
Meritus School of Osteopathic Medicine

Missing Persons Policy

Policy Statement and Purpose

In accordance with Section 488 of the **Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008** (20 U.S.C. § 1092(j)), the **Meritus School of Osteopathic Medicine (MSOM)** is committed to the safety, well-being, and security of its students. This policy establishes MSOM's official procedures for responding to reports of students who are believed to be missing. Prompt reporting and investigation are essential to ensure swift action and proper coordination with local law enforcement and other relevant parties.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Define what constitutes a missing student.
- Outline clear reporting channels and responsibilities.
- Ensure timely notifications to confidential contacts and appropriate authorities.
- Protect student privacy while prioritizing safety.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- **All students enrolled at MSOM.**
- **All MSOM faculty, staff, and students** who may become aware of a potential missing student.
- **School administrators**, including Campus Security and the Office of Student Affairs, who are involved in the notification and investigation process.

Definitions

- **Missing Student:** A currently enrolled student who has not been located within 24 hours of being reported absent from MSOM or their on-campus residence under circumstances that are inconsistent with their usual patterns of behavior and where reasonable concern for their safety exists.
- **Campus Housing:** Any residential facility owned, leased, operated, or otherwise controlled by MSOM that provides housing to students as part of their enrollment.

- **Confidential Contact:** A person designated by the student, in addition to any general emergency contact, to be notified specifically if the student is determined to be missing. This individual may be a parent, guardian, relative, friend, or any other trusted person.
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Student Notification and Contact Designation

- During the **housing application process** and/or during student orientation or enrollment, MSOM students residing in campus housing will be informed in writing of their option to designate up to **3 confidential contacts**.
 - These contacts are maintained confidentially and will be accessible only to authorized campus officials and law enforcement personnel as part of a missing person investigation.
 - Students may update their emergency and confidential contact information at any time via the **Student Portal** or by contacting the **Office of the Registrar**.
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Reporting a Missing Student

Any member of the MSOM community, including faculty, staff, students, or visitors, who believes a student may be missing should take **immediate action** by notifying:

- **Campus Security:** 8122
- **Office of Student Affairs:** 240-313-9602 and studentaffairs@msom.org

If the report is initially received by a faculty or staff member who is **not a designated official**, it must be **immediately referred to Campus Security** without delay. Prompt reporting helps initiate early response efforts.

Response Procedures

1. Preliminary Investigation (Within 24 Hours)

Upon receiving a report of a potentially missing student, **Campus Security** will initiate a preliminary investigation to determine the student's location and well-being. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Contacting the student via phone, email, and text.
- Visiting the student's assigned residence and speaking with roommates or neighbors.
- Checking class attendance and academic activity.
- Reviewing meal card use or electronic access logs.
- Speaking with instructors, friends, or classmates.

If the student is not located within **24 hours**, or if there is compelling evidence of risk prior to that timeframe, the student will be **officially classified as missing**.

2. Missing Person Notifications

If the preliminary investigation determines the student is missing, MSOM will notify the following parties no later than **24 hours after the student is determined to be missing**:

- The **student's confidential contact**, if designated.
 - The **local law enforcement agency** with jurisdiction, regardless of the student's age or contact designation.
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3. Ongoing Coordination and Support

- **Campus Security** will continue to coordinate with **local law enforcement**, providing any relevant information that may assist in locating the student.
 - The **Office of Student Affairs** will:
 - Serve as the primary liaison for the student's family.
 - Coordinate any internal communications regarding the missing person case.
 - Provide counseling and support services to students affected by the situation.
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Responsibilities

- **Campus Security**:
 - Lead authority for receiving reports and conducting initial investigations.
 - Responsible for timely notification to local law enforcement.
 - Maintains official incident reports and documentation.
 - **Office of Student Affairs**:
 - Manages confidential and emergency contact records.
 - Communicates with families and supports affected students.
 - Ensures student rights and privacy are protected throughout the process.
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Record-Keeping and Confidentiality

- All **confidential contact and emergency contact information** will be stored in a **secured student information system** and will be accessible only to designated personnel.

- Information shared in the context of a missing student investigation will be treated with **strict confidentiality**, and used solely for locating the student or for notification purposes as required by law.