

## Where to go for Help/Resources

### Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention – When Your Child is Missing: A Family Survival Guide

This guide was written by parents and family members who have experienced the disappearance of a child. It contains their combined advice concerning what you can expect when your child is missing, what you can do, and where you can go for help.

[http://www.missingkids.com/content/dam/ncmec/en\\_us/desktop/publications/pdf6a.pdf](http://www.missingkids.com/content/dam/ncmec/en_us/desktop/publications/pdf6a.pdf)

### Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network (RAINN)

RAINN is the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline (800.656.HOPE, [online.rainn.org](http://online.rainn.org) or [rainn.org/es](http://rainn.org/es)) in partnership with more than 1,000 local sexual assault service providers across the country and operates the DoD Safe Helpline for the Department of Defense.

<https://www.rainn.org/>

### Parents of Murdered Children, Inc. (POMC)

POMC provides support and assistance to all survivors of homicide victims through on-going emotional support, education, prevention, advocacy, and awareness.

<http://www.pomc.com/>

### National Center for Victims of Crime – Victim Connect

Victim Connect Resource Center is a referral helpline where victims can learn about their rights and options confidentially and compassionately.

<https://victimconnect.org/crime-resources/hate-crimes>

## Your FBI Victim Specialist

The FBI Victim Specialist assigned to your case is there to make sure you have information and support to help you get through this process. She or he will explain the criminal justice process, listen to your concerns, help you find available forms of assistance, and keep you updated on the status of the case. The Victim Specialist works for the FBI but is not an Agent. Instead, the Victim Specialist is often someone with a social work or counseling degree and experience working with young people and adults who have been victims of violent crime.

The Victim Specialist works as part of a team with the FBI Agent and employees from the U.S. Attorney's Office. While most of the discussions that you have with your Victim Specialist are confidential, there may be times when the Victim Specialist will need to share information you provide with other team members. If you have questions about limited confidentiality, you may contact your Victim Specialists for clarification. Generally, the Victim Specialist and the Agent will make every effort to protect your privacy.

## Important Contact Numbers

### FBI Victim Specialist:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### FBI Special Agent:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_



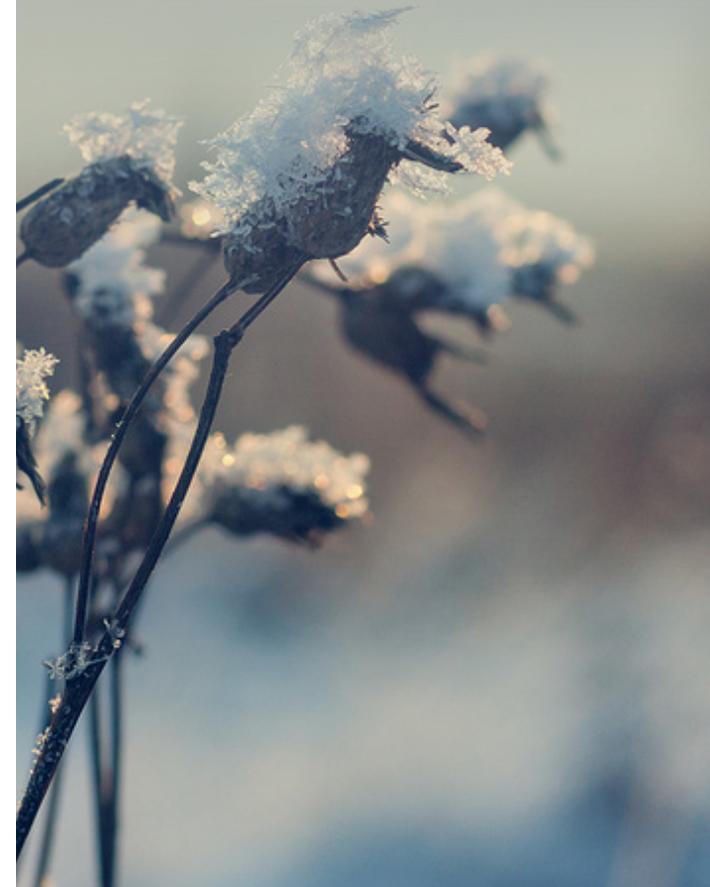
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Victim Services Division  
J. Edgar Hoover Building, Room 3329  
935 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20535  
(202) 324-3000  
[www.fbi.gov/resources/victim-services](http://www.fbi.gov/resources/victim-services)

*The opinions, findings and conclusions expressed in this brochure are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.*

U.S. Department of Justice  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Victim Services Division



# Cold Cases: You Are Not Forgotten



## What is a Cold Case?

Every investigation into a serious crime is important but every investigation also unfolds and proceeds differently. A cold case refers to a criminal investigation for which investigative leads have been exhausted. Any case can be inactive or go cold, but the following are common types of cold cases:

- Homicide
- Sexual Assault
- International Parental Abduction
- Kidnapping/Missing Child/Missing Adult
- Child Exploitation
- Civil Rights or Hate Crimes

These cases are not closed but are stalled because there is no evidence or insufficient evidence available that would help identify a perpetrator (known in the FBI as a subject). Sometimes there may be evidence but it is not enough to arrest or charge an individual. There are not always eye witnesses and sometimes eye witnesses are less than sure of what they saw or heard. Unlike television crime dramas, DNA evidence may not be available or cannot be matched to a subject.

New developments in cold cases may occur months or years after the crime. In some cases, there are no new developments. The passing of time can make it difficult for investigators to locate witnesses and subjects and for eye witnesses to accurately recall what they saw or heard. On the other hand, new investigative resources and forensic technologies can make it possible to test evidence and develop new leads. Subjects or other individuals with knowledge about a crime may decide to provide information or accept responsibility. A cold case does NOT mean that victims are or should be forgotten

## What Happens if There is a New Development?

An FBI Victim Specialist or Special Agent will reach out to you to provide information on the new development. Any new development may bring back a wide range of emotions. Your Victim Specialist can provide information and support. You should let the Victim Specialist and Special Agent know how often you want to communicate, even when there are no current developments.

## DNA and Other Evidence

DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) is in biological material to include semen, blood, sweat, saliva, urine, hair, and skin tissue. It may be retrieved from various sources such as weapons, clothing, furniture, or on a victim's body. If a perpetrator's biological material has come into contact with one of the sources, there may be DNA.

The length of time it takes to test DNA retrieved in a criminal case varies. Crime laboratories have to prioritize the testing of DNA samples based on factors such as whether or not there is a pending criminal trial, how many DNA tests are currently backlogged, staffing levels, and funding. As DNA technology advances, requests for testing DNA may increase, for example, in cold cases and appeals cases. DNA evidence has led to new leads and resolution in many cases over the last 40 years. DNA technology and other types of forensic technology continue to evolve and improve.

Sometimes other evidence or witness statements are obtained or re-examined, which may result in a new case development. Other types of evidence may include documents, surveillance videos, confessions, connections to similar crimes, etc. The Victim Specialist and Special Agent assigned to your case will inform you of what evidence led to the new development in your case.

## Prosecution

If DNA or other evidence or leads obtained during the investigation results in the identification, arrest, and filing of charges against a subject or subjects, you will be notified at the earliest possible time. Once someone has been charged with the crime and indicted, the U.S. Attorneys' Office or local district attorney will be responsible for prosecuting the case in federal court or state court. Your Victim Specialist will introduce you to the Victim Witness Coordinator or Victim Advocate in the district attorneys' office to ensure you understand the court process and your rights with regard to the criminal justice process.

The new evidence or lead may help tell the story of what happened, even if a prosecution may not be possible. This can happen if the development occurred after the statute of limitations expired. This means a subject cannot be prosecuted if a particular time period imposed by law, for that particular type of crime, has passed. In other cases, the subject has been identified, but may be dead or serving a lengthy prison sentence for another serious crime.

## Coping with the Emotional Impact

Navigating the unknown during a cold case investigation for a long period of time may be scary, confusing, frustrating, upsetting, emotionally draining, and a whole range of other emotions. Likewise, reopening a cold case to review evidence and/or because a subject(s) has been identified can bring about a wide range of emotions, that may provide relief or feel like an intrusion into your current life. It is important to know that your feelings may vary throughout the life of the case and there is no right or wrong way to feel about any good or bad news you may receive during the investigation. Your FBI Victim Specialist can listen and help you to find counseling in your area.

## Know Your Rights

Under the *Victims' Rights and Restitution Act (VRRRA)*, 34 U.S.C. § 20141, victims are entitled:

- To be notified they have been the victim of a federal crime;
- To be informed of the place where they may receive medical and social services;
- To be informed of public and private programs available for counseling, treatment, and other support services;
- To receive reasonable protection from a suspected offender and persons acting in concert with or at the behest of the suspected offender;
- To know the status of the investigation of the crime, to the extent it is appropriate and it will not interfere with the investigation;
- To have personal property being held for evidentiary purposes maintained in good condition and returned as soon as it is no longer needed for evidentiary purposes.

If someone is charged and indicted with a crime, you may have additional rights related to the prosecution, sentencing, and incarceration of the individual. The U.S. Attorney or district attorney handling your case will inform you of those rights.