

The Missing Persons Searching Toolkit

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Objective of the Missing Persons Searching Toolkit

> The Missing Persons Searching Toolkit you are reading is a 9-page document designed for any social service agency that is searching for missing persons. The main document discussed in this toolkit is the family search flyer, which is presented for you on Page 5. Family search flyers are made with the goal of locating sought persons for family tracing cases with maximum effectiveness. After you gather as much information as possible about the missing person, you create a family search flyer that you will distribute throughout the public so that people can contact your office with any information they have on the missing person. The family search flyer needs to go to the most active and important leaders in the local cultural population corresponding to the sought person's ethnicity. On Pages 6 through 9 of this Missing Persons Search Toolkit, you will find forms for cover letters which should accompany the family search flyer when it is mailed or faxed to leaders at various types of local ethnic organizations in your area which can include: 1) ethnic places of worship, 2) ethnic small businesses (grocery stores & restaurants), 3) ethnic community organizations (social service organizations), and 4) ethnic newspapers

Collect Basic Details on the Missing Person

> You must gather certain essential details about the missing person in order to maximize the likelihood that you will find the missing person, making sure to obtain such details as: the missing person's first and last name, gender, age, place of birth, ethnic group, nationality, year of arrival in the United States, the region where the missing person lived prior to his or her arrival in the United States, and the last known year in the region where the missing person had last been seen. You will provide the public with details about your missing person through the family search flyer, for which there is a template on Page 5. When you gather information on your missing person, be sure to gather as much information as you can from as many relatives, friends, acquaintances, co-workers, and clergy of the missing person as you can find.

Remember to Research in Two Key Areas: People Who Can Help in the Search, and the Last Known Locations of the Missing Person

> Be especially focused on gathering as much information as you can in *two key categories*, namely: 1) *people who may be of assistance in locating the missing person*, and 2) *the last known locations of the missing person*. As you interview people to create a case file for the missing person, it is crucial to gather information about people who could potentially be of help in locating the missing person, and such people might include: relatives of the missing person; friends of the missing person from recreational and cultural activities; religious leaders from places of worship where the missing person had been attending; supervisors or co-workers from the missing person's places of employment; and former classmates from the missing person's schools. Also, be sure to learn as much as you can about the last known locations where the missing person was known to be, which includes the last known place of residence and also the specific geographic spot where the missing person was last seen or heard from prior to the disappearance. During the investigation, you should contact the last place of residence through certified letters. Certified letters require that whoever receives the letter must provide a signature for the postal worker when the letter is received. So, if you are trying to find a missing person who recently lived in an apartment, then you can send certified letters to the manager of the apartment building and also to the neighbors who live in the adjacent apartments. Or, if the missing person was last known to be living in a house, then you can send a certified letter to the current resident in the house where the sought person used to live, and you can also send certified letters to the residents in the neighboring houses. A practical way to discover where people are living is through reverse phone directories like the Pacific Bell Street Address Directory, which is often available through public libraries. Reverse phone directories allow you to look-up people's addresses if you have their phone numbers and vice versa – and people in the same apartment complex are listed in reverse phone directories.

After Trying the Basic Steps of Tracing, Create a Family Search Flyer for Public Distribution

> Each family search flyer contains essential information on the sought person, including: name, gender, age, place of birth, ethnic group, nationality, arrived in the United States in the following year, arrived in the United States from the following place, and last known year in local region. The template for the family search flyer can be stored on your computer as a Microsoft Word document, so that you can fill it in with new details for each new missing person. Please reference the sample version of a family search flyer on Page 5. As soon as your department has determined that the sought person cannot be located through the first basic steps of tracing (calling 411, using the Pacific Bell Street Address directory, trying the Ultimate White Pages online at www.theultimates.com/white, and searching for the missing person's previous addresses through the Department of Motor Vehicles), then you make a family search flyer for the tracing case. You might consider having the family search flyer translated into the appropriate language of the sought person's culture group, so that the local ethnic community can most easily understand the flyer. Organizations that could potentially translate search flyers for you at no cost might include: ethnic social service organizations, an ethnic student group at a local university, an ethnic chamber of commerce, and an online ethnic translation service.

Search for the Missing Person through Collaboration with Cultural Leaders

> The most common way for you to find sought persons for tracing cases is through mutually-beneficial relationships with local ethnic organizations, especially ethnic social service organizations and ethnic places of worship. When you contact local ethnic organizations, keep in mind that you are providing the community with a free and very meaningful gift, namely the ability to reunite relatives at no charge. You contact local ethnic organizations with three purposes: 1) to find sought persons through the distribution of your family search flyers; 2) to find new volunteers for your department who can assist you in searching for missing people in their own culture group; and 3) to find new tracing clients who are also searching for missing people. When distributing family search flyers to the community, there is a simple solution to every challenge. Using ethnic yellow page directories online or in hard-copy form, you can quickly find translation services when flyers must be translated. You can use the AT&T Language Line to get a live translator who can help you communicate with ethnic organizations when they do not speak English. You can recruit volunteers from the most popular local ethnic organizations, and these volunteers can provide lists of the most crucial organizations you need to contact in their local community when tracing cases arise.

Be Creative When Looking for Cultural Leaders in Your Area

> When reaching out to a particular ethnic community in your local area (e.g. Afghan, Cambodian, Ethiopian, etc), first call the local consulate (corresponding to the missing person's nationality) to ask the consulate about all of the key ethnic social service organizations, ethnic places of worship, ethnic small businesses, and ethnic newspapers for the consulate's cultural community in the local region. Then, look for ethnic yellow page directories covering your region for the sought person's culture group. You can search for ethnic yellow page directories online through Yahoo.com or Google.com. For example, to find the online Ethiopian yellow page directories for your local region, you can use search criteria in Yahoo.com that can include: the name of your local city or region + "Ethiopian" + "directory" or "yellow pages." Also, you can look for ethnic yellow page directories in hard-copy book form at local ethnic social service organizations and at local ethnic small businesses (grocery stores & restaurants). As an example, a local Vietnamese social service organization might mail their regional Vietnamese yellow pages to your department at no cost after you explain your services to find missing Vietnamese people in the area. Granted, only larger American cities have consulates, but many American cities have some form of ethnic yellow page directories for their region, whether online or in hard copy form. Regarding ethnic places of worship, you might also have religious umbrella organizations that cover all of your local area, such as a panel of Christian leaders that might meet monthly, or an Islamic Shura Council which communicates with all the Islamic mosques in your region, or a Board of Rabbis for your region which communicates with Jewish temples in the region. These religious umbrella organizations can send family search flyers to many places of worship at once, including ethnic places of worship such as a Cambodian church or an Ethiopian church. Local leaders might also gather by both religion and ethnicity; for example, you might find a local panel of Cambodian Christian leaders in your region.

Send the Family Search Flyer to Cultural Leaders along with a Cover Letter from Pages 6 through 9 of this Toolkit

> When mailing or faxing the family search flyer to a local ethnic organization, be sure to send a cover letter explaining the nature of your search. Options for cover letters can be found on pages 6 through 9 of this Toolkit, where you will find cover letters for four different kinds of organizations:

- Businesses - the cover letter accompanying family search flyers that you send to ethnic small businesses (grocery stores & restaurants, especially)
- Places of Worship - the cover letter accompanying family search flyers that you send to ethnic places of worship
- Community Organizations - the cover letter accompanying family search flyers that you send to ethnic community centers or ethnic social services organizations
- Newspapers - the cover letter accompanying family search flyers that you send to ethnic newspapers so that you can place a “family search ad” about your sought person into the ethnic newspaper. The ethnic newspapers use information straight from the family search flyer, regarding your sought person and how the public may contact your department if they know any information about the sought person. You can use a modified version of this form letter for ethnic websites in your region as well. You may not be able to contact radio or TV stations directly if you have a media department or a communications/marketing department that is supposed to contact radio or TV stations on your behalf.

Family Search Flyer

(Your organization's logo and letterhead information go at the very top of the page)

MISSING (insert name of culture here) PERSON IN (insert region)

(Your organization's name) is dedicated to helping families around the world find missing relatives after they have been separated due to (insert the various types of separations you handle). This service is available free of charge to people worldwide in (insert the region you cover).

Just below, please find information regarding a (insert name of culture here such as Cambodian, Ethiopian, or Iranian) individual whose family has been separated from (him/her) in recent years:

MISSING (insert name of culture here) PERSON:

Name:

Gender:

Age:

Place of birth:

Ethnic group:

Nationality:

Arrived in the United States in the year:

Arrived in the United States from the following place:

Last known year in (insert the region you cover):

People who have information related to this individual can contact us directly at the following address and phone number:

Attention: (your own name or your department's name)

(Your organization's name)

(Your organization's address)

Tel: (your department's phone number)

Thank you for helping us to reunite this (insert name of culture here) family.

Also, if you or someone you know are searching for someone, because separation has occurred due to (insert the various types of separations you handle), then please feel free to contact us.

Business Letter

(Your organization’s logo and letterhead information go at the very top of the page)

Date:

Dear

Thank you for collaborating with (insert the name of your organization’s name) in our efforts to help reunite families. We very much appreciate your collaboration. Enclosed, please find copies of a “family search flyer” about the following individual(s) for whom we are searching in the (insert your local region) area:

Missing person(s):

It would be outstanding if you could display these family search flyers in your business, in case any of your customers have information on the missing person(s). Feel free to duplicate and distribute these family search flyers in the local community.

(Insert the name of your organization) searches for individuals when they have been separated from their families due to (insert the causes for separation that you handle). We would not search for individuals for (insert circumstances for separation that you would not handle), since we must (insert an explanation for why you cannot search for missing persons under some circumstances, such as if you need to remain neutral in political affairs or if your organization’s mission statement only covers certain types of services).

Please contact us at any time if you have comments or questions.

Sincerely,

(Your own name)

(Your organization’s name and your department’s name)

(Your organization’s address)

Tel: (your department’s phone number)

Place of Worship Letter

(Your organization’s logo and letterhead information go at the very top of the page)

Date:

Dear

Thank you for collaborating with (your organization’s name) in our efforts to help reunite families. We very much appreciate your collaboration. Enclosed, please find copies of “family search flyers” about the following individual(s) for whom we are searching in the (insert your local region) area:

Missing person(s):

It would be outstanding if you could display these family search flyers at your place of worship, in case anyone in your congregation or community have information on the missing person(s). Feel free to publish details on the missing person(s) in your bulletin or newsletter. You may also duplicate and distribute these family search flyers in the local community.

(Insert the name of your organization) searches for individuals when they have been separated from their families due to (insert the causes for separation that you handle). We would not search for individuals for (insert circumstances for separation that you would not handle), since we must (insert an explanation for why you cannot search for missing persons under some circumstances, such as if you need to remain neutral in political affairs or if your organization’s mission statement only covers certain types of services).

Please contact us at any time if you have comments or questions.

Sincerely,

(Your own name)

(Your organization’s name and your department’s name)

(Your organization’s address)

Tel: (your department’s phone number)

Community Organization Letter

(Your organization's logo and letterhead information go at the very top of the page)

Date:

Dear

Thank you for collaborating with (insert your organization's name) in our efforts to help reunite families. We very much appreciate your collaboration. Enclosed, please find copies of a "family search flyer" about the following individual(s) for whom we are searching in the (insert your local region) area:

Missing person(s):

It would be outstanding if you could search your records to determine whether you have any information on the missing person(s). It would also be excellent if you could display these family search flyers on any bulletin boards in your office, in case your staff or clients have information on the missing person(s). Feel free to duplicate and distribute these family search flyers in the local community.

(Insert the name of your organization) searches for individuals when they have been separated from their families due to (insert the causes for separation that you handle). We would not search for individuals for (insert circumstances for separation that you would not handle), since we must (insert an explanation for why you cannot search for missing persons under some circumstances, such as if you need to remain neutral in political affairs or if your organization's mission statement only covers certain types of services).

Please contact us at any time if you have comments or questions.

Sincerely,

(Your own name)

(Your organization's name and your department's name)

(Your organization's address)

Tel: (your department's phone number)

Newspaper Letter

(Your organization’s logo and letterhead information go at the very top of the page)

Date:

Dear

Thank you for collaborating with (your organization’s name) in our efforts to help reunite families. We very much appreciate your collaboration. Included with this fax, please find a “family search flyer” about the following individual(s) for whom we are searching in the (insert your local region) area:

Missing person(s):

It would be outstanding if you could put a “family search ad” in your newspaper, in case any of your readers have information on the missing person(s). You may use any information you wish from the enclosed family search flyer, when you write the family search ad, including the sought person’s: name, gender, age, place of birth, ethnic group, nationality, year of arrival in the United States, country where the sought person had been living prior to living in the United States, and last known year in the local region.

(Insert the name of your organization) searches for individuals when they have been separated from their families due to (insert the causes for separation that you handle). We would not search for individuals for (insert circumstances for separation that you would not handle), since we must (insert an explanation for why you cannot search for missing persons under some circumstances, such as if you need to remain neutral in political affairs or if your organization’s mission statement only covers certain types of services).

Please contact us at any time if you have comments or questions.

Sincerely,

(Your own name)

(Your organization’s name and your department’s name)

(Your organization’s address)

Tel: (your department’s phone number)