

Disclaimer:

All the following information on this page in the the **downloadable checklist**, is the direct result of the Paul Nolan Miralles family on-the-ground experience leading and carrying out a Missing Persons search in Amsterdam. The objective of this information is to give families of Missing Persons **practical checklists of what to do, who to talk to, who not to talk to, and how to look after yourself during a search for a Missing Person in Amsterdam**. Please contact the **Amsterdam Police and BDR (Bureau of Missing Persons)** immediately and work directly with them in your search.

In Amsterdam, a Missing Person (who is an Adult, over 18 years old) is not considered truly 'missing' until 48 hours since the time of their disappearance. Also, a very important thing to know is that an adult who is Missing is not considered a possible victim of a crime, unless the person is found with evidence of assault. Please take this extremely important information into account for the first 48-72 hours of your search.

Top 10 Tips for Missing Persons Search in Amsterdam

- 1. Contact the Amsterdam Police immediately - See Downloadable Checklist** on what to bring to the first meeting. The Police will usually check the mobile phone and bank account for recent movements. Contact them to hear the results of these searches asap.
 - **Identify who the key Inspector at the BDR is for your case**, make sure you have their direct contact details and
 - the **details of the (Protocol/File number)** for the Missing Persons to refer to when liaising with them.
 - Many times you may not get to speak to the Inspector in charge and therefore need to have this information at the ready to share with their colleagues.
- 2. Organise a Search Team, with a clear leader and clear roles and responsibilities for different team members.**
 - **Team Leader:** coordinates all actions and keeps the team centered and focussed on the key tasks
 - **Team members:** each person should be very clear what you need them to do, when and how to report back to the team leader
 - **Search parties:** when searching for a Missing person near the canals or in sensitive areas at night, always go together in groups of 3 for security reasons.
 - **Working with other volunteers:** Have a core team of maximum 5-7 people, who will then manage groups of volunteers for specific tasks. If too many people get involved in the core team, that can slow the Search team down and reduce efficiency.
- 3. Create a Missing Persons flyer and Facebook Page immediately, with :**
 - a recent photo, description (height, build, eye colour, any distinguishing features e.g. tattoo, birthmark)
 - what they were wearing at the time of disappearance
 - time of disappearance
 - contact details: Amsterdam Police number and link to Facebook page you have created
 - think of making the flyer in Dutch and English
 - get as many volunteers as possible to distribute the flyer (paper and pdf versions) and post it up in public places, share on Facebook and twitter

4. **Take detailed notes of the Search: nominate a person** (usually the team leader or someone else) in a special notebook(s) dedicated to this person. Note down every action, date, time, who did what and contact details of people helping you in the search (e.g. police inspectors, media, consulate staff, etc). This will be of precious help as it is difficult to keep all the information in your memory at this stressful time.

5. **Places to Look:**
 - **Retrace the Missing Persons last steps and where they would have been going.** Organise your search party such that one person is checking all along the route for Street Cameras, Private Company cameras. Note the position of each and inform the police.
 - **Talk to the private companies (e.g. bars, restaurants, supermarkets) on the route / last place the Missing Person was seen,** and ask them to check their security cameras at the date and time of disappearance of the Missing Person. If they do have footage of your Missing Person, notify the police immediately to go and collect the footage. Beware, most street and security cameras only record for a limited time and may be written over within 24-72 hours or several days, so please do this quickly.
 - **Check all the nearby hospitals and morgues** and bring in a Missing Persons flyer. Give the description of your Missing person. If a person matching the description of your Missing person has been brought in without ID, the hospital/morgue will immediately contact the police and not give you this information directly.
 - **Red Light District:** Send search teams in trios (for personal security), with flyers to show people the photo/hand out to check if the Missing person is in this area, possibly drunk or drugged somewhere.
 - **Homeless People shelters/gathering places:** Send search teams in trios (for personal security), with flyers to show people the photo/hand out to check if the Missing person could possibly have been seen by a homeless person.

6. **People to talk to:**
 - **The Amsterdam Police and the BDR (Bureau of Missings Persons):** these should be your first contacts
 - **Volunteer Search organizations:** eg Signi Zoekhonden (Search Dogs) Association, The Red Cross
 - **Consul of your Country Embassy in the Netherlands :** if the Missing Person is not a Dutch National.
 - **Be open and try to listen carefully to people who offer help:** Sometimes families of other Missing Persons who have been through a similar experience will try to contact you. Be careful of who you talk to and what you say, as it is often distressing to hear about other Missing Persons who have shown up dead or have never been seen again, which can increase your emotional anxiety and not be helpful. Try to listen to people who offer you practical advice and tips, as all ideas are helpful during the first 48-72 hours
 - **Trauma Counsellors:** It is very difficult to find Trauma Counsellors in Amsterdam. Current information we have on the best place to go is the AMC Hospital in Amsterdam, who have a specialised Trauma Unit, with people trained to deal with people in very distressing circumstances.

7. **People NOT to talk to:** Beware that when you give your contact details on a missing persons flyer, to the general public, to the media, you may be contacted by people such as **Mediums and Private Investigators**. Beware of speaking to either as they often give false hope and with the private investigators, they may try to charge you a lot of money for non-reliable results.

8. **Collaborating with the Media: Nominate one spokesperson for all the media,** who will prepare key messages of what to say and not to say in advance and who will feel at ease going in front of the cameras / on the radio etc. Please see our

Contacting the Media checklist for more practical tips.

9. Keep Strong and have a Positive Attitude: Keep upbeat, positive and have an open mind. You cannot jump to any negative conclusions unless you have facts and evidence to back them up.

10. Look after yourself:

- Make sure you keep busy and focused on the Search, and also allow yourself short periods to rest/eat and make sure you get a minimum few hours sleep. Days during a search can be very, very long and busy and as you don't know how long the search will last, it's important to keep your stamina and strength up.
- Drink plenty of water, avoid alcoholic drinks or other substances at this stressful time as they can impair your judgement.
- Try to eat small amounts at regular intervals and have a bottle of water with you and some healthy snacks with you at all times, in case you will not have time to eat, which is often the case during a Search for a Missing Person.
- Wear comfortable shoes, have your phone charger with you at all times.