

**RCW 68.50.320 Procedures for investigating missing persons—**

**Availability of files.** When a person reported missing has not been found within thirty days of the report, or at any time the investigating agency suspects criminal activity to be the basis of the victim being missing, the sheriff, chief of police, county coroner or county medical examiner, or other law enforcement authority initiating and conducting the investigation for the missing person shall: (1) File a missing person's report with the Washington state patrol missing and unidentified persons unit; (2) initiate the collection of DNA samples from the known missing person and their family members for nuclear and mitochondrial DNA testing along with the necessary consent forms; (3) ask the missing person's family or next of kin to give written consent to contact the dentist or dentists of the missing person and request the person's dental records; and (4) enter the case into the national crime information center system through the Washington state patrol electronic database. Upon knowledge from the national crime information center system, the Washington state patrol's crime information center, or similar or subsequent authority, that a person in custody at a jail, or being released from custody, is the subject of a missing person's report, the jail shall notify the agency of original jurisdiction for the missing person's report.

The missing person's dentist or dentists shall provide diagnostic quality copies of the missing person's dental records or original dental records to the sheriff, chief of police, county coroner or county medical examiner, or other law enforcement authority, when presented with the written consent from the missing person's family or next of kin or with a statement from the sheriff, chief of police, county coroner or county medical examiner, or other law enforcement authority that the missing person's family or next of kin could not be located in the exercise of due diligence or that the missing person's family or next of kin refuse to consent to the release of the missing person's dental records and there is reason to believe that the missing person's family or next of kin may have been involved in the missing person's disappearance.

As soon as possible after collecting the DNA samples, the sheriff, chief of police, or other law enforcement authority shall submit the DNA samples to the appropriate laboratory. Dental records shall be submitted as soon as possible to the Washington state patrol missing and unidentified persons unit.

The descriptive information from missing person's reports and dental data submitted to the Washington state patrol missing and unidentified persons unit shall be recorded and maintained by the Washington state patrol missing and unidentified persons unit in the applicable dedicated missing person's databases.

When a person reported missing has been found, the sheriff, chief of police, coroner or medical examiner, or other law enforcement authority shall report such information to the Washington state patrol.

The dental identification system shall maintain a file of information regarding persons reported to it as missing. The file shall contain the information referred to in this section and such other information as the Washington state patrol finds relevant to assist in the location of a missing person.

The files of the dental identification system shall, upon request, be made available to law enforcement agencies attempting to locate missing persons. [2022 c 251 s 5; 2020 c 45 s 2; 2007 c 10 s

5. Prior: 2006 c 235 s 4; 2006 c 102 s 6; 2001 c 223 s 1; 1984 c 17 s 18; 1983 1st ex.s. c 16 s 16. Formerly RCW 68.08.355.]

**Findings—Intent—2020 c 45:** "The legislature finds that a recent search of available missing and unidentified persons data for Washington state returned one thousand nine hundred twenty-six pending missing persons cases and one hundred seventy-two records of full or partial unidentified remains throughout the state. Every one of these individuals is someone's family member or loved one.

The legislature further finds that more can be done to reduce the number of missing and unidentified Washingtonians through the utilization of national resources. The national missing and unidentified persons system is a publicly searchable resource developed by the national institute of justice that contains databases of missing persons and unidentified persons cases from across the country. Cases entered into these databases are verified with local authorities and are automatically searched against one another. The national missing and unidentified persons system also has the ability to compile potentially identifiable information and available biometric data, such as DNA, including family reference samples, dental records, and fingerprints. Participation in the national missing and unidentified persons system is free, and biometric sample kits are funded through the national missing and unidentified persons system, alleviating the burden on contributing local governments. At the close of 2019, the national missing and unidentified persons system databases included nearly seventeen thousand published outstanding missing persons cases, and over thirteen thousand published unidentified persons cases. In addition, over nineteen thousand missing persons cases and over four thousand unidentified persons cases that were included in the national missing and unidentified persons system have been resolved.

The legislature recognizes that participating in this centralized and nationally based system is to the advantage of the citizens of the state, and intends to establish a system of consistent statewide participation in order to achieve its full benefit." [2020 c 45 s 1.]

**Short title—2020 c 45:** "This act may be known and cited as Cody's law." [2020 c 45 s 5.]

**Intent—2007 c 10:** See note following RCW 43.103.110.

**Purpose—Effective date—2006 c 235:** See notes following RCW 70.02.050.

**Finding—Intent—2006 c 102:** See note following RCW 36.28A.100.

**Effective date—1983 1st ex.s. c 16:** See RCW 43.103.901.

*Missing children clearinghouse and hotline: Chapter 13.60 RCW.*