

Florida Missing Endangered Persons Information
Clearinghouse Advisory Board

MISSING & ENDANGERED

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2025 / ISSUE 14



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 later expanded to include missing endangered adults and seniors. The MEPICAB'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. The MEPICAB works with the Florida Missing Children's Day Foundation (FMCDF) to present Florida Missing Children's Day, which will be held Monday, September 8, 2025. For more information regarding the MEPICAB, Florida Missing Children's Day or FMCDF, visit www.fmcdf.org.

Missing & Endangered





The 2025 Florida Missing Children's Day (FMCD)

STUDENT CONTESTS

In recognition of child safety issues, Florida Missing Children's Day will be held on September 8, 2025. Each year, to raise awareness of missing children issues and abduction prevention, the Florida Missing Children's Day Foundation sponsors a student poster, essay, and National Anthem contest. While the poster and essay contests have closed, information for the National Anthem contest can be found below.

NATIONAL ANTHEM CONTEST ...due May 2, 2025

The Florida Missing Children's Day Foundation present the 2025 FMCD National Anthem Contest, which is **open to all 1st - 8th graders in Florida**.

- Applicants may sing solo or in a group of up to three (3) individuals.
- The performance must be acapella (no instrumental accompaniment).
- The award is contingent upon the winner attending and performing the National Anthem at Florida Missing Children's Day on Monday, September 8, 2025, in Tallahassee, Florida.

To be considered, participants must submit a video and/or a link to a video of them singing the first verse of the National Anthem. Video submissions must be sent with a completed application and signed parental release form, and should be submitted via email to FMCDNationalAnthem@gmail.com. This account will only be checked when the contest closes.

CONGRATULATIONS

to the winner of the 2025 statewide FMCD poster contest, Cali!

See the winning artwork on the right.



Submission packets, additional contest rules, and prize information can be found at:
www.fmcd.org/student-contests



QUESTIONS?

Contact FDLE's FMCD coordinator by calling 850-410-7016 or emailing FMCD@fdle.state.fl.us.

National Anthem submissions should not be sent to this address.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding Students with Disabilities

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

Florida Atlantic University (FAU) Center for Autism and Related Disabilities/Florida Developmental Disabilities Council

Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorder

Externalized behaviors in students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) can manifest in various ways, such as hyperactivity, tantrums, theft, threats or acts of physical harm, arguing, or aggression. While these behaviors may seem spontaneous, they often react to specific environmental, situational, or interpersonal triggers. When law enforcement encounters such behaviors, they may be misinterpreted as intentional defiance or resistance. Student safety plans can be valuable in these situations and require collaboration between parents, schools, and law enforcement. It is essential to personalize safety plans for students with disabilities by working closely with families, caregivers, teachers, and healthcare providers. This teamwork helps to understand the students' unique needs and behaviors, allowing for implementing preventive measures in schools. For an example of a student safety plan, please email texume@fau.edu.

Preparing Students with Disabilities and Police for Successful Interactions Through Activities

Educators can work with police officers to create text or picture scripts that help teach students how to communicate effectively with law enforcement. This includes practicing asking for help and responding to police requests. Students with disabilities may face challenges in responding appropriately to commands from police officers, which can result in problematic verbal and nonverbal reactions during interactions.

To address this, educators must incorporate police awareness training that equips students with the skills needed for positive and effective communication with law enforcement. Some helpful suggestions for education and law enforcement include:

- Officers to participate in career day.
- Officers to attend various school events.
- Organize "Lunch with a Cop" sessions.
- Plan a tour of the local police station.
- Arrange for students to meet officers, ask (or practice asking) questions verbally, with picture exchange cards, or augmented speech devices, about their uniforms, and explore a police car.
- Encourage police officers to connect with students by attending events (i.e., field day).

Continuing with Police Safety Training

Contact FAU Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) or your local CARD to learn more about our free law enforcement training. These sessions are designed to enhance officers' knowledge and skills as first responders in situations involving individuals of all ages with disabilities, with a special focus on de-escalation techniques to ensure the safety of both the individuals and the officers.



Danielle was last seen at a party in the Cantonment, Florida, area on September 30, 2001, at the age of 14.

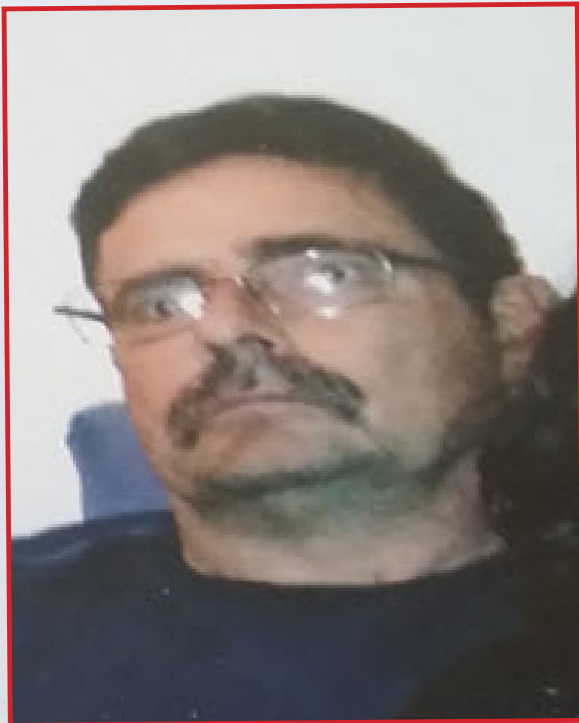
She was wearing a sky blue halter top and blue Tommy Hilfiger jacket with black pants. She has a scar on her right forearm. Her photo (bottom right corner) has been age-progressed to 18 years old.

If you have any information about this case, please contact the Escambia County Sheriff's Office at 850-436-9620 or the Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse hotline at 1-888-FL-Missing (1-888-356-4774).

MISSING DANIELLE BELL



MISSING GEORGE KUEHNE



George was last seen in Hollywood, Florida, on September 6, 2016, by a witness who claims to have seen George picked up by two unidentified males in a white van.

George requires an assistive mobility device, such as a wheelchair or walker, for transportation and cannot get in or out of a wheelchair without assistance. Foul play is suspected.

If you have any information about this case, please contact the Hollywood Police Department at 954-967-4357 or the Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse hotline at 1-888-FL-Missing (1-888-356-4774).



2024 FLORIDA ALERT STATISTICS

In 2024, there were 404 missing person alerts issued in Florida:

- 9 AMBER Alerts
- 84 Missing Child Alerts
- 121 Purple Alerts
- 190 State Silver Alerts

BY THE NUMBERS:

Approximately 94% of qualifying alerts resulted in a successful recovery (380).

Approximately 5% of qualifying alerts resulted in a deceased recovery (19).

Approximately 1% of qualifying alerts have not yet resulted in a recovery (5).

*Recovery information as of 2/7/2025.

Missing Endangered Operations SPOTLIGHT OF THE YEAR

During 2024, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) worked alongside both federal and local agencies to help identify and locate missing and endangered children within the state. FDLE's continued efforts to protect Florida's families and combat human trafficking are highlighted in the operations below.

Operation Seminole Saber

In April 2024, more than two dozen FDLE agents and analysts participated in the U.S. Marshal's Operation Seminole Saber to identify and locate missing children in the Tampa Bay area. The operation recovered 27 endangered children.

Operation We Will Find You

In July 2024, FDLE, as part of the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office's Human Trafficking Task Force, announced Operation We Will Find You. The operation was a six-week nationwide operation resulting in the recovery of 200 missing children. Thirty-one recoveries were made in Miami-Dade County alone. Fifty-five endangered or missing children were found across the southern district of Florida.





Tracking & Monitoring Sexual Offenders

FDLE houses Florida's Sexual Offender and Predator Registry. In 2024, FDLE members added 3,425 new registrants to the Sexual Offender and Predator System and disseminated more than 5,900 travel notifications to other states and territories.

In addition to maintaining the registry, FDLE's sworn personnel investigate allegations of unregistered sexual offenders and predators living in Florida, sexual offenders and predators who move without updating their information, and other registration violations.

Operation Thin Ice

In February 2024, FDLE agents worked with the Wakulla County Sheriff's Office and federal partners on Operation Thin Ice. The operation resulted in the arrest of 10 Wakulla County sex offenders/predators for failure to report information required during their mandated registrations.

Operation Catch Up

In March 2024, FDLE, Jefferson County Sheriff's Office and the Monticello Police Department verified the addresses of more than 50 registered offenders living in Jefferson County. Two sexual offenders and one sexual predator were arrested for non-compliance with Florida's registration laws and criminal investigations were initiated on four absconded sex offenders.

Operation Safe Halloween

In September, FDLE launched Operation Safe Halloween visiting hundreds of sex offenders and predators to confirm they were following Florida's registration laws. Operations were conducted in Franklin, Hardee and Lafayette counties resulting in nine arrests.

Operation Spooky Sweep

Six sex offenders were arrested during Operation Spooky Sweep just before Halloween. FDLE partnered with the Gadsden County Sheriff's Office to visit more than 50 registered sex offenders and predators to ensure they were compliant with sex offender laws.

Operation Full Moon

In November, 27 sex offenders and predators were arrested in Operation Full Moon. During the three-day operation, physical contact was made with 70 registrants residing in Hillsborough County to verify they are following registration laws. FDLE partnered with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office and the Florida Department of Corrections.

Operation Broken Crayon

Also in November, FDLE, the Hernando County Sheriff's Office and Florida Department of Corrections arrested nine in Operation Broken Crayon after contact with 63 registered sex offenders and predators.



Combating Online Child Sexual Exploitation

The Impacts of

GENERATIVE AI

Generative artificial intelligence (generative AI) refers to a subset of artificial intelligence that allows users to generate images, video, text, and audio based on specific prompts or requests. While this increasingly implemented type of technology can have benefits, it has become a growing concern to law enforcement entities for the ways in which it is being used to sexually exploit children.

Over the past two years alone, the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children \(NCMEC\)](#) has received over 7,000 reports of child sexual exploitation involving the use of generative AI to create or distribute child sexual abuse material (CSAM).

According to the [Department of Homeland Security](#), generative AI is being used by online predators to:

- Upload an image of a child and make it appear as though the child is nude or engaged in sexually explicit acts,
- Enter text prompts to generate images of children being sexually abused,
- Teach other offenders how to victimize children online, and
- Edit and/or add to existing CSAM to create and share new content.

An investigation by the [Stanford Internet Observatory](#) in 2023 found hundreds of images containing CSAM in an open dataset used to train AI text-to-image generation models. This means that the images generated by predators using AI are not only created by referencing existing open-source AI models (for example, stock image models), but actual CSAM content.

Fortunately, AI may also be used responsibly to enhance law enforcement's ability to accurately and efficiently identify both victims and online predators. In 2023, the Department of Homeland Security conducted Operation Renewed Hope. This operation was the first of its kind and used AI and other machine-learning models to identify and locate 311 previously unknown victims of online sexual exploitation. Over 100 abuse victims were identified and/or rescued, and numerous offenders were found and arrested.

As this becomes a growing threat, it is imperative that platforms hosting generative AI models are held accountable to standards that prevent the criminal misuse of their technology. NCMEC has implemented several protocols to respond to the threat of child sexual exploitation via generative AI, including responding to reports made through their [CyberTipline](#) and helping victims remove explicit images of themselves online through their [Take It Down](#) program.



What is the **UNIDENTIFIED DECEASED INITIATIVE?**



**By: Jonathan Rigsby, Senior Crime Intelligence Analyst
*Florida Department of Law Enforcement***

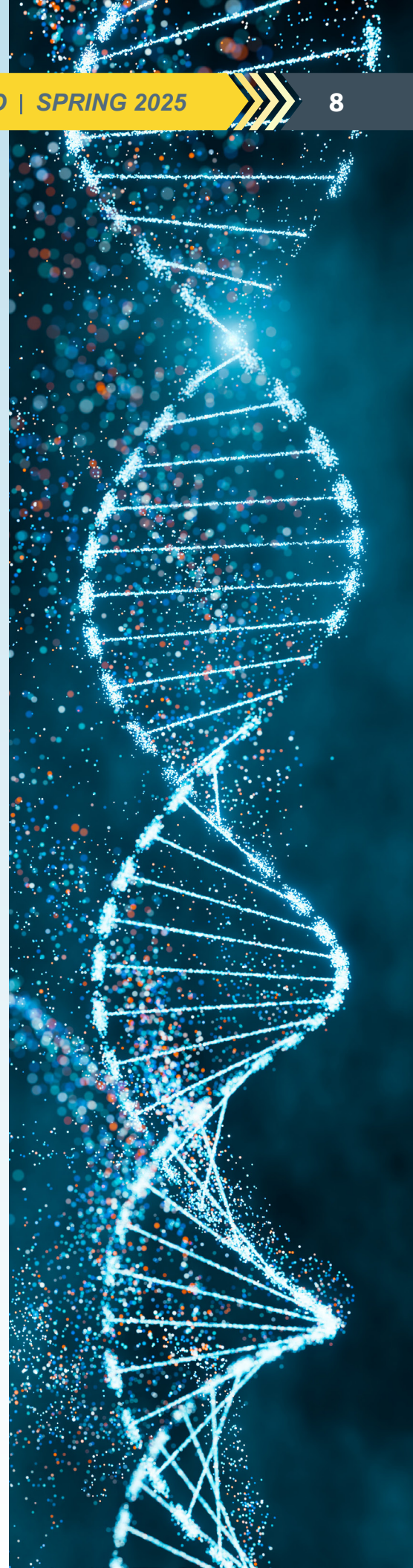
There are nearly 900 sets of unidentified human remains (UHRs) in Florida. These UHRs vary from a few bone fragments to complete remains, but each shares a common feature: the person's identity is unknown.

Identifying some UHRs can be done using traditional investigative methods by using ID cards, fingerprints, DNA, or dental records. Investigators may also speak with neighbors or local businesses to establish possible identities for remains found in parks or public places. Other cases require more sophisticated scientific methods to establish identification. Clues may even be uncovered by examining which mineral isotopes are present in a person's bones and correlating this to a specific geographic region.

These cases can be long and complex, but advances in technology have provided new tools for investigators and medical examiners. Advanced techniques have allowed for the extraction of DNA from previously unusable sources. Now, even a single tooth can provide enough DNA to identify skeletal remains.

The newest tool for law enforcement is Forensic Investigative Genetic Genealogy (FIGG). In FIGG, DNA profiles are compared with publicly uploaded DNA results to establish common ancestors for an unidentified person. Analysts conduct genealogical research to try to find living relatives of the deceased. These living relatives may be only distantly related (3rd or 4th cousins), but DNA samples from those distant relatives help to pinpoint others who can direct investigators to living relatives.

FDLE maintains several initiatives to assist with identifying UHRs. An unidentified deceased analyst provides analytical support to local law enforcement, while a dedicated FIGG unit investigates other cases. Lab services are provided to agencies across Florida to assist with processing DNA samples and coordinating cases. FDLE recently received a federal grant to provide enhanced DNA analysis of UHRs.





NCMEC

A National Missing Child Resource

Continued from Summer 2024 Issue

The [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children \(NCMEC\)](#) is the United States' largest child protection organization. It is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation that works with families, victims, private industries, law enforcement, and the public to assist with preventing child abductions, recovering missing children, and providing services to deter and combat child sexual exploitation. In 1984, NCMEC was established by John and Revé Walsh, parents of Adam Walsh who went missing in Florida in 1981, and other child advocates to raise awareness and aid in the location of missing children. In 1998, NCMEC introduced their CyberTipline, where incidents of child sexual exploitation can be reported online in addition to their 24-hour hotline, 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678).

NCMEC opens missing children and unidentified person cases across the United States and displays missing poster flyers from all over the nation. Their website's search function allows users to search by name, location, age, physical description, and more. As a reminder, if your child is missing, immediately call your local law enforcement agency or 911 to report them missing. After your child is reported missing and uploaded into the Florida Crime Information Center, you may contact the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's (FDLE) Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse (MEPIC) to request opening a case on your child at the state level. MEPIC does not offer resources to you and your family, but will open a case and start offering investigative and analytical assistance to the law enforcement agency working your child's case.

NCMEC is the national technical resource who will work with you, your family, MEPIC, and your local law enforcement agency on creating and disseminating posters to help generate leads, communicate with state/federal agencies to provide services in locating your missing child, provide leads and tips to law enforcement agencies when received on their tip line, provide peer support, resources, and referrals to missing person families. NCMEC also develops age-progressed photos and provides MEPIC and local law enforcement agencies with any leads submitted to their CyberTipline regarding long-term Florida cases.

NCMEC also offers long term missing child and unidentified person case resources for law enforcement and families. These resources include creating age-progression images of missing children, assisting in the collection and distribution of biometric information of missing children for databases, conducting open source queries, searching known attempted abductions and convicted sexual offenders/predators for leads, and offering multiple forensic resources such as carbon dating, authentication of handwriting documents such as runaway notes, chemical isotype analysis, forensic genetic genealogy, forensic odontology, and pollen/soil analysis.

Continued on next page.





NCMEC Resources

NCMEC provides safety and prevention resources for families and child-serving professionals focused on topics like online and real-world safety, including skills on how to handle a variety of situations ranging from staying home alone to knowing what to do in emergencies, to abduction and child sexual exploitation prevention. Their educational resources include:

- **Professional Training:** NCMEC offers online and in-person trainings, technical assistance, and resources to public safety and child-serving professionals.
- **NetSmartz:** NetSmartz is a free educational program teaching children ages 5 - 17 about online safety and digital citizenship. The program includes age-appropriate games, videos, presentations, and classroom lessons to help children learn how to protect themselves online.
- **KidSmartz:** KidSmartz is a child safety program that educates families about preventing abduction and encourages kids in grades K - 5 to practice safe behaviors.
- **Safe to Compete:** Safe to Compete is a program providing youth sports organizations and families of child athletes with resources to help protect children from sexual abuse.
- **ADAM Program:** The ADAM (Automated Delivery of Alerts on Missing Children) Program quickly distributes missing child posters from NCMEC to specific geographic search areas. Businesses and individuals can sign up for free to receive email alerts and posters when children go missing in their area.
- **Take It Down:** In 2023, NCMEC created a new initiative to help children regain control and combat child sexual exploitation called Take It Down. Take It Down is a free, anonymous service offered by NCMEC that can assist individuals with removing or stopping the online sharing of nude, partially nude, or sexually explicit images or videos taken of them while under 18. This service was spotlighted in our [Spring 2024 Newsletter \(Issue 11\)](#), and all previous newsletters may be located at <https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MEPIC/Home/MEPIC-Advisory-Board/Newsletter>.

NamUs

The National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) is another national clearinghouse and resource providing information on missing, unidentified, and unclaimed person cases throughout the country. NamUs provides technology, forensic services, and investigative support to resolve missing person and unidentified deceased person cases. NamUs also allows limited access to the public, allowing the loved ones of missing persons to take a more proactive role in searching for them. Law enforcement is strongly encouraged to submit missing persons case information to NamUs. NamUs is designed specifically to match missing person cases with unidentified human remains.

Florida Missing Children's Day

HAVE YOU SEEN THESE MISSING PERSONS?



SHIRLENE ROBERTS
Missing since 09/10/2009
from Jacksonville, FL



STEVEN MACKRELL
Missing since 07/29/2015
from Pompano Beach, FL



PATSY BUTLER
Missing since 10/23/17
from Perry, FL



JONATHAN MARTINEZ-CALIX
Missing since 03/25/2009
from Bonita Springs, FL



[www.fdle.state.fl.us/
mcicsearch](http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/mcicsearch)

If you would like to report a missing person, or if you recognize any of these individuals, please contact your local law enforcement agency first and then call the Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse (MEPIC).

1-888-FL-MISSING (356-4774)



Florida Missing Children's Day is an annual ceremony held in remembrance of Florida's past and present missing children.

This year's ceremony will be held on Monday, September 8, 2025. For more information, visit the website using the QR code to the right.



www.FMCDF.org

