



*American Academy of Forensic Sciences
American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors
International Association for Identification
International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners
National Association of Medical Examiners
Society of Forensic Toxicologists*

Sustaining the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs)

A Critical National Resource for Public Safety, Forensic Science, and Families of the Missing

The Problem:

The **National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs)** is the nation's only federally funded, centralized system dedicated to resolving missing, unidentified, and unclaimed person cases. Funded by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and managed by the University of North Texas Health Science Center, NamUs provides secure, no-cost investigative, forensic, and victim support services to law enforcement, medical examiners, coroners, forensic laboratories, and families across the U.S.

NamUs is an indispensable component of the nation's forensic and criminal justice infrastructure. By integrating investigative information with DNA, dental, fingerprint, and demographic data, NamUs accelerates identifications, supports criminal investigations, and helps reunite families with missing loved ones. Continued federal investment is essential to sustain and expand these nationally significant services.

Why NamUs Matters:

NamUs serves as the national clearinghouse for missing and unidentified person cases, enabling agencies to share information across jurisdictions and connect cases that might otherwise remain unsolved.

The system supports:

- Nationwide sharing among law enforcement, medical examiners, coroners, and forensic professionals.
- Searches of DNA, dental, fingerprint, and other forensic information to assist with identifications.
- Coordination with national forensic databases, including helping investigators determine whether DNA profiles have been entered into and searched through CODIS.
- Identification of unknown decedents when visual identification is not possible because of decomposition, fire, trauma, or other circumstances.

These capabilities reduce investigative delays, improve public safety, and return unidentified individuals to families.

Critical Investigative and Family Services

Beyond its database, NamUs provides specialized investigative support that many jurisdictions cannot otherwise access. Its Analytical and Case Support Division assists agencies by conducting advanced research, developing investigative leads, identifying potential matches, and providing case consultations that strengthen criminal investigations and increase case resolutions.

NamUs also delivers comprehensive victim and family support services by:

- Providing guidance and resources to families of missing persons.
- Connecting families with trained peer support volunteers and mental health resources.
- Facilitating family reference DNA collection to aid identifications.
- Assisting with return of identified remains through transportation, exhumation, and reinterment.

These services help families obtain long-awaited answers while ensuring that unidentified decedents are treated with dignity and returned to their loved ones whenever possible.

Policy Recommendation:

Congress should provide sustained and robust funding for NamUs to preserve and enhance its role as the nation's premier resource for missing and unidentified person investigations. Continued investment will strengthen forensic science, improve interstate collaboration, accelerate identifications, support criminal investigations, and expand services for families affected by the disappearance or loss of a loved one.

Maintaining NamUs is an investment in public safety, scientific excellence, and compassionate service—ensuring that the missing are found, the unidentified are named, and families receive the answers they deserve.

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