



PROTECTING MISSING PERSONS LIVING WITH COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENTS

While it may be impossible to prevent people with cognitive impairments from going missing, it is critical for the missing person to be located as quickly as possible to protect the 'at-risk' person from being harmed.

WHO IS AN 'AT-RISK' PERSON?

The definition of an at-risk person generally refers to a person, living with medical, cognitive, mental health or physical conditions. These make the person unable to care for themselves, unable to protect themselves, or cause them to behave in ways that are potentially dangerous.

Persons 'at-risk' may include those living with:

- Alzheimer's disease or dementia
- Autism
- Acquired brain injury
- Mental health condition

Police services across the country offer two programs that are designed to provide help in emergency situations where the missing loved one lives with cognitive impairments. The first program is the Vulnerable Persons Registry and the second, is known as Project Lifesaver.

1. THE VULNERABLE PERSONS REGISTRY

The Vulnerable Persons Registry (VPR) is an initiative that involves local police services, community agencies, vulnerable persons and their caregivers. The program allows vulnerable persons or their caregivers to voluntarily submit information to a database that can be accessed in an emergency, such as when one goes missing.

Examples of behaviours that may be displayed by vulnerable persons include:

- Habit of wandering
- The inability to communicate
- Fascinations or attractions (water, construction sites, etc.)
- Unusual social responses (fear of strangers, aggression, bad reactions to some sensory stimuli)

such as bright lights, loud noises, etc.)

WHO CAN REGISTER A VULNERABLE PERSON?

The vulnerable person, their caregiver, or anyone with a legal authority over the vulnerable person may register them with the VPR.

To have a loved one added to the registry, simply visit the police service in the area where the vulnerable person lives and complete a form. For convenience, most police services have online forms.

INFORMATION REQUESTED WHEN REGISTERING WITH THE VPR

When registering the vulnerable person, the types of information needed may include:

- Full name (i.e., family name and given name)
- Address (street, city, country and postal code)
- Date of birth
- Physical description (including description of scars, marks, tattoos, etc.)
- Contact information for the caregiver, doctor, or psychiatrist
- Details of any special needs (e.g., medications)
- Best method to approach the person
- Objects or areas that hold special appeal to the missing person
- Strategies used to calm the person down in the past
- Locations visited often
- History of going missing and where located

In addition, a photo is required. The best photo to provide is one similar to a passport or identification photo that shows the vulnerable person's face.

USING INFORMATION IN THE VPR



When a person registered with the VPR is in an emergency situation, police can access the database to obtain critical information about them. Although the database can only be accessed by police, it may be necessary to share information with other first responders in an emergency situation.

If the vulnerable person is in crisis and needs police assistance, information in the registry is used to quickly and effectively respond to the situation. By using the details of vulnerable person's condition, history and behaviours, the goal is to provide the best possible outcome for the vulnerable loved one.

UPDATING/REMOVING INFORMATION ON THE VPR

The individual registering a vulnerable person will be asked to provide their contact information in order to receive regular reminders to update any details that may have changed over time.

Information contained in the registry can be modified as needed or removed entirely. Generally, you will be asked to create a login when completing the registration process to allow access to the record. Information should also be provided about removing the entry.

There is *NO COST* to register a loved one with the Vulnerable Person Registry.

Looking for more information,
visit <https://www.vulnerablepersonsregistry.ca>

2. PROJECT LIFESAVER

Project Lifesaver's goal is to increase the chance of finding the 'at-risk' person in the shortest time possible. The program is open to those who are at risk of wandering or running away due to a reduced cognitive ability.

Individuals registered with Project Lifesaver wear a wristband that sends out a continuous unique FM radio frequency-based signal. If the wearer goes missing, trained police use specialized equipment to locate the missing person's signal and to locate the individual.



REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN PROJECT LIFESAVER

As with the VPR, participants are required to be living in an area where the police service has contracted with Project Lifesaver. As well, the participant must have a caregiver who is responsible for them 24-hours a day.

ROLE OF CAREGIVERS

One of the reasons why participants need a responsible caregiver is so they can test the device on a daily basis and confirm it is working properly.

It is the responsibility of the caregiver to notify police immediately if the participant goes missing. The participant is also entered into the Vulnerable Person Registry so critical information is on file with the police.

COST OF PROJECT LIFESAVER

Before purchasing the wristband, people being registered with Project Lifesaver have to go through a screening process to make sure they qualify for the program. In some locations, there is a monthly maintenance fee.

To learn more about Project Lifesaver and associated costs, please consult your local police service or <https://projectlifesaver.org/>

Evaluate this Information Sheet

This fact sheet was created as part of Victims and Survivors of Crime Week 2023. Ontario's Missing Adults wishes to acknowledge funding received from the Department of Justice – Victims Fund.

The theme this year is the Power of Collaboration. Your feedback is important to us. Please take a few minutes to evaluate this information sheet by clicking [here](#).