

MISSING
WOMEN
COMMISSION OF
INQUIRY

Missing Women Commission of Inquiry Public Policy Forum 3:
Improving Missing Person Practices

- ▶ **Session A: Accepting and Investigating Missing Person Reports**
Monday, May 7, 9 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Wosk Centre for Dialogue – Room 420
580 West Hastings Street, Vancouver
- ▶ **Session B: Police Relationships with Victims' Families, the Community, the Public and the Media**
Monday, May 7, 1:30 p.m. – 4 p.m.
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Improving Missing Person Practices – ***Session A: Accepting and Investigating Missing Person Reports***

Session Date, Time and Location:

Monday, May 7, 9 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

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Focus on options for improving the initiation and conduct of investigations of missing women and suspected multiple homicides.

This policy forum will focus on options for improving the initiation and conduct of investigations of missing women and suspected multiple homicides. Through research and consultations, the Commission has identified a number of potential areas for reform aimed at improving police policies and practices in these cases. These are: the definition and categorization of missing persons; reporting requirements; initial response; investigation; obtaining, recording, sharing and disclosing information; long-term missing person cases; cold cases; and closing missing person cases.

In its policy reports, the Commission identifies eight overarching avenues for reform aimed at improving police practices. These are:

- ▶ Expanding the knowledge base through research and analysis;
- ▶ Increasing consistency of police response through standardization;
- ▶ Improving risk assessment tools, policies and practices;
- ▶ Establishing clear protocols and specialized protocols for at-risk groups;
- ▶ Strengthening investigative skills and techniques;
- ▶ Enhancing support systems;
- ▶ Adopting missing person legislation and other statutory reforms; and
- ▶ Evaluating and auditing progress.

Participants in this session may identify additional issues and options for reform.

These are some of the questions and issues to be addressed during the dialogue at this policy forum:

- ▶ What types of research and analysis are required to support evidence-based best practices in the investigation of missing women and suspected multiple homicides? How should this research be carried out?
- ▶ Are existing BC police standards for missing person investigations comprehensive and effective? What gaps remain to be filled? Should standards be set at the local, provincial and/or national level?
- ▶ Is risk assessment effectively incorporated into missing person policies and practices? What additional risk assessment tools, policies and practices should be developed and implemented?

Are existing BC police standards for missing person investigations comprehensive and effective?

What are the most promising initiatives?

What support systems are required?

- ▶ Are existing missing person protocols comprehensive and effective? Are additional protocols required for particular groups of missing persons? What are the challenges in developing and implementing these protocols and how can they be overcome?
- ▶ What are the most promising initiatives to strengthen specialized investigative skills and techniques required to meet the challenges of investigating missing women and suspected multiple homicides? What steps should be taken to foster more effective use of major case management systems? What steps should be taken to integrate multidisciplinary approaches? Are there unmet investigative training requirements?
- ▶ What support systems are required to facilitate effective investigations of missing women and suspected multiple homicides? What are the best practices for the organization and staffing of missing person units? What are the priorities for enhancing the sharing of information and intelligence, as well as information technology systems in support of these investigations? How can the BC Police Missing Persons Centre and the National Police Support Centre for Missing Persons best support these investigations? Are there unmet training requirements?
- ▶ What, if any, legislative changes are required to enable effective investigations of missing women and suspected multiple homicides? Should BC adopt provincial missing person legislation? If so, what provisions should it contain? Is federal legislation required?

Additional Information

For more information on this topic, please review the discussion paper: *Policies and Practices in the Investigation of Missing Persons and Suspected Multiple Homicides*. You can also review the research reports: *Practices and Procedures in*

the Investigation of Missing Persons Across Canada: 1997 to Present and Comparative Approaches to Missing Persons Procedures: An Overview of British, American and Australian Policies. You can download them here: <http://www.missingwomeninquiry.ca/reports-and-publications/>.

Improving Missing Person Practices – ***Session B: Police Relationships with Victims’ Families, the Community, the Public and the Media***

Session Date, Time and Location:

Monday, May 7, 1:30 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Wosk Centre for Dialogue – Room 420

580 West Hastings Street, Vancouver

Success depends upon building and maintaining positive relationships.

The police cannot carry out successful investigations of missing women and suspected multiple homicides on their own. Success depends upon building and maintaining positive relationships with family members or the person who reports a person as missing to the police, the community, the wider public and the media. It is clear that a collaborative and integrated response involving communities, organizations and individuals is required to enable police to carry out these important functions.

An established working relationship between the police and the community may be particularly important in investigating the disappearance of vulnerable and marginalized women. It may appear that a victim lacks a strong network of friends, acquaintances and family ties because of non-traditional living patterns or because the victim’s family and friends also live

precarious lives. As a result, police may have to be more proactive in investigating—an approach that is facilitated through positive working relationships with the community and strategic partnerships with community agencies. These strategic relationships are also key to addressing factors that make women vulnerable to going missing or disappearing.

This policy forum will focus on options for improving police responses to missing person cases through more effective interactions with victims' families or the person who reports a person as missing to the police, communities, the wider public and the media in these investigations.

These are some of the questions and issues to be addressed during the dialogue at this policy forum:

- ▶ What steps can be taken to ensure that all individuals who report a person as missing are treated fairly and with equal respect? How can we remove obstacles to a fair and equal response in each missing person case?
- ▶ What are the specific information and communication needs of families and friends who have reported someone missing? What mechanisms or processes are required to ensure that these needs are met in an effective manner?
- ▶ What steps need to be taken to build an effective network of support for families and friends of missing persons? What types of support are required? Who should provide these supports? How should they be provided?
- ▶ How can police-community partnerships be developed and used effectively in both prevention and investigation efforts in the context of missing persons—particularly vulnerable and marginalized women who face a high risk of going missing?
- ▶ How can we best use websites and social media to provide information and increase public awareness about missing persons? How can these tools/strategies be used in

Focus on options for improving police responses to missing person cases.

Ensure that all individuals who report a person as missing are treated fairly and with equal respect.

What steps need to be taken to build an effective network of support for families and friends of missing persons?

How can police-community partnerships be developed and used effectively?

prevention efforts? How can these tools/strategies be used to facilitate the missing person investigation process?

- ▶ What steps can be taken to build community skills and community engagement in missing person investigations? Are different strategies required in the urban and rural contexts? What steps can be taken to foster positive bystander attitudes, engagement and intervention skills?
- ▶ Should police agencies develop specific media protocols to deal with missing person investigations? If so, what best practices should be included in these protocols? What resources do families, friends and community groups need to support their interactions with the media in this context?
- ▶ Should the media be encouraged to develop standards for reporting in missing person cases? If so, what steps can be taken to initiate this process?
- ▶ What types of capacity building and support are required at the national level? What are the priority requirements and how can they be met? Could the National Police Support Centre for Missing Persons carry out these functions? Are there other organizations that could carry out these functions?

Additional Information

For more information on this topic, please review the discussion paper: *Towards More Effective Missing Women Investigations: Police Relationships with Victims' Families, the Community and the Media*. You can also review the research reports: *Practices and Procedures in the Investigation of Missing Persons Across Canada: 1997 to Present* and *Comparative Approaches to Missing Persons Procedures: An Overview of British, American and Australian Policies*. You can download them here: <http://www.missingwomeninquiry.ca/reports-and-publications/>.