family abductions. In 2019, 57% of all AMBER Alerts were family abduction cases. NCMEC data between 2008 to 2017 shows that 3.7% of children recovered from a family abduction return in fair or poor condition. Data also showed that 47 children abducted during this time period were recovered deceased. 74.5% of the deceased recovered were between the ages of 0 and 6.

There were 21 AMBER Alerts issued in which the child was recovered deceased during 2008 to 2017. 60% of these AMBER Alert abductions involved the father of the child. 80% of the recovered deceased abductors were male and 71% of the children died involved a murder-suicide situation.

## Missing: Bonnie Dages and Jeremy Dages

Bonnie Dages and Jeremy Dages were last seen in Brandon, Florida on April 28, 1993. Jeremy was 4 months old and Bonnie was 18. Bonnie Dages has a scar on her left leg and on her abdomen. They went to a shopping center around 9 p.m. and never returned. Bonnie's vehicle and purse were left in the shopping center parking lot. Foul play is suspected.

If you have any information concerning these individuals, please contact the Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse at 1-888-FL MISSING (1-888-356-4774) or the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office at 813-247-8000



## 2021 Legislative Update regarding Sexual Offenders and Predators

Senate Bill 234, which was signed into law on June 22, clarifies the sexual offender/predator registration law in Florida by amending the language in s. 943.0435, Florida Statutes. The Legislature found that a person's **failure to pay a fine does not relieve him or her of the requirement to register as a sexual offender.**

The Legislation clarifies this intent by adding the following language:

Section I. The Legislature found that the opinion in *State v. James*, 298 So. 3d 90 (Fla. 2d DCA 2020), is contrary to legislative intent and that a person's failure to pay a fine does *not* relieve him or her of the requirement to register as a sexual offender according to s. 943.0435, Florida Statutes. The Legislature intends that a person must register as a sexual offender according to s. 943.0435, Florida Statutes, when he or she has been convicted of a qualifying offense and, on or after October 1, 1997, has:

1. No sanction imposed upon conviction; or
2. Been released from a sanction imposed upon conviction.

And amending s.(1)(h)1.a.(II), Florida Statutes to read:

(II) Has been released on or after October 1, 1997, from a sanction imposed for any conviction of an offense described in sub-sub-subparagraph (I) and does not otherwise meet the criteria for registration as a sexual offender under chapter 944 or chapter 985. For purposes of this sub-sub-subparagraph, a sanction imposed in this state or in any other jurisdiction means probation, community control, parole, conditional release, control release, or incarceration in a state prison, federal prison, private correctional facility, or local detention facility. If no sanction is imposed the person is deemed to be released upon conviction.

## Child Sexual Abuse Victim Statistics

According to the Canadian Centre for Child Protection survey, **67% of Child Sexual Abuse Material (also known as child pornography) survivors** said the distribution of their images impacts them differently than the hands-on abuse they suffered because the distribution never ends and the images are permanent.

**Prepubescent children are at the greatest risk** to be depicted in Child Sexual Abuse Material\*.

**When boys are victimized**, they are much **more likely** than girls **to be subjected to very explicit or egregious abuse**\*.

**78% of reports regarding online enticement involved girls** and **15% involved boys** (8% of the reports, gender could not be determined)\*.

\*Statistics from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children referencing the key findings from the Production and Active Trading of Child Sexual Exploitation Images Depicting Identified Victims study and Towards a Global Indicator on Unidentified Victims in Child Sexual Exploitation Material study.