



*American Academy of Forensic Sciences
American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors
International Association for Identification
National Association of Medical Examiners
Society of Forensic Toxicologists/ American Board of Forensic Toxicology*

July 12, 2021

NamUs

REQUEST

CFSO requests \$10M annual funding for the NamUs program accompanied by a strategic plan to address current and future needs.

BACKGROUND

NamUs (National Missing and Unidentified Persons System) is a national information clearinghouse secure website and resource center for missing, unidentified, and unclaimed person cases across the United States. It consists of information and also forensic casework support. It has historically been funded and administered by the National Institute of Justice and managed through a vendor cooperative agreement or contract. NamUs is a resource that is heavily relied upon by the law enforcement, medical examiners, coroners, allied forensic science professionals, and family members of missing persons to identify the dead and to solve crimes. NamUs services are utilized in collaboration with state and local partners when specific forensic science expertise is needed that is not available on the state or local level. NamUs is essential to make identifications in cases where the remains from victims are too degraded for a visual identification. This includes such events as traffic accidents, house fires, or persons not located before natural decay or environmental factors interfere. Often these techniques are specialized forensic disciplines or techniques (e.g. mitochondrial DNA, molecular genealogy, anthropology, odontology) that are not readily available in many local jurisdictions. The decedents need to be identified before a death certificate is issued and the remains can be released to the families.

The free and secure NamUs website is utilized as powerful tool to expedite associations between missing person cases and unidentified human remains found throughout the country. Forensic laboratories and investigators routinely start at this website to determine if DNA, dental, and fingerprints from remains are available for searching and comparison during an investigation, or whether family member DNA profiles are available for a possible DNA match to a crime scene or to remains. Often, the NamUs website is the only way that a forensic laboratory knows whether the DNA profile from a set of remains has been loaded into the national DNA database, CODIS, and has been searched. The NamUs website empowers families to assist in the investigation. They can search for their missing loved ones within the database of unidentified remains.

Furthermore, the NamUs Analytical and Case Support Division provides expanded investigative resources on cases reported to NamUs and in its database. Utilizing multiple criminal justice and nongovernmental databases and advanced search techniques, the NamUs analytical team mines relevant information, locates individuals, and vets leads that can be of critical assistance to ongoing investigations. This group of intelligence analysts provide services that many investigative agencies do not have access to and NamUs is their only avenue to get the needed information. They provide case consultations and support criminal justice efforts to drive missing and unidentified person case resolutions. The unidentified decedents often do have family, next-of-kin, or friends who want and need to know that the person is dead, and how they died. That connection between the unidentified decedent and the family allows for closure, and for resolution of their estates.

For families of the missing, NamUs has victim services that provide information and support to individuals and families impacted by the loss or disappearance of a loved one. They provide educational materials, resource referrals for support groups and mental health care along with peer networking to connect families with trained volunteers who provide guidance and support based on shared experiences. NamUs also provides reunification services to return deceased loved ones home, including support with exhumations, transportation, and re-interment.

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