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## ***BRINGING HOPE TO THE FAMILIES OF MISSING AND UNIDENTIFIED PERSONS***

### **THE CHALLENGE**

- During 2006, 836,131 missing person records were entered into NCIC, an increase of 0.19 % from the 834,536 entered in 2005. Missing Person records cleared or canceled during the same period totaled 851,940. \*\*
- As of December 31, 2006, there were 110,484 active missing person records in the FBI's National Criminal Information Center data base (NCIC). Juveniles under the age of 18 account for 58,763 (53.18 %) of the records. \*\*
- In a typical year medical examiner and coroners' offices report that they manage about 4,400 unidentified human remains of which about 1,000 remained unidentified after one year.\*
- About 2,000 medical examiners and coroners' offices provided death investigation services across the United States in 2004. Medical examiner and coroners' offices reported a total of 13,486 unidentified human decedents currently on record, with the largest jurisdictions (those serving 250,000 or more) accounting for 87% of all cases.\*
- Overall, an estimated 23% of Medical Examiners and Coroner offices reported one or more unidentified decedents on record.\*

### **THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE TAKES ACTION**

In 2005, the U.S. Department of Justice's, Office of Justice Programs established a National Task Force on Solving Cases of Missing Persons and Unidentified Human Remains. The Task Force, which included representatives from local, state and federal law enforcement, forensic medicine and victim advocacy organizations, provided recommendations and a roadmap for implementation of the National Missing and Unidentified Persons Initiative (NamUs), our nation's first national repository for missing and unidentified persons.

#### **Office of Justice Programs Initiatives**

**President's DNA Initiative:** The events of September 11, 2001 demonstrated on a national scale the significance of providing support for families of missing persons. The President's DNA Initiative provides funding to support the elimination of DNA backlogs, strengthening crime lab capacity, stimulating research and development, protecting the innocent, identifying the missing, education, training, and outreach to victims' families, law enforcement, and the coroner-medical examiner community. Over the past four years, the Department of Justice has provided in excess of \$400 million to support the activities under the President's DNA Initiative.

- **The National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs):** Launched by the Office of Justice Program's National Institute of Justice in July 2007, NamUs is the first national online repository for missing persons and unidentified decedent cases. This new Internet-based tool ([www.namus.gov](http://www.namus.gov)) provides access to an unidentified decedent database, missing persons database, and resources to support efforts to solve missing person cases. Medical examiners, coroners, law enforcement officials, forensic professionals, and the public will be able to use NamUs to search and match missing persons records with information from unidentified human remains.
- **Census of Medical Examiner and Coroner Offices** - This year, the Bureau of Justice Statistics released its study which will include information on the personnel, functions, workload, and needs of state, district, and county medical examiner, coroner, and mixed systems in the U.S.
- In 2005, NIJ brought together Federal, state, and local law enforcement officials, forensic scientists, victim advocates, legislators, and families of missing persons to draft model legislation on the prompt collection, analysis, and dissemination of evidence to help solve these cases. The model legislation is available on [www.ncjrs.gov](http://www.ncjrs.gov).
- OJP has funded numerous trainings and technical assistance projects on missing persons and unidentified dead through the National Institute of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office for Victims of Crime, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

## Resources

- More information about the Office of Justice Programs can be found at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov>.
- Information on improving the use of forensic DNA evidence throughout the Nation's criminal justice system can be found at [www.dna.gov](http://www.dna.gov).
- For DNA sample testing kits and free testing of DNA samples, contact the Center for Human Identification at 1-800-763-3147, or visit [www.hsc.unt.edu/departments/pathology\\_anatomy/dna/Forensics.cfm](http://www.hsc.unt.edu/departments/pathology_anatomy/dna/Forensics.cfm)
- An electronic version of the FBI's Missing Persons and Unidentified Persons data collection guide is available to law enforcement officials through the LEO Intranet at <http://home.leo.gov/lesig/cjis/programs/ncic>.

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\* **Medical Examiners and Coroners' Offices, 2004**, *Bureau of Justice Statistics*, Matthew J. Hickman, Ph.D., Kristen A. Hughes, MPA, Kevin J. Strom, Ph.D., Jeri D. Roper-Miller, Ph.D., *RTI International*)

\*\* **National Crime Information Center's Missing Person and Unidentified Person Statistics for 2006**, Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of Justice, Washington D.C.