

Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP)

Indigenous persons experience disproportionately high rates of violence, and, relatedly, are reported missing or are murdered at high rates. Tribes and organizations that receive funding from the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) Tribal Victim Services Set-Aside Program (TVSSA) can use their funds to help Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP) by:

- Providing services to the family members of MMIP victims.
- Generating awareness of MMIP among community members in general as well as individual MMIP cases.
- Collaborating with Tribal, federal, and state and local officials to respond to MMIP cases.

Missing Persons

Between 2009 and 2018, 85 percent of the Native children who were reported missing to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children were considered endangered runaways (children between the ages of 11 and 17 who left home and whose whereabouts are unknown to their parent or guardian).¹ Bringing attention to Native children who are endangered runaways is crucial to protecting their safety, as they may be more susceptible to becoming victims of crime. This is particularly true if they run away from foster care. Research suggests youth in foster care may run away more frequently than youth who are not involved in the system and are more likely to become victims of sex trafficking.²

Adults also disappear or go missing under a variety of circumstances. Some adults may choose to disappear to escape intimate partner violence or some other form of violence. A 2016 study by the National Institute of Justice found that more than four in five American Indian and Alaska Native adults (83 percent) have experienced some form of violence in their lifetime.³

People may disappear and later may be found alive. In some cases the search for a missing person may result in the discovery of a body and the beginning of a homicide investigation. During the time when a loved one's whereabouts are unknown, family members may require services and assistance. If the search for a missing relative results in the discovery of the person's remains, the family may require additional support.

In response to feedback OVC received through Tribal consultations, OVC TVSSA grantees may now use their funding to assist family members of a missing person under the following circumstances:

1. The missing person is known to be a victim of kidnapping or in the company of a human trafficker.
2. The individual's disappearance is under investigation by law enforcement.
3. The missing person's family members fear that they may be a victim of crime.⁴
4. The missing person has a history of being victimized, and their disappearance may be directly or indirectly related to that history.

Missing Persons' Activities

TVSSA grantees may use their funding to support the following activities related to missing persons:

- Provide financial assistance and support to the families of missing persons.
- Conduct outreach events and other activities to educate the community about MMIP issues.
- Produce billboards, flyers, placards, etc. to generate awareness about individual missing person's cases, and, in limited circumstances, support costs incidental to a private search.
- Work with a multidisciplinary, interjurisdictional group of Tribal, federal, and state and local stakeholders to create MMIP response protocols.

Support for Victims of Homicide

TVSSA funds can be used to aid families when the remains of a missing person have been recovered and have been determined to be a victim of homicide. In these circumstances, TVSSA funds can support:

- Reunification costs, including exhumation (if needed), repatriation, and burial of the remains.
- Assistance for survivors of homicide, including financial and civil legal help, as well as family and individual counseling.

For More Information

Visit ovc.ojp.gov/program/tribal/overview for more information on OVC, the TVSSA Program, and or MMIP.

¹ *Native American Children Reported Missing to NCMCEC* (2021) National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

² *Research Brief: Examining the Link: Foster Care Runaway Episodes and Human Trafficking*, (2020), Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

³ Rosay, André B., *Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men: 2010 Findings from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey* (pdf, 82 pages). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, 2016, NCJ 249736.

⁴ It is important to help family members understand that confidentiality is key when adults disappear to protect their personal safety. Law enforcement and victim services personnel may have a duty to protect the confidentiality of persons who have voluntarily disappeared and may not be able to share information about their whereabouts without their consent.