

**Investigation and Interviewing**  
**Techniques For Search and Rescue Responders**

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## **Investigation and Interviewing Techniques for Search and Rescue Responders**

### **Overview:**

The best way to find a missing person in the wilderness or urban environment is not to send out an armada of search teams and personnel hoping to find clues, but to place heavy emphasis on the initial investigation and prepare a search plan that focuses on places the subject would likely be found. Information on where to look can best be obtained from good investigation. Build a profile of the missing person in your mind as if he or she is someone you already know. Get to know who their family, friends, business associates or schoolmates are in order to understand the missing person. By doing this you can better plan what the missing subject will do in a particular situation. For example, you may find that the initial call about a possible child abduction is determined later, through investigation, to be a runaway or a case of the child forgetting to call home.

Investigation as used in a search context is the continual process of gathering information about the missing subject and the circumstances under which he or she is missing. The gathering of information includes interviewing people who have pertinent knowledge of the subject. This process commences with the first report of the missing subject and is completed at the end of the search operation. It includes the interview with the subject after he or she is found to determine what happened.

Besides usefulness in search planning, investigation gathers historical and statistical information, which can be useful in future searches for similar subjects. The investigation report should include post-search information on the effectiveness of the resources utilized in locating the missing subject. In addition, the complete report of the investigation and the management of the search incident can later be incorporated into a training exercise.

### **Interview and Interrogation**

It is helpful to understand the difference between interview and interrogation. Law enforcement agencies are tasked with investigating incidents to determine whether crimes have been committed and, if they have, to arrest the perpetrators. Established rules and techniques have been developed to complete these tasks, which include interview and interrogation. For law enforcement these are defined as:

Interview – A structured non-accusatory process to obtain useful information from someone who may or may not have knowledge of events or circumstances of the incident. Specific techniques may be used to aid recall or elicit behavior useful in determining the veracity or involvement of the interviewee. It should be noted that the interviewee might not have any knowledge of the crime or the perpetrators. Interviews may also evoke lies and themes to use against the uncooperative. In some instances there will come a point in an interview where

the interviewee may become a suspect of a crime. The interview will then become an interrogation.

Interrogation – A structured accusatory process during which a suspect of a crime is confronted in a confident manner and then convinced that the best decision would be to admit responsibility. The techniques used in obtaining useful information are designed to apply pressure to or intentionally trip up the subject.

In law enforcement interview and interrogation, there are laws and codes to protect the interviewee and define when a person is considered free to walk away from the questioning at any time, if they are being detained or in a custodial environment. It may be necessary to read the person their Miranda rights. An attorney may need to be present before any questioning occurs.

In law enforcement interviews and interrogations a great deal of the time is spent preparing for the actual session. Questions are carefully crafted and well thought out to induce a specific response. During the sessions the first hours are devoted to general conversation, which the investigator uses to develop a rapport with the subject and identify behavioral changes to the change in topics.

In lost or missing person incidents involving law enforcement and/or search and rescue personnel there is a more specific definition:

Search Interview – A structured but informal questioning process to obtain useful information from someone who has first hand and/or pertinent knowledge of the missing subject. The tone of the interview is such that there is no condoning or condemning the action of the missing subject, the interviewee or the circumstances surrounding the subject's disappearance. Questions are structured to aid the interviewee in recalling specific details and events leading up to the disappearance of the missing subject. The information gathered is used to develop a subject profile, collect lists of other persons to interview and aid in the planning of where to look for the missing subject.

In this type of missing person interview, the questions are nearly the same in all types of searches and subjects. A rapport is developed almost immediately because of the common goal of the interviewer and interviewee, to find the missing subject and bring them home safely. Note in most circumstances the interviewee is free to walk away from the questioning at anytime but is encouraged to stay and help.

Some techniques used in search interviewing and investigations are designed to solicit full and accurate information about the missing subject. Some questions may even be designed to trip up the interviewee so the answers can be corroborated with other interviews in order to find out who has the most credible information.

## **Whom to Interview**

The person (or persons) who reported the subject missing is the best place to start. Anyone with first hand knowledge or potentially important knowledge of the subject can give the investigator the best information to help develop the subject profile. Following is a partial list of potential interviewees:

- Parents
- Spouses
- Children
- Siblings
- Other relatives
- Close friends
- Co-workers
- School teachers
- School administration, counselor, nurse
- Classmates
- Family physician
- Mental health professional
- Subject's caregiver
- Other healthcare or welfare worker (both that reside on site and visit the subject)
- Business associates
- Members of civic groups the subject belongs to
- Local law enforcement personnel familiar with the missing subject and/or familiar with the area
- Person or persons who last saw the subject
- Eyewitnesses to the incident
- People who have seen the subject since he or she was first missing

An important aspect to understand is the fact that those with direct personnel knowledge of the missing subject as implies direct emotional ties as well. These emotions are expressed in many directions such as being upset and agree at themselves for “allowing this to happen” or at the interviewers with statements like “Why are you asking all these stupid questions? Why aren't you out looking for my Kathryn?” Certainly, they are worried and frightened that the subject is missing and something bad could have happened to them. This would also include that “panicky” feeling, which leads to irrational thought and actions.

It is essential to keep in mind and understand these emotions and the subsequent effects on how the interview will go. The interviewee is preoccupied and not always listening to what is being asked. They will also be slow in responding. Therefore, the interview will need to be adjusted to compensate for these distractions.

## **Information to Obtain:**

Initial reports of missing subjects will start the information gathering. The 911 operator will establish the nature of the emergency with the standard list of questions. These are based on the classic precursor to most questions: who, what, where, when, why and how.

If the nature of the emergency is established to be a missing person then these questions are asked:

- Name of subject (or subjects)
- Physical characteristics
- Clothing
- Mental, emotional and physical condition
- How long the individual has been missing
- Place where the missing person was last seen
- Any suspicious, special or anomalous circumstances known about the event
- Availability and mode of transportation
- Suspect information if possible abduction
- Call back telephone number for the reporting party
- Relationship to the missing subject

This information is then forwarded to a “beat” or duty officer by the dispatcher. The officer is dispatched to investigate the missing person incident and prepare a report. Following is a suggested checklist of items to note during this initial investigation for an Officer Response to Missing Person Report:

- Get the name, nicknames, aliases, date of birth (age), race, gender of missing person.
- Find out if the missing person can communicate; if he/she knows his/her own name and address; if he/she speaks English.
- Establish and secure the physical point last scene (PLS) of the missing person and determine how long the person has been missing..
- Determine who last saw the missing person and have that person available for further interview
- Get a detailed physical description of the missing person, including clothing and any information about their footwear.
- Obtain a recent photograph of the missing person.
- If the missing person is a child or an elderly person, and the PLS is a house, check the interior and exterior of the residence yourself, paying particular attention to the space under beds and in closets or cabinets. Do this even if family members assure you the house has already been checked.
- Obtain information from family members and/or friends who may have conducted any searches in the area. Have anyone who has been in the area of the PLS remain until the Search and Rescue Team arrives so their tracks can be recorded.

- Have dispatch contact local hospitals, the jail and local shelters to determine if the missing person is in any of those facilities.
- Find out if the missing person has ever been missing in the past and under what circumstances.
- Locate and secure any clothing, bedding or other items that belong to the missing person that can be used as a scent article for trailing dogs. Keep others away from any such material until the arrival of the Search and Rescue Team. (Note that some trailing dog handlers may want to collect these scent articles themselves.)
- Determine what the missing person may have had with them, e.g., wallet, identification, papers, food, money, cigarettes, camping gear.
- Get a list of addresses and phone numbers of any friends or relatives.
- Try to get information on the mental state of the missing person.
- If the missing person is a child, find out what school they go to and the name of their teacher and school administrator.
- If the missing person is an adult, find out the name, address and phone number of the employer or caregiver.
- Complete the standard missing person form as department procedure manual and protocol dictate.

The initial report information will be used to determine the possibility that the subject is lost, runaway, suicidal or any other possible scenario and determine if the search and further investigation needs to continue.

This initial investigation by the responding officer generally leads to a more in-depth and expanded investigation by trained investigators/interviewers. Besides confirming such basic information as name, age, sex, clothing description, shoe size and point last scene, the interview should look at incident variables. Following are some examples:

1. The subject's mobility and ability to travel: Missing subjects can move in a straight line in an urban environment and if unrestrained or blocked they could travel out of the local area, thus expanding the search area in a very short period of time. This could lead to a complete rethinking of where and how to search for the subject.

Example questions:

- Can they walk, ride, hitchhike or drive?
  - Do they have access to a vehicle, bicycle, horse, boat or airplane?
  - Do they have knowledge and access to public transportation, rapid transit, trains, buses or taxis? (Keep in mind that many bus operators may allow an elderly person to ride a bus without paying.)
  - What type of money or credit cards do they carry.
2. The subject's ability to survive: Survival in any urban environment is not as challenging as it is in the wilderness. However, some subjects may be unable to recognize or utilize the facilities, services or resources that are obvious to the average person to maintain life, i.e., food or shelter. They may be

unwilling, afraid or too independent to ask for help. These attitudes could affect their survival chances and increase the urgency of the search effort.

Example questions:

- Do they have any money with them?
- Do they have a pager or cell phone?
- Do they know how to call home?
- Are they familiar with their surroundings?
- Do they live in the area?

3. The subject's mindset and intent: Had the missing subject an idea of what they were doing, where they were going and what they intended to do when they got there? For example, is the missing person with Alzheimer's trying to reach a former residence? Is the missing person contemplating suicide and do they have the means to carry out their plan?

Example questions:

- Were they just going for a walk?
- Are they trying to find something or someone?
- Did they leave a note?
- Do they have a diary?

4. The subject's ability or tendency to respond: The tendency of the subject to respond to attraction techniques, such as calling their name, may be very normal when they are in a normal situation or state of mind. However, circumstances in the urban environment or in their life may preclude them from doing so. For example, someone that does not want to be found, e.g., runaway, despondent, may avoid searchers or not respond to attraction techniques.

Example questions:

- Was the missing child taught not to respond to strangers unless they know the secret password? Was a password established?
- Did they do something that would make them feel guilty? Will they avoid responding because they are afraid of punishment?
- For adults is there a mental, physical or language problem that could hinder their ability to answer searchers' calls?

5. The subject's likes and dislikes and what attracts their attention: The missing subject may have a fondness for a specific activity -- a place to "hang out", a special pet or animal that they enjoy being around. The converse should also be asked: What would cause the subject to turn away, shun or hide if they were exposed to an unpleasant activity, crowded environment or specific type of person or thing?

- Do they like to play video games at the local fast food store?
- Do crowds bother them?



- Do they prefer solitude?
  - Do they like animals?
  - Are they afraid of someone in a uniform?
  - Are they attracted to water?
6. The subject's past and recent behavior and life history: Is there anything influencing them in the recent, not so recent or distant past that would account for the missing subject's behavior. Does the subject long to return to a better time or place in their life? For example, persons with Alzheimer's disease often think they are living in the past and will try to return to a former residence. Or did the subject just decide to go visit a friend they have not seen in a long while? Was there a pleasant or unpleasant event that just occurred?
- Is there something in their life that occurred recently or in the past that might affect their current mindset?
  - Where did they grow up? Do they return there often?
  - Who are their friends, peers and relatives?
  - What was their life's work and where?
  - Did they just return from a trip and where did they go?

Frequently, after collecting this information from one source, a list of additional sources of information is developed. This list includes names of friends, family, teachers, relatives and clergy -- all the people who know the missing subject. It could include a list of places and attractions. More information may be available from other outside agencies and jurisdictions frequented by the missing subject. Make contact and check with institutions such as hospitals, domestic violence shelters, homeless shelters and jails.

### **The Interviewers:**

The law enforcement agency that called for search team resources may have already completed a good background investigation and interview. Sometimes this is not the case due to the rapid development of the incident and/or the unavailability of trained personnel. Law enforcement personnel deal with formal interviews and interrogations as it relates to criminal cases on a routine basis but may not be skilled in search interviewing. Additional information to develop search strategies must be obtained. If the requesting law enforcement agency does not have the resources or skills for search investigation, then the information gathering may fall to the search team managers.

The personnel assigned to interview should consist of two investigators per interview team. The interviewers should have a background in search and search management. Another combination of interviewers for the interview team would consist of one SAR member and one law enforcement trained in search and rescue. Prior to sitting down with the interviewee, the interviewers should determine who will ask the questions and who will be the scribe or note taker. This is to establish which interviewer the interviewee will focus on and build rapport. During the interview, conditions may dictate that the roles be reversed, because the interviewee may prefer to talk to the other member of the team, for example, a woman.

The scribe can also ask follow up or clarification questions but should not dominate the interview. The scribe should be listening carefully to the questions and answers, as well as observing the interviewee's demeanor and body language. He/she can also be looking around the room for clues.

When conducting the interview the interviewers need to be aware of their own demeanor and attitude, as described in the following principles:

- First and foremost be a good listener. Be attentive to what the interviewee says and how they are saying it.
- Stay calm. Realize that the interviewee is under a lot of stress and does not need any more pressure brought on by someone who is hyperactive, excitable or anxious.
- Be non-threatening. This may require a change of uniform or appearance. The mere fact that an interviewer has a uniform on is enough to intimidate the interviewee, making them uncomfortable and less inclined to be forthcoming with information. Law enforcement personnel may want to take off their duty belt and weapon.
- Do not be intimidating. Eye contact is important and has varying impact. For example, in casual conversations eye contact is sporadic. Maintaining continuous eye contact can make an interviewee feel uncomfortable and less likely to cooperate. Additionally, in some cultures eye contact in conversation is avoided and casually glances are considered an insult.
- The tone of voice and the word choice should not convey that you condone or condemn the actions of the missing or the interviewed persons. This includes condemning anyone for his or her actions or lack of action. For example, asking the interviewee a pointed question such as "Why did you let them do that?". Do not treat anyone with disrespect. Do not be patronizing or condescending. It is not the responsibility of the interviewer to judge interviewees; such an attitude could lead the interviewee to distrust of the interviewer's sincerity in using the information obtained to only find the subject.
- Be respectful and polite. Use "please" and "thank you". This goes a long way to build trust and rapport.
- Be reassuring and let the interviewee know what's happening. As noted, the interviewee may be under a lot of stress. Tell them about the number of teams that are out looking for the missing person. Let them know that they will be notified as soon as any new information becomes available. Stress the importance of the information being gathered in the interview and how helpful it will be in the search effort.
- While being reassuring, it is equally important not to give false hope. Be wary of saying "Sure, we will find him" as it will be difficult to recant if the person is not found.. This false sense of hope could be devastating to the family of the missing loved one. Do not lie, but do assure the interviewee that every effort and resource is being used to locate the missing person.

- Do not ask leading questions, especially if you already know an answer from another source that may be contradictory. For example, do not ask the parents of a missing child, “Is he a good boy?” when the boy’s teacher has described him as a “bad boy” and a disciplinary problem.
- Be aware that some of the questions may be sensitive. They should be prefaced with a statement such as “I know this is a sensitive question but we need to ask if the missing subject has tried to commit suicide in the past.” In addition to suicide, questions about drug and alcohol abuse, sexual activity and even religious and ethnic beliefs can be sensitive. An interviewee may not want to give such information for fear of tarnishing a reputation, not wanting to accept the possibility or truth or fearing retribution or other repercussions. Keep in mind that you are gathering facts and each piece will help put the puzzle together. If the interviewee seems uncomfortable with the question, the interviewer should emphasize that the information is confidential and shared with only those who need to know.
- Do not rush the questioning along or interrupt a response. Wait for the full answer to the question. Some people do not process questions quickly, especially the elderly. When under stress it can take even longer. Allow time for thinking and, once they have answered, allow time for more thinking. Most people cannot sit silently for more than six seconds in an interview without saying something. That six-second pause can produce additional information. It may be necessary to break the questions down into smaller pieces in order for the interviewee to better understand and respond appropriately.
- Project a sense of positive urgency. The interview is being conducted to help find the missing subject. The interviewee may not see the need or understand the urgency of the situation. It is important to reassure the interviewee that the search effort has started and that the information they provide will help in the search planning on where to look.
- Be professional. Interviewing is a serious job. Sit up straight, keep your feet off the furniture -- all the things your mother (or drill sergeant) taught you.

### **The Interview Setting:**

A good interview can take more than two hours. Therefore, the location for the interview is also very important: it should be someplace quiet, comfortable and non-distracting to help put the interviewee at ease. It may be difficult to find a quiet spot considering the circumstances and activities of the search effort. The best location is a place with limited foot traffic and people coming in and out. A busy area is distracting and can be detrimental to the interview, destroying the momentum of the interview or train of thought and concentration of the interviewee. Law enforcement personnel may also be a distraction to the interview process as they go about their jobs in the space where the interview may be held. In such cases, it may be necessary to find a “hiding place” to conduct the interview.

Other considerations for the interview setting is the residence or the search site. Interviews at the residence are usually more productive. It is a place that the interviewees

most likely know well and where they feel comfortable and safe. An additional benefit is that the home is where resource information such as addresses, phone numbers and other potential documentation or clues are located.

Friends, family or loved ones can also be distracting. Although they may provide comfort to the interviewee during the interview, they may also divert the interviewee's attention from the interviewer, or worse they may answer a question rather than allowing the interviewee to answer. This is especially true of divorced parents. The dominant "ex", may answer the question and may not allow the other "ex" to answer. In such a scenarios, the solution is to conduct separate interviews with different interviewers.

It may be necessary to have food and drink available during a long interview. Beverages containing caffeine or alcohol should be discouraged as they can affect judgment and cloud responses to questions. Smoking can also be a problem for both the interviewee and interviewer, causing a dilemma: if the interviewer must smoke and is not permitted to, he or she may become nervous and uncooperative; if smoking is permitted, the smoke may be distracting to the interviewer. The issue of smoking should be discussed with all parties prior to the interview. A simple adjustment of location to allow for ventilation may resolve the dilemma.

The room itself should have comfortable chairs in the living room or kitchen, for example. The important thing is to sit down. A writing surface for note taking is helpful. The interviewer should face the interviewee and the note taker should sit to the side of the interviewee.

A list of questions – either standard questions as found in Attachment XX and XX (also accessible on The Bay Area Search and Rescue Council (BASARC) web site: [http://www.basarc.org/forms/BASARCFORMS/InterviewShort\\_V.9-2000.doc](http://www.basarc.org/forms/BASARCFORMS/InterviewShort_V.9-2000.doc) and [http://www.basarc.org/forms/BASARCFORMS/InterviewLong\\_V.9-2000.doc](http://www.basarc.org/forms/BASARCFORMS/InterviewLong_V.9-2000.doc)) or a special set of questions made up for the particular incident or interviewee – is extremely helpful. The interviewer can use these as a guide to make sure all pertinent questions are asked and to keep everyone on track. The question forms found on the web site are designed in a long and short format. The short format list of questions is used by the interviewer; the scribe uses the long format, which includes space to write the answers.

Interviewers must pay attention to the surroundings and environment. Is it safe to be there? Are there kitchen knives or other potential aggressive weapons within arm's reach? Should the interview be conducted in a different location? Is the home well kept or messy? Are there any visual clues to be seen that might aid in building a profile of the missing subject? Both interviewers should be making written and mental notes.

## The Questions:

The Start: In building a profile of the missing subject and establishing a rapport with the interviewee, it is prudent to start with something similar to the following statement:

“We don’t know your missing father (or child or whoever the missing person is) and we need to know as much as we can about them to better understand and figure out what they would do in a given or particular situation. This will also give us an idea of where to search and make the best use of our resources.”

Tangential Questioning: In all questioning it is important to take advantage of tangential questions that spin off the basic questions. For example, an initial question would be: “Does the missing subject smoke?” If the answer is “yes,” the following are examples of appropriate tangential questions:

- What brand do they smoke?
- How many packs do they have with them?
- Why do they smoke? Is it to reduce stress?
- When do they smoke?
- How many cigarettes do they smoke a day?
- What would happen to their smoking consumption if they were under stress like being lost?
- What would happen to them physically and/or mentally if they ran out of cigarettes?

Tangential questions could go on and on, depending on the subject matter. The interviewer must think outside the box and take tangential questioning as far as it will go. However, the interviewer must be aware that interviewee may also go off on tangents not relevant to the subject. The interviewer may then have to redirect the interview to maintain focus. Additionally, the interviewee is usually under a lot of stress and may have a difficult time focusing on the questions. The interviewer may then have to paraphrase or break the questions down into manageable parts for clarity.

Variables in the subject’s life could affect the outcome of the incident. Dividing up the questions into the following groups will add control to the interview and help keep everyone focused and on track. A prepared list of questions (as seen on the BASARC web site [www.basarc.org](http://www.basarc.org)) will also aid in continuity .

### 1. Health Status

Questions similar to those taught in first aid, first responder or Emergency Medical Technician courses use the mnemonic device **SAMPLE**:

- S Are there any **Signs or Symptoms** of illness or injury?
- A Do they have any **Allergies** to insect bites or medications we need to be aware of?

- M Are they taking any **Medications**? If so, what for and where are they? What happens if they miss their medications? What happens if they take too much of their medications?
- P Are there any **Past** medical conditions we need to be aware of? Are they under a doctor's care?
- L When was the **Last** time they had food or water?
- E Were there any **Events** leading up to their current health condition?

## 2. Mental Status

Questions related to their past and current mental condition and what changes could occur in their condition:

- Are they happy or sad? Are they depressed? Are they feeling guilty or fearful? Have they turned inward and withdrawn or have they become more outgoing and friendly? What is making them this way?
- What are their likes and dislikes about people and things?
- What is their level of responsiveness? Have they been or are they disoriented to their surroundings?
- Would they give up the fight to find their way home?
- Would they become fatigued and unable to move on?
- What are their good and bad habits? Do they have something they use as a “security blanket?”; if so, what is it?
- Are they outgoing and friendly to kids, adults, strangers or animals?
- Questions to use for someone who is despondent and possibly suicidal (both verbal and non-verbal):
  - ◆ Has their sleep been disrupted?
  - ◆ Has there been a stressful event or significant loss (actual or threatened) in their life?
  - ◆ Is there a history of serious depression or mental disorder?
  - ◆ Have they expressed feelings of guilt, hopelessness or depression?
  - ◆ Have they been expressing great emotional and/or physical pain or distress?
  - ◆ Have they been putting things in order, e.g., paying up insurance policies, calling old friends, giving away possessions?
  - ◆ Have they talked about planning to commit suicide?
  - ◆ Have they attempted suicide in the past?
  - ◆ Have they shown efforts to learn about means of death or rehearse fatal acts and precautions to avoid rescue?
  - ◆ Do they have the means (e.g., gun, pills, rope) to complete their intent?
- Questions to use for someone who may be suffering from mental retardation:
  - ◆ Did they learn to sit up, crawl or walk later than other children?
  - ◆ Did they learn to talk later or have trouble speaking?
  - ◆ Do they find it hard to remember things?
  - ◆ Do they have trouble understanding how to pay for things?
  - ◆ Do they have trouble understanding social rules?
  - ◆ Do they have trouble seeing the consequences of their actions?

- ◆ Do they have trouble solving problems?
- ◆ Do they have trouble thinking logically?
- Questions to use for someone who may be exhibiting psychotic behavior:
  - ◆ Do they show signs of sedation, depressed respiration, a semi-hypnotic state, contracted pupils, depressed reflexes and/or intoxication?
  - ◆ Have they shown a lack of pain or fatigue?
  - ◆ Are they showing signs of lack of coordination, restlessness, excitement, disorientation, confusion and/or delirium?
  - ◆ Are they experiencing hallucinations, pupil dilation, increased blood pressure and body temperature, depressed appetite, and on occasion, nausea and chills?
- Questions to use for someone who may be exhibiting signs of dementia:
  - ◆ Are there signs of memory loss that affect their job skills?
  - ◆ Are they experiencing difficulty in performing familiar tasks?
  - ◆ Are they having problems with language?
  - ◆ Are they disorientated to time and place?
  - ◆ Are they showing signs of poor or decreased judgment?
  - ◆ Are they having problems with abstract thinking?
  - ◆ Do they place items in inappropriate places?
  - ◆ Are they showing signs of rapid changes in mood or behavior?
  - ◆ Have there been dramatic changes in personality?
  - ◆ Are they experiencing a loss of initiative?

### 3. Historical Information.

Has something like this happened before? If so what happened and what were the results? Have they walked away from other care facilities before and where were they found? Is there a history of runaway?

### 4. Outside Influences

What are the outside influences that could hamper or change the outcome of the search? In urban areas, weather and terrain are less of a factor than in the wilderness, but can be if they are severe. More likely are those related to the density of people and buildings. The fewer people looking for the missing subject, such as what happens during night searches where residents are inside, the fewer chances of him being seen. Similarly, the more buildings/streets/houses there are, the more places that must be searched.

### 5. Past and Current Search Activity

Once the subject was noticed missing:

- What efforts have you (the reporting party) done to find subject? This will help determine if search areas have been missed or require additional re-searching.
- What efforts have others done to find subject? What searching is still going on? Again, this will help determine if search areas have been missed or

require additional researching and who else might still be out there looking for the missing subject.

Note: Most people are poor at estimating distances and tend to give unreliable information. When interviewing two people they tend to overestimate. The most reliable information on locations and distance should be plotted on a map.

6. Time When Noticed Missing

- When did you notice them missing?
- What were you (the reporting party) doing or what activities were you engaged in prior to the time you noticed them missing? This question can be revealing because there can be a considerable difference from the time they were reported missing and the actual time they were last seen.

7. Time Since Last Seen

- When was the last time they were seen and what were they doing?
- When was the last time they had medication?
- When was the last time they had sleep and for how long?

Note that questions require an estimate of time can produce a variety of responses. Make use of “activity association” to estimate time such as: What program was on television at the time?; Was the sun just starting to going down?

8. Sensitive Questions

Some questions may be sensitive. So before asking you may state “The next set of questions may be sensitive, but we need to ask them to better understand the missing subjects state of mind or possible impairments. Example questions asked about adolescents:

- How are they handling puberty ("the hormones on the run")?
- What are their sex habits?
- Do they have a girl/boy friend?
- Have they ever sneaked away to see their boy/girl friend?

Some questions may be sensitive when asked about adults:

- Could they be experiencing postpartum (after birth) depression?
- Are they going through menopause and how are they handling it? Are they taking any medications?
- Have they been diagnosed or do they suspect that the subject is experiencing dementia or Alzheimer’s disease?
- Has there been any past criminal behavior?
- Is there a possibility the missing subject is having an affair?
- Is the marriage heading for a potential breakup?

Some questions may be sensitive when asked about people of any age:

- Could the missing subject use or have a problem with drugs or alcohol?



## 9. Final Questions

Probably the most important questions are saved until the end. They are:

- Is there anything we should know that would help us locate the missing subject?
- Where do you think they are?

Both questions at the end of an interview produce surprising results. Asking if there is anything else and then pausing will give the interviewee time to ponder and usually come up with one or two tidbits that could prove important. The response to the last question can be very accurate, as the following example illustrates:

A German couple came to visit a brother in the United States. The visiting wife went for a walk and did not come back. Law enforcement was called and a very difficult interview was conducted with the husband that was interpreted by the brother. It was found that the wife was depressed and had a heart condition. It was felt, however, that the brother was altering the questions and responses for some reason. An additional non-law enforcement interpreter was brought in and coached on the questions to be asked. The new interpreter eventually took a walk with the husband and asked the final question “Where do you think your wife is”? The response was very detailed. The husband stated that he thought his wife would walk for awhile, find a secluded spot along a road, smoke one cigarette, take all of her heart medication and lay down to die. Later that day some sightseers spotted the missing wife alive but unresponsive, just barely visible from an overlook. Upon investigation of the site a single butt of a German brand of cigarettes was found along with the empty blister pack of her heart medications.

The above story illustrates that those closest to the missing subject may have the best insight into the missing subject and what they really think has happened. At the beginning of an interview there may be many possible scenarios as to why a person is missing and the hope is that the outcome will be simple. After interviewing for a few hours, however, the interviewee may come down to reality and may even be resigned to the fact the final outcome may not be so simple. The strengthening of the rapport established over this time may help the interviewee to open up. With that realization the interviewee may be able describe, sometime in great detail, what they think happened to the missing subject.

In some situations, the interviewee’s answers to the questions may seem vague or untruthful. Unfortunately, some caregivers at nursing homes tend not to give straight answers for fear of punishment for neglecting the patient and allowing them to wander away. It is wise to have a certain level of suspicion but do not let on or show it. Asking the same question a different way later on in the interview will confirm or alleviate this suspicion. People under stress get easily confused and may give two different responses to the same question and not realize it. In an interrogation of a suspected criminal, the idea is to trip up the suspect. The early rapport building questions during an interrogation are designed to establish the interviewee’s truth response mode. If, during a missing

person interview, it is felt that the interviewee is being less than truthful, it may be necessary to bring in law enforcement personnel skilled in interrogation to discover the truth.

### **Additional Considerations in Interviewing**

#### **Body language (The Study of Kinesics):**

Depending on the source, it can be said that anywhere from 50 to 80% of communication is non-verbal, through body language. Posture, hand gestures, eye contact, licking of the lips, and fidgeting in a chair are all examples of where to look for this non-verbal communication. How to read body language will not be covered here. There are several books and other resources on the subject. Be aware of the interviewee's body language and record what the interviewer sees. This may help later when there is a need to determine truthfulness. The interviewer's own body language, of course, should convey understanding, trust and professionalism.

#### **How Long Will the Interview Last?**

A good interview can take as much as two hours, in order to be thorough and to take advantage of tangent questions. The time should be broken up into a short interview to obtain initial information that will be passed on to search management, followed by the longer more in depth interview. This being the case, tell the interviewee up front that this activity will take this long and that there will be frequent breaks to gather up thoughts and make use of the restroom or obtain refreshments. The first interviewee will generate lists of others to interview and each person could conceivably take another two hours. Investigation staff will need to gear up to manage more interviews and interview teams.

When is a good time to stop the interview? A good time is when you have exhausted the prepared list of questions. When sufficient crucial information has been gathered it can be transmitted to the search planners during a break. If a particularly hot item of information becomes apparent, then stop briefly and transmit the information immediately:

Example: At the start of a search for an elderly walkaway from a care home, searchers were told that the missing subject uses a cane to walk. Through the use of tangent questions during the interview of the reporting party, it was determined that if the subject lost or dropped the cane he would fall and that he did not have the upper body strength to get up. The interview was interrupted and the information transmitted to the field. Searchers were then advised that they should look for someone lying down or walking. Indeed, the missing subject was found lying down after he lost his footing and cane. His first words were "I fell and can't get up".

Inevitably, after reviewing the interview data with others, there will be more questions. Let the interviewee know that you will be back with more questions and set up a place to meet again. Have someone stay with the interviewee so they won't get away, but also to have someone to talk to and perhaps continue with an informal interview.

Lists of others to interview will be generated and each person could conceivably take another two hours. Investigation staff will need to gear up to manage more interviews and interview teams.

### **On the Use of Tape Recorders:**

Many interviewers are not able to quickly write down responses to questions and may want to use a tape recorder. Keep in mind when recording conversations - to many people a tape recorder is intimidating. Once you place it on the table the interviewee may not be as forthcoming with full or truthful responses even if you ask if it is OK to tape the interview. The alternative is to not tell the interviewee that the conversation will be recorded. This brings up other issues. The interviewers need to be aware of the laws governing recorded conversations. Many law enforcement jurisdictions allow recording as long as one party is aware of the recording or if one party is under the direction and is an agent of law enforcement (**Reference: California Penal Code Section 633 and 633.5**). Further, as noted before most interviews are lengthy and most tape recorders will not record continuously without having to stop and turn the tape over. Most recorders have an end of tape audible signal. If caught by the interviewee, the interviewer's credibility and rapport will be gone or severely diminished, which will cause irreparable damage.

### **Dealing with Parents of Missing Children:**

It goes without saying that the parent of a lost or missing child is going through a lot of emotions. Feelings of shock and horror, denial and doubt, anger and aggression, agitation and restlessness, guilt, as well as crying are just a few that are common. These emotions are directed at themselves, other family and friends as well as the interviewer. It is important for the interviewer to understand these emotions and how to deal with them. Voicing concern and understanding is important. It is very difficult to be empathetic unless the interviewer has personally experienced a lost child but a sympathetic "I understand how you feel" voice is appropriate.

Obviously, the parent under a lot of emotional stress will have a tough time focusing on the task of being interviewed. If it is noticed that they are not focused, point it out by saying something like: "I know this is difficult, but in order for us to help locate your child we need to get through these questions. Let's see if we can answer a few more and we'll take a break." As noted earlier, they will also have difficulty understanding and answering complex questions. Break the questions down if necessary.

Another problem that will arise occurs with divorces or separated parents. Accusations will be hurled from both sides in order to place blame or cause hurt. One ex-spouse may be hiding something from the other. Do not play referee. Separate the parents into different rooms with different interviewers.

A good guideline when dealing with parents of missing children can be found in “When Your Child is Missing: A Family Survival Guide” written by Shay Bilchik, Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention, which can be found online at <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/pubs/childmissing/contents.html>

### **Document, Document, Document:**

Take notes (or use an interview form to record the conversation)! It is imperative to take good notes for several reasons. The most important is to pass on the information obtained in the interview to search management or the responsible law enforcement agency, so that they can review and evaluate it, and ultimately use it to improve the search. Another reason is to keep track of who talked to whom and when. Still another is for the legal record in case the missing subject case turns out to be a crime. Be aware that things said and documented in the interview can be used in court. This being the case the interview records should be written up as soon as possible while the information is fresh. Both the questions asked by the interviewer and the interviewee’s responses should be included in the report. Be careful not to put in subjective information such as “they seemed uneasy” that could be subject to interpretation and questioning by a lawyer

### **Neighborhood Door-to-Door Canvassing and Interviewing:**

Another large generator of clues is the technique of door-to-door canvassing and interviewing in residential neighborhoods. Door-to-door interviews may help answer the question “Did the missing subject pass by this way?” The task is simple. Two-to-three person teams go down both sides of a street, stopping at each house and asking questions. Interviewing, however, becomes very labor intensive, taking as much as 15 minutes per house, depending on how on what level (or type) of search used. There can be as many as 250 to 300 single-family residences in a suburban neighborhood and possibly several hundred more in multi-family high-density housing. Doing the math, it is easy to see that there is a need for extensive resources.

The level of thoroughness in a neighborhood canvass search are defined as follows:

**Level I:** The most thorough and detailed. Consists of an interview with all residents. This is followed by a complete search, with permission of the residents, of the front and back yards and any out buildings. A request is also made of residents to complete interior search. (With the permission of the residents, an interior search may be made by the field team.) In a suspected abduction, the interior search should be conducted by the interview team, preferably without the residents present.

**Level II:** Consists of an interview with all residents and a request of the resident to search their property and yards.

**Level III:** Residents are not contacted or are absent during the search. An information flyer can be left at the door.

Have a plan on how to draw up the assignments. Have the appropriate maps that will best describe the neighborhood to be searched. This may be a combination of street maps and assayer maps showing the individual property and addresses.

Canvassing of neighborhoods should be done when it is safe. Knocking on doors and disturbing the residents at one o'clock in the morning may make it difficult to get positive responses to your questions (assuming they even answer the door at 1 AM). It is also advisable to have a Safety Officer assigned for the door-to-door interviewing. The Safety Officer looks out for the welfare and safety of the searchers. A working knowledge of the neighborhoods to be searched may prevent someone from getting hurt. For example, a searcher may inadvertently walk up and knock on the door of a "crack house". The Safety Officer should be from the local law enforcement agency, if possible. Some agencies have a policy of only having uniformed officers conduct door-to-door searches. They might be accompanied by a volunteer searcher.

Upon knocking on the door clearly announce politely who you are, who you represent (police/sheriff department) and why you are there. Searchers should look professional by wearing some sort of clean uniforms and carry identification cards. There is no need to carry full backpack, and wear climbing helmets, multiple radio harnesses or other essentials normally required in a wilderness search environment. Clean the mud off boots, clean shirt and pants will add toward the professional look.

Find out, clearly define and brief teams on what authority team members have to enter private property to check out back yards or out buildings.

Safety briefing instructions are the same as what is called officer safety training for law enforcement deputies when approaching a residence in response to detail call. The information should include:

1. Be alert when approaching a house. Be aware of your surroundings. When you go up to a house, look at what and who is around you.
2. Have an escape plan. If something happens, how are you going to retreat? Who needs to be contacted?
3. Listen at the door before knocking. Do you hear people talking? Are you going to be interrupting a domestic dispute? Is there a dog barking behind the door that may jump out when the door is open.
4. Do not stand directly in front of the door. No one wants to be in the line of fire in case some irate citizen decides to shoot a bullet through the door and ask questions later. On the other hand, no one should appear to be trying to conceal him or herself either. Just stand to the side.
5. Knock on the door hard. Do not use the doorbell. Knocking commands authority. Do not knock on the door with your flashlight
6. Stand far enough away to encourage the occupant to come out
7. Do not go in the house, even if invited. Ask the interviewee to step outside.

8. One member of the team should place themselves in front of the door. They will ask all of the questions and give the resident one person to focus on. The other members of the team should stand to the side recording the responses to the questions, observing the inside of the residence and being alert to safety issues.
9. When leaving, back away until the person is inside and closed the door
10. If the interviewee is uncooperative, thank them for their time, make a note in your log to come back, if necessary and advise the Safety Officer.
11. Additionally, a radio person should be standing at the sidewalk observing the interview at the door. A prearranged panic signal from the interviewers will alert the radio operator to summon help.

Interviewing requires good interpersonal skills. Getting used to the task requires practice. Field team practice scenarios should be set up in basic training on how to go door-to-door and ask questions. Use of forms and a list of appropriate questions will help alleviate the tension and anxiety felt by some search team members. A standard interview dialog should consists of:

1. Identifying yourself and state your affiliation clear and with authority: “Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ with the Sheriff’s search and rescue team and we are looking for Jane Doe who is missing. Can you help us?” (Note: Have identification ready to show)
2. Determine if they have seen the missing subject: “Do you know Jane? Have you seen her?”
3. Compile a list of possible witness: “Who lives here? Were they home at (time)? Was there someone else at home when you/they were gone?”

Interview teams should have a picture of the missing subject available. Have a simple “lie test” question available to corroborate the interviewee’s statements. The interviewers need to have accurate information, but some simple piece of the subject’s description can be held back or left out of release to the public and used as the “lie test”. The information should be distinctive enough such as the color of clothing or a piece of jewelry that if the subject were actually seen would corroborate the sighting. Another example might be the subject’s height and weight. As the information interview yields a potential sighting, ask the lie test question “Was he tall and thin?” If the answer is, “Yeah, that was him!” and the interviewer knows the subject was short and over weight, the reported sighting can be discounted. This makes it easier to weed out false reports and the resident from just “parroting” the information given to them by the interviewers.

Finally, depending on the level of the search, ask the resident if the team can check their backyard and outbuildings and if the resident can check the interior of the residence. Try not to take the resident’s word that they have searched their own property. It may or may not be accurate, or his idea of a thorough search may be looking out the back window. Always ask permission to search the property yourself. If he is reluctant you can ask him to assist you, pointing out possible hiding places or clue locations.

A useful tool for documentation is an Urban Interview Log (see *SAR 132*). An urban interview log lists:

- All the addresses the teams went to
- Who you talked to
- The phone numbers
- Whether anyone was home
- Whether any pertinent information (clues) were obtained.

The log also lists places like attractive hazards around that particular area such as abandoned cars, out-buildings, and places that you did not get a chance to check but should be checked later. If the incident is a suspected abduction, it might be a good idea to list the license plates of all vehicles in the neighborhood for future reference.

Occasionally, a resident may become belligerent, refuse to talk to the teams or even chase them off. For this situation, back out and apologize for the interruption. Note the address, the circumstances to be past on to sworn personnel can contact them

It is important to find out what is out of the ordinary, but it is equally important to consider what is NOT out of the ordinary, or what is normal for the neighborhood. Often this information can be obtained by interviewing people who are in the neighborhood on a regular basis. They may have unwittingly seen or heard something pertinent regarding the missing subject. They may include:

1. Mail carriers
2. Fed-Ex and UPS drivers
3. Newspaper delivery persons
4. Utility workers, trash collectors, city workers
5. Familiar walkers, joggers, neighbors in the area
6. Bus drivers, taxi drivers

Handouts or “leave behind” flyers are an excellent idea (see *Attachment “Lisa Norrell*). They will encourage the public to continue looking for the subject and provide information on who to contact if the subject is seen or found.

While walking from door to door the teams will inevitably come across people on the street. These people should also be interviewed. Simply putting up a hand, making eye contact and say “Excuse me, may I have a moment of your time”. Ask them where they have been, what they saw, and conditions in the area, other people they saw. Have a map available to confirm routes traveled. Give them a handout and ask them to report anything that they see or might remember about the missing subject.

A technique to accelerate a door-to-door interview is to stop at certain houses that look like someone has been home all day. Homes with toys in the yard are a good clue that a mother would have been home most of the day.

Another source of information are people who participate in a Neighborhood Watch Program. These programs motivate neighbors to be alert for strange or abnormal incidents and activities in the neighborhood. Find out who is the point-of-contact and how they can be reached.

### **Post-Search Interviews:**

If the outcome of the search is positive, that is, the missing subject was found alive, then it is a good idea to conduct a post-search interview. Consider what the subject has been through. It may not be appropriate to talk to them right away due to medical or mental conditions. Try to get it first hand from the subject, however, not from a third party that could misinterpret a response.

Once a time and place has been established, try to find out:

- Where they went
- How long where they mobile
- What they did
- Why they did what they did
- How they survived
- Did they see the searchers, helicopters, signals, or hear their name called?
- Was there anyone else with the subject and what happened to them?
- Confirm any possible clues found or items dropped and not found

Plot the information on a map and show:

- Where they were found
- Where they got lost or disoriented
- The direction and paths traveled

Other information to obtain:

- Who made the find?
- What was the find environment?

This information can then be used to confirm how effective the search planning was done and the effectiveness of resources such as dogs or helicopter. The information gathered can also be used for statistics and future training

### **Telephone Interviews:**

It may be necessary to conduct interviews over the telephone or even a radio in some circumstances. The important thing to keep in mind is that all of the interview and investigation techniques discussed thus far apply to telephone interviews. You do however lose the ability to:



- Watch body language, that 50% of non-verbal communication.
- Show and discuss maps or diagrams to clarify information
- Obtain physical evidence or items that could be helpful in the investigation

Keeping the above in mind the interviewer needs to:

- Be a good listener.
- Be more descriptive and colorful in questioning. This will require more time. Use plain language they understand.
- Have marked-up maps faxed or, transmitted by other electronic means, or by messenger
- Slow your rate of speech. Many people subconsciously interpret speech by listening and reading lips. When the ability to read lips is gone the speech will have to be slowed down. This also means slowing down more than would be necessary due to the stress factors.
- Lower your voice pitch. Due to the design of telephones the higher frequencies are filtered out. Lowering the vocal tone will prevent this problem.
- Speak directly into the telephone transmitter to prevent muffled and unintelligible speech
- Use their name a lot. This conveys to them that you care and are paying attention
- Listen for overtones in the interviewee's voice. This is like reading between the lines and helps take the place of body language.
- Listen more intently to the responses to questions.
- Listen to your own voice. Does it convey warmth, sincerity, confidence, interest, and professionalism?

Documenting phone interviews is the same as noted before. There may only be one interviewer to record the information. Additional interviewers can listen in on an extension phone or use a speakerphone, however, this can be intimidating to the interviewee. If cell phones are used make sure the batteries are charged and/or extra batteries are available. It is disruptive if there is a dropped call or several breaks to change out batteries.

### **Interview Practice**

In order to learn and reinforce any new skill you need to practice. A simple technique to learn interview skills is to set up simple scenarios between three people - one interviewee and two interviewers. An example scenario would be:

The interviewee (who will also be the reporting party) is told to pick an elderly relative or friend that they know and can describe both physically and mentally. The situation is described as follows: The elderly subject came to visit for the weekend. The interviewee left alone to go to the grocery store for about an hour. Upon returning home the elderly subject is missing. The circumstances as to why they are missing are unknown.

The interviewers conduct an interview using a prepared list of questions and try to build a profile of the missing subject. After about 20 to 30 minutes stop the interview and discuss the following:

1. Note how many questions (including tangent questions) were completed in the given time period.
2. What did you learn about the missing subject?
3. What did you learn about the interview process?
4. What questions can you add?
5. What would you do differently?

Switch roles, change the scenario, make the missing subject a juvenile, and discuss the results.

### **Field Interviews**

As field teams progress on their search assignments they will come upon people living, working and/or traveling within the search area. Specific search assignments might be established to set up a trail/road block for the sole purpose of interviewing persons going into or out of the search area. In all cases searchers should take the opportunity to stop and interview these people to elicit information that could be useful in the search. It can be as simple as showing a picture of the subject and asking if they have seen the person. Some procedures and hints on field interviewing are as follows:

The location of the field interviews can be any frequently traveled routes into and out of the search area. If it is the specific assignment is to be a trail/road block set it up in such a way as to make it difficult for the users to miss the interview team, but not so difficult as to impede two way traffic. Mark the area so it is easily seen as well. Enough personnel should be available to handle large volumes of traffic so as not to miss anyone with potential clues.

First, be selective on whom you interview and under what circumstances. People need to feel they are not threatened or inconvenienced. Searchers need to also feel they are safe. Take into account the time of day, the surroundings, and the urgency of the search. People who live in or frequent the area are usually the best bets. Again the information gathered is from those coming into and out of the area.

Second, approach the potential witness in a friendly manner and identify who you are and the purpose of the request to stop and answer some questions. If the witness is hesitant, explain that his/her cooperation is completely voluntary but may be very important to the success of the search. Explain the importance of relevant negatives as seeing no one at all in a given area may help us focus the search efforts.

Ask basic questions first:

- “Have you seen (or “Do you know”) this person?” (show a photo of the missing subject)
- How long have you been here?
- Would you have seen him if he was in this area?
- Who else might have seen him?
- Did you hear or see anything unusual?
- What did you notice along the way?

Record in your notebook all negative responses, as a record of places where the subject was NOT seen. If you get any kind of positive responses, ask more questions to find out what they know. If it seems that the information is particularly important, have an experienced interviewer meet the person, or have them go to base for a more complete interview. Collect the name, address, e-mail, home, work & cell phone numbers for future follow up or contact again. If a group of persons are being interviewed collect the contact information from at least two persons. Review the interview notes before releasing the witness. Be sure all witness information is legible, unambiguous, and complete. Double-check spelling of re-contact information. Also make sure the party knows how to contact the Investigations Unit (e.g., phone, e-mail, website) if they remember any additional information at a latter time.

Also document a brief description of the party(s) interviewed, for example: two adult males, one adult female, approx. ages, appearance (ethnic type, equipment that might stand out). In rare cases and at the direction of the incident command, take digitally photograph each person interviewed, with their permission.

If they ask you about what’s going on, be careful to only give them non-sensitive information about the subject and the conduct of the search. Do not give any information you find out to the media. Refer them to the Public Information Officer (PIO) at base.

### **Internet Web Search**

As technology and the information super highway advances so has its used in the investigation for a missing subject. Recent documented cases have shown that pure investigation on the internet have resulted in the location of missing subjects and have prevented undo waste of resources in the field. To illustrate:

A backcountry packer crew came across an abandoned campsite fully set up with a tent, sleeping bag, cooking area and proper food storage. A luggage tag inside of a bear canister revealed a name and contact information. A review of the backcountry permits confirmed that a Mr. Smith (name has been changed) did enter the area but was not technically overdue. The trail was non-existent due snow coverage at the time. Due to past experiences with abandoned sites of this nature the local authorities felt that a search was warranted.

That night, a Google™ search of the Internet revealed that Mr. Smith was an Information Technologies Professor at Lancaster University in England. Further searching uncovered his office phone number, of which his voice mail stated he

was still on holiday in the states. Using the Lancaster University phone directory that was listed on the Internet, Investigators were then able to contact Mr. Smith's co-workers to conduct interviews and determine the missing person's travel plans. The University web site also had a photograph of Mr. Smith. Sometime early in the morning investigations discovered that a co-worker had received an e-mail from the missing subject a few days earlier.

Investigators obtained Mr. Smith's e-mail address and sent him notification regarding the search efforts. He wrote back several days later to confirm his well being, and to note that he was in a near by town at the time.

Further interviewing of Mr. Smith concluded that he set up camp and spent one night. The morning of the second day he traveled to a nearby lookout point to "get my (his) bearings." He traveled along a nearby ridgeline for what turned into a short day hike. He attempted to re-trace his steps and he quickly realized that he had become disoriented. He spent sometime attempting to locate his camp, and after several hours of no success he decided to attempt to hike out. The bivied with little supplies the night. He states that he stumbled across a well-traveled trail and was able to exit on the 4th day. He than took a bus to the near by town.

As illustrated above, websites of employers can yield valuable information that can be exploited to resolve a missing person incident. Web sites of organizations the subject is known to be a member can also produce valuable information.

Additional sources of information can be found by just typing in the missing subjects name in a search engine (Google™, Yahoo™, etc.). Many people especially the young have established their own websites and post journals sometimes referred to as personal publishing or "blogs".

Blogs (also called web logs or weblogs) are a frequent, chronological publication of personal thoughts and web links. In simple terms, a blog is a web site, where a person writes content on an ongoing basis. As they add content to their blog, new posts are automatically positioned on top of previous posts, so a visitor can see "what's new." The visitor can leave comments or link to another blog or e-mail to others if they choose. A blog can be a personal diary, a daily pulpit, a collaborative space, a political soapbox, a breaking-news outlet, a collection of links, or one's own private thoughts. There are literally millions of them, in all shapes and sizes, and there are no real rules. A blog is often a combination of what's happening in someone's personal and business life as well as what is happening on the web--a kind of high-tech, hybrid diary/guide site. The trend has gained momentum with the introduction of automated published systems, most notably Google's Blogger™ at [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com) or [www.livejournal.com](http://www.livejournal.com). Thousands of individuals use services such as Blogger to simplify and accelerate the publishing process.

These personal websites will also include photos of themselves, names and photos of friends and family and even people they dislike. Journals can reveal the missing subjects inner most thoughts and help to further develop the subject profile.

### **Other Investigative Techniques**

In addition to interviewing, search management should consider other ways of gathering information about the incident, the subject and the environment in which the search will be conducted.

1. Records of the subject. These can include:

- Family photographs of the subject
- Yearbooks
- Medical reports
- School or work records
- Computer files
- E-Mails
- Credit card tracers,
- Video security camera records
- The subject's phone calls or answering machine recordings
- Missing clothing, shoes or personnel items
- Criminal records
- Automobile registration
- Sales receipts
- ATM withdrawals

The list can go on and on. Consider all the possibilities based on what you have found out about the subject.

2. Institution checks. Call all the likely public or private institutions the subject might wind up at, including:

- Hospitals
- Care centers
- Mental health facilities
- Jail
- Detox centers
- Battered women's shelters,
- Homeless shelters
- County Protective Services

Leave a description of the subject with the institution, in case they are admitted later.

3. Clues. Collect and analyze all clues discovered during the course of the search, including:

- Items found by searchers
- Canine alerts
- Human or vehicle tracks
- Eyewitness sightings
- Reported unusual noises or smells

Follow up on any pertinent clues.

4. Knowledgeable people. Use people who are familiar with the neighborhood or area to help you locate hiding places, attractive hazards, and popular gathering places. They can tell what is normal or abnormal about the area, who lives where, and general information that may be helpful in the search. They can include the police who patrol the area and other public employees who service the area. A good idea is to have them remain in the CP so they can instantly respond to questions that come up during the course of the search.

It is important to center the investigation, including the interviewing, in one functional section of the search management. Under ICS, normally, that would be the Planning/Intelligence Section. They can take all the information and correlate it with other information, so they don't miss something. Equally important, however, is for the Planning Section to pass on their analyses to the Operations Section so action can be taken immediately on vital information. There should be a continual flow of information between the two sections, so each knows what the other is doing.

## Summary:

The process of investigation and interviewing in a lost or missing person incident is a continual process of gathering information to better understand what the missing subject will do in a particular circumstance and plan how to make the best use of resources involved in the search effort. The success in the process relies on several factors. The points that must be stressed include.

- Understand that interviewing in a lost or missing incident differs from those conducted in the context of a standard law enforcement interview and interrogation.
- Interviews are in depth and designed to paint a mental picture of the missing subject.
- Interview everybody who has direct knowledge of the missing subject and/or direct knowledge of the circumstances leading up to the disappearance
- Besides gathering the basic descriptive information, expand the list to include the subject's:
  - Mobility and ability to travel
  - Ability to survive
  - Mind set and intent
  - Ability or tendency to respond
  - Likes and dislikes and what attracts their attention
  - Past and recent behavior and life history
- Understand that when conducting an interview you are building a rapport and your demeanor can make the difference in the amount and quality of the information received.
- Be a good listener.
- The location and setting of the interview is important to keep in mind to reduce the stress of the interviewee.
- Have a guideline or list of questions prepared prior to conducting a lost or missing person interview to keep the interview on track.
- Take advantage of tangent questions.
- Practice, Practice, Practice