

Missing and Endangered Persons Information  
Clearinghouse Advisory Board (MEPICAB)

# MISSING & ENDANGERED

Spring 2022  
Issue 6

## IN 2021, THERE WERE:

**10 AMBER Alerts with 10 Recoveries**

**48 Missing Child Alerts with 43 Recoveries**

**287 Silver Alerts with 280 Recoveries**

**IN 2021, 31 RECOVERIES WERE DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTED TO THE FLORIDA ALERT SYSTEM.**

*\*A subject is **recovered** when he or she has been located alive and well, and re-united with family. You can locate current missing person alerts by visiting FDLE's [Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse](#).*

## What is the 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. 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.

MEPICAB'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 observance that is held the second Monday of September each year 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 can visit the FMCD Foundation [website](#).



## Myths and Misconceptions about Missing Persons Cases

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 each passing hour decreases the likelihood that the subject will be found."
2. You shouldn't report a missing person if this isn't the first time they've disappeared.
  - **FALSE:** There are various reasons why a person can go missing. Therefore, even if the person's disappearance were voluntary, it would be best to avoid assumptions. In some cases, the reason for their unknown whereabouts could point to foul play, auto injuries, or health-related incidents.
3. Only a family member can file a missing person's report.
  - **FALSE:** Anyone can file a missing person's report if they have a legitimate concern about a person's welfare.
4. MEPIC maintains an active missing person's case on every missing child in Florida.
  - **FALSE:** MEPIC will only open a missing person's case at the request of law enforcement and the public. However, prior to opening a case, the child must have been reported missing to local law enforcement and entered as missing in the Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC).
5. Attempted abductions most frequently happen at home.
  - **FALSE:** According to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), attempted abductions happen more often when a child is going to and from school or school-related activities.

Please [click here](#) to see our Myths and Misconceptions flyer based on the 2021 Summer Newsletter.

## Unidentified Deceased Persons

### Florida

MEPIC and the Medical Examiner's Commission work together to gather resources and methods to help identify the unidentified deceased persons found in Florida and bring renewed attention to the growing number of unidentified persons.

The advancement of technology allows law enforcement and medical examiners to resubmit fingerprints, dental records and DNA on older cases which could generate positive identifications. Over the past five years, FDLE has worked with the Medical Examiner's Commission and local law enforcement to identify 28 sets of unidentified remains, providing closure to families and solving previously cold cases.

### National

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) tracks the discovery of unidentified remains, if they have been identified by law enforcement, and how many remain open cases. In a study of [unidentified child remains](#), the majority of deceased children were determined to have died within a week of going missing.

Only two percent of the victims who went missing remained alive for more than one year before their death. Individuals over 15 years old were more likely to remain alive for over a week.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of cases involving deceased children age eight and under were not reported missing to law enforcement. When victims age 20 and under were identified, the study found that they had not been reported missing approximately 58 percent of the time.

*Timeframe Alive Based on Child's Age*

	Total	Under a week	Weeks to months	Over 1 year	Undetermined
0-12 Months	4	100%	-	-	-
1-5 Years	14	64%	14%	-	21%
6-10 Years	8	75%	25%	-	-
11-15 Years	44	70%	25%	-	5%
16-20 Years	108	45%	32%	1%	21%
21+ Years	51	41%	25%	8%	25%

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## Missing Endangered Person Statistics

### Florida Statistics

The Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC) indicated that Florida had approximately 25,262 active missing *children* cases opened and 12,020 active missing *adult* cases opened in 2021. Fortunately, most missing person cases are resolved within one month. Less than one percent of missing person cases are not recovered by the one-year mark. As of 12/31/2021, there were approximately 3,500 active cases in Florida according to FCIC.

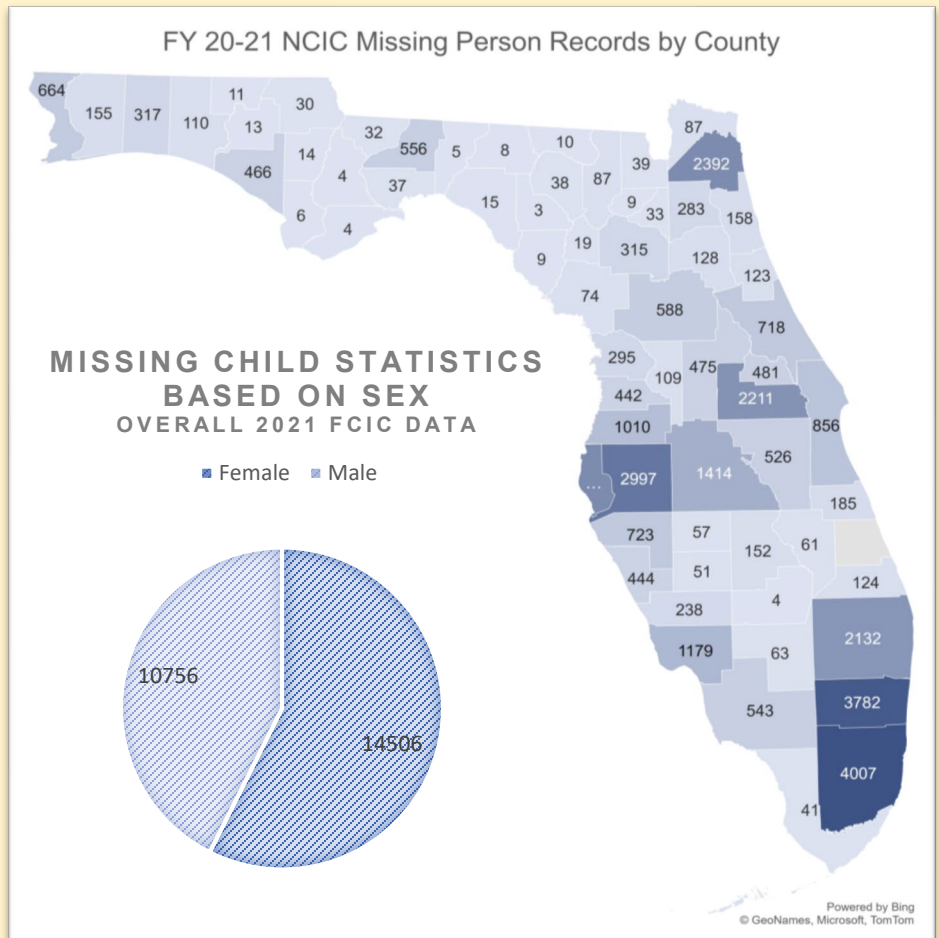
In the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse (MEPIC) opened 2,654 new cases from July 2020 to June 2021. MEPIC cases are opened when missing persons information is received from local law enforcement, Florida Department of Children and Families, and the public and the data has been entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). In the same time frame, MEPIC closed 2,558 cases. Cases are closed after the missing person has been found and/or the case has been resolved. The images shown below illustrate the FCIC 2021 missing child data indicating the case type based on sex and a map based on NCIC data that shows missing person records for each county.

### National Statistics

According to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), long term missing cases are cases in which the missing person has not been recovered and there are no active leads.

In a study conducted between 2014 and 2016, 98 percent of long term cases involved children who ran away or were abducted by a family member.

A total of 151 children were recovered after having been missing for a decade or longer. Family abduction cases have the longest average time missing, with an average of 326 days.





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## AMBER Alert: Zachary Bernhardt



Zachary Michael-Cole Bernhardt was last seen in Clearwater, Florida on September 11, 2000. Zachary was eight years old when he went missing. He would be approximately 30 years old today. Zachary was home in Clearwater the last time he was seen. He is described as having blond hair, blue eyes, and with scars under his chin, between the bridge of his nose and on the right side of his upper lip.

If you have any information concerning Zachary Bernhardt, please contact the Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse (MEPIC) at 1-888-FL MISSING (1-888-356-4774) or the Clearwater Police Department at 727-562-4422.

You can view other active AMBER Alerts by visiting MEPIC's current AMBER Alert page by [clicking here](#). You may also search all current missing and unidentified persons through the MEPIC database which can be found [here](#) or by visiting the Florida Missing Children's Day Foundation's website which stores long term missing cases in their "[Have You Seen Me?](#)" section.