

Missing Student Policy

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures for the university's response to reports of a missing student, as required by the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. This university policy applies to students who reside in university-operated residence halls and apartments, as well as College of Arts & Sciences students residing in non-university housing.

For purposes of this policy, a student may be considered to be a "missing student" if the person's absence is contrary to his/her usual pattern of behavior and unusual circumstances may have caused the absence. Such circumstances could include a reasonable/reliable report or suspicion that the missing student may be endangered. Examples include, but are not limited to, possible victim of foul play, expression of suicidal thoughts, alcohol or other drug abuse, a life-threatening situation, or recent contact with persons who may endanger the student's welfare.

Related Policies and Resources:

- [Required Notifications for CAS Students](#)
- [FERPA](#)

Policy Contact:

- Office of Student Life
 - studentlife@bethel.edu
 - 651-638-6300

1. Procedures for designation of emergency contact information

- Students age 18 and above and emancipated minors:** At the beginning of each fall semester, all College of Arts & Sciences students of Bethel University and all students in university housing will be notified of the opportunity to designate an individual or individuals to be contacted by the university no more than 24 hours after the time that the student is determined to be missing in accordance with the following procedures. A designation will remain in effect until changed or revoked by the student. Students may change or revoke their emergency contact using the form available on Blink.
- Students under the age of 18:** In the event a student who is not emancipated is determined to be missing pursuant to the following procedures, the university is required to notify a custodial parent or guardian no more than 24 hours after the student is determined to be missing in accordance with the procedures set forth below.

2. Official notification procedures for missing students

- Any individual who has information that a student may be missing must notify the Office of Security and Safety as soon as possible.
- The Office of Security and Safety will work with campus offices, the reporting person (s), and the student's acquaintances to gather all essential information about the student (description, clothes last worn, where the student might be, who the student might be with, vehicle description, information about the student's physical and mental well-being, an up-to-date photograph, class schedule, etc.). Appropriate campus staff will be notified to aid in the search for the student.
- When a missing student report is made to the Office of Security and Safety, the chief of security and safety will immediately notify the Associate Dean for Residence Life if the student lives on campus, the Dean of Student Life if the student lives off campus, or the Dean of Student Success and Retention if the student attends the seminary. The appropriate dean (CAS), dean of student success (seminary), or the chief of security and safety will contact the resident director of the student's residence (or RD on-call if appropriate) and the dean of student programs (CAS) or the housing specialist.
- The campus staff will take steps to try to locate the missing student, including but not limited to the following:
 - Call student's cell phone
 - RD/RA/associate dean for residence life visits student's room
 - Contact roommate(s)
 - Look for student's car on campus
 - Check student locator report for class schedule
 - Access reports to determine the last time he or she used a meal card or card access to residence hall
 - Obtain student's work schedule
 - Contact faculty regarding student's last date of attendance in class
 - Call student's home number
 - Request that Bethel Informational Technology Services staff check electronic logs to determine the student's last login to Bethel's computer network systems.
- If the above actions are unsuccessful in locating the student or it is apparent immediately that the student may be endangered, the following personnel will meet to determine that the student is missing:
 - Associate Vice President of Student Life
 - Dean of Student Life
 - Associate Dean for Residence Life
 - Chief of security and safety
 - Resident Director
 - Office of Security and Safety
 - Dean for Student Success and Retention
- No later than 24 hours after determining that a student is missing, the following will take place:
 - The Office of Security and Safety will contact the appropriate local law enforcement agency to report the student as a missing person, and the local law enforcement agency will take charge of the investigation. The Office of Security and Safety will assist external authorities with these investigations as requested.

- Dean of Student Life, or designee, will notify the emergency contact (for students 18 and over) or the parent/guardian (for students under the age of 18) that the student is believed to be missing.
- For missing students who are 18 years of age or older and did not designate an individual to be contacted, the dean of students, or designee, will act in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and Minnesota Government Data Privacy guidelines with regard to contacting a parent/guardian.

3. Campus communications about missing students

- a. In cases involving missing persons, law enforcement personnel are trained to provide information to the media in a manner designed to elicit public assistance in the search for a missing person. Therefore, all communications regarding missing students will be handled by outside law enforcement authorities, who may consult with the university's Office of Communications and Marketing. All inquiries to the university regarding missing students shall be referred to the Office of Communications and Marketing. Any individual with information about the missing student shall be referred to the Office of Security and Safety, who shall refer such inquiries and information to law enforcement authorities.
- b. Prior to providing the university community with any information about a missing student, the Office of Communications and Marketing shall consult with the Office of Security and Safety, local law enforcement authorities, and the Office of Student Life to ensure that communications comply with FERPA guidelines and do not hinder the investigation.

Adapted with permission from St. Cloud State University, December 7, 2009