



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, July 8, 2013
2:00 PM EST

OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS
(202) 307-0703
WWW.OJP.GOV

Justice Department Releases New Tools to Help Law Enforcement Find Missing Persons with Alzheimer's Disease

WASHINGTON - The Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) today released a series of training videos to help law enforcement find and aid missing persons with Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia. Created in partnership with the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and the Alzheimer's Association, the four short videos can be downloaded from the IACP website at no cost and be easily disseminated to patrol officers.

Today's announcement also introduces a web-based connection between the MedicAlert and the Alzheimer's Association Safe Return® networks and BJA's Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS) network. The RISS MedicAlert® Access™ gives law enforcement access to shared information to enhance their search capabilities for people with Alzheimer's disease who are missing or lost.

"If an individual with Alzheimer's disease or dementia wanders and becomes lost and is registered with the MedicAlert® + Alzheimer's Association Safe Return® program, law enforcement can now easily access information to help reunite the person with loved ones," said BJA's Director Denise E. O'Donnell. "BJA is proud to be able to support local law enforcement's efforts to protect this very vulnerable segment of our communities."

The training videos depict three different scenarios public safety officials and law enforcement officers could face when people with dementia have wandered. The videos, based on real-life situations, demonstrate best practices in searching for and dealing with these persons and their caregivers. A fourth video provides guidelines for protocols and policies to help law enforcement agencies prepare for such incidents.

According to latest data from the National Institute on Aging, as many as 5.4 million Americans of all ages are living with Alzheimer's disease or some other form of dementia. Of that number, as many as 60 percent -- 3.1 million people -- are at risk of wandering, and 50 percent of those who wander have the potential to become lost.

"These training videos respond to a critical and growing issue being faced by the law enforcement field. Alzheimer's disease is often an overlooked issue, and does not get the same attention that other issues we face do. More frequently, law enforcement officers are finding themselves responding to reports of missing

persons with this terrible disease. This video sets forth best practices and tips that can be critical in helping officers respond efficiently and effectively to those affected by Alzheimer's disease," said IACP President Craig Steckler.

The Alzheimer's training video series may be downloaded here: www.theiacp.org/alztrainingvideo.

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The Office of Justice Programs (OJP), headed by Assistant Attorney General Karol V. Mason, provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice, and assist victims. OJP has six components: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. For more information about OJP, please visit: www.ojp.gov.