

Department of Justice Programs And Resources for Law Enforcement, Families, and Communities Addressing Missing or Murdered Black Women and Girls

The Department of Justice (“the Department”) is committed working with law enforcement, families, and communities to address the important issue of missing or murdered Black women and girls. Black women and girls make up less than 8% of the U.S. population but accounted for more than 1/3 of the individuals listed in the [2020 National Crime Information Center \(NCIC\) Missing Person and Unidentified Person Statistics](#). Black women face disproportionately high rates of homicide, with more than half of these deaths linked to intimate partner violence. The Department’s efforts to combat gender-based violence, violent crime, and to reduce firearms crimes are important for addressing the issue of missing or murdered Black women and girls. Improving law enforcement responses to Black women and girls as victims of and witnesses to crime is inherently part of our broader work to advance effective, fair, and constitutional policing.

The Department has prioritized fostering collaborative efforts between law enforcement and communities to reduce crime and increase public safety. Ensuring that our programs and services reach every community is central to improving trust and communication between the Department and the people it serves. We have developed this handout to raise awareness about the resources available across the Department’s components to address public safety concerns underlying cases of missing or murdered Black women and girls.

➤ **OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS (OJP)**

Amber Alert Training and Technical Assistance

- OJP’s **Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)**, through a training and technical assistance (TTA) provider, assists law enforcement on issuing AMBER Alerts consistent with DOJ’s [Guidelines for Issuing AMBER Alerts | AMBER Alert \(ojp.gov\)](#).
 - OJJDP’s TTA provider included a focus on missing Black girls, as well as other children of color, at its annual training for law enforcement agencies (and the multi-disciplinary teams that support them) in 2022, 2023, and 2024, and is planning to include similar workshops (e.g. disparities in response to missing children of color, the public and media coverage of missing Black children) at the 2025 National AMBER Alert Symposium.
 - OJJDP’s AMBER Alert TTA provider hosts webinars regularly, including a missing children of color webinar series. A complete listing of available AMBER Alert trainings may be found at: [NCJTC - National Criminal Justice Training Center - AMBER Alert Training & Technical Assistance Program \(fvtc.edu\)](#).

National Ashanti Alert Network

- The [Ashanti Alert Act](#) was signed into law in December 2018 to connect local missing adult alert programs and enable the sharing of alerts across state lines. The Act is named in honor of Ashanti Billie, a 19-year-old African American woman from Virginia who was abducted and murdered in 2017.
- OJP's **Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)** administers the [National Ashanti Alert Network](#), which supports the development and use of Ashanti Alert plans to assist in the safe recovery of missing and endangered persons.
 - BJA worked with the Federal Communications Commission's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau to establish a new Emergency Alert System event code to make it easier for all state, local, Tribal, and territorial alerting officials to quickly disseminate information to the public to aid in the recovery of missing or endangered persons.

Children's Justice Project

- In FY24, OJJDP launched the [Children's Justice Project \(CJP\)](#), in partnership with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), to accelerate the identification of children who have been found deceased but have not yet been identified.
 - A disproportionate number of children who have been found deceased but have not yet been identified are children of color and children who have gone missing from state care (e.g., child welfare system and the juvenile justice system).

National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs)

- The [National Missing and Unidentified Persons System \(NamUs\)](#) is a free and secure publicly available and centralized repository and resource center for missing, unidentified, and unclaimed person cases. Administered by OJP's **National Institute of Justice (NIJ)**, NamUs currently contains information on more than 50,000 active missing, unidentified, and unclaimed persons cases. It also provides forensic services that enable investigators to match long-term missing persons with unidentified remains.
 - Since its inception, NamUs has resolved more than 15,000 missing and unidentified persons cases using advanced forensic techniques, including forensic genetic genealogy.

Missing and Unidentified Human Remains Program (MUHR)

- Administered for the first time in FY 2022, BJA's [Missing and Unidentified Human Remains \(MUHR\)](#) Program provides funding to improve the reporting, transportation, forensic testing, and identification of missing persons and unidentified human remains.
 - The MUHR Program augments and complements the existing services available through the NamUs Program, filling a gap in the national field by providing federal

resources directly to jurisdictions to assist in addressing missing persons and unidentified human remains cases.

➤ **UNITED STATES MARSHALS SERVICE (USMS)**

Missing Child Program

- The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 enhanced the USMS’ authority to assist law enforcement with recovering endangered missing children, regardless of whether a fugitive or sex offender was involved. Through its [Missing Child Program](#), the Marshals assist other law enforcement agencies with the recovery of critically missing children.
 - USMS has twice executed [Operation We Will Find You](#), a nationwide missing child operation that focuses on geographical areas with high clusters of critically missing children. With technical assistance from NCMEC, USMS partners with state, local, and other federal agencies to develop a multi-disciplinary team to find critically missing children, based on indications of high-risk factors such as victimization through child sex trafficking, child exploitation, sexual abuse, physical abuse, and medical or mental health conditions. To date, more than 400 endangered missing children, which includes runaways and those abducted by non-custodial persons, have been recovered.

➤ **OFFICE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (OVW)**

Improving Law Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence by Identifying and Preventing Gender Bias

- In 2022, the OVW released an update to this [guidance](#), designed to help law enforcement agencies recognize, mitigate, and prevent gender bias and other biases from compromising the response to and investigation of sexual assault, domestic violence, and other forms of gender-based violence.
 - The guidance emphasizes that law enforcement agencies must be mindful that gender bias can occur alongside other types of unlawful discrimination, including racial bias, exacerbating deficiencies in the criminal justice system’s response to reports of sexual assault and domestic violence and further undermining victim safety.

Domestic Violence Resource for Increasing Safety and Connection (DV RISC)

- OVW funds this [national resource center](#) led by the Center for Justice Innovation, Esperanza United, and Ujima Inc., providing training and technical assistance on intimate

partner violence (IPV) risk assessments and models. The project emphasizes building relationships with culturally specific TTA providers and community-based organizations to ensure cultural responsiveness and inclusion of historically marginalized populations, including Black communities, in IPV risk assessment strategies.

Grants to Enhance Culturally Specific Services for Victims of Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking Program

- This grant [program](#) supports culturally specific community-based organizations in addressing the critical needs of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking victims through innovative culturally specific strategies to enhance access to services and resources for victims. For FY2024, OVW funded 52 awards for a total of \$22,975,000.

Sexual Assault Services Culturally Specific Program

- This grant [program](#) supports nonprofit organizations that focus primarily on culturally specific communities and have experience in the area of sexual assault or who partner with an organization having such expertise. SAS Culturally Specific Program grant funds support culturally specific intervention and related assistance for victims of sexual assault. For FY2024, OVW made 23 awards for a total of \$8,662,464.00.

National Training and Technical Assistance

- OVW funds national organizations to provide training and technical assistance, including those aiming to support and expand the capacity of organizations that provide culturally specific services primarily focused on Black survivors.
 - **Ujima, The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community:** This is a national TTA [provider](#) for OVW grantees. Their mission is to mobilize the community to respond to and end domestic, sexual, and community violence.
 - Current projects include: *Enhancing Culturally Specific Responses to Domestic Violence Homicide and Firearms Initiative; HBCU Training and Technical Assistance Initiative; Ensuring Culturally Specific Responses for DV Fatality Review Teams; The Intersection of Racial Equity and Fairness in the Courts Training Project; Firearms Training and Technical Assistance Initiative - Culturally Specific Training and Technical Assistance Consortium; and Improving Responses and Advocacy for Black Survivors.*
 - **National Resource Center on Domestic Violence and Firearms:** This OVW-funded TTA [provider](#) has partnered with Ujima to provide tools and support needed to develop and implement effective strategies for preventing the use of firearms in

domestic violence incidents and for strengthening a coordinated community response to increase access to safety and support for victims.

- **National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault:** This national TTA [provider](#) supports and enhances the capacity of Communities of Color to provide culturally responsive prevention and intervention addressing sexual assault.
 - Current projects include: *Learning Collaborative on Culturally Specific Services Addressing Sexual Assault; and Comprehensive Training and Technical Assistance for the Sexual Assault Services Culturally Specific Program.*
- **Firearms Technical Assistance Project (FTAP):** OVW funds [12 pilot sites](#) across the country through FTAP as part of a comprehensive strategy to address the lethal intersection of domestic violence and firearms.

➤ **CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION (CRT)**

Title VI Enforcement

- Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, CRT works to make sure that law enforcement agencies and other recipients of federal funding take affirmative steps to comply with their civil rights obligations by offering technical assistance to facilitate Title VI compliance. Technical assistance helps agencies update and/or enhance their policies and practices, while strengthening the connection between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve.
 - **Next-of-kin Death Notifications:** After a lack of timely notifications resulted in deceased individuals receiving pauper's burials in unmarked graves in Hinds County, Mississippi, and reports indicating a perception that race or other factors may have played a role in the process, CRT and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Mississippi (USAO) announced in [April 2024](#) that they would offer targeted technical assistance to the Jackson Police Department (JPD) and the Hinds County Coroner's Office concerning policies and procedures related to next-of-kin death notifications.
 - CRT and the USAO partnered with the Department's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office to offer the technical assistance through the Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center (CRI-TAC) program, including:
 - An examination of JPD's General Order on Missing Persons and new General Order on Death Notifications and provided recommendations on implementation and training.
 - Recommendations on policies and training related to locating next-of-kin for the Hinds County Coroner's Office.

Enforcement of Federal Criminal Civil Rights Laws

- CRT's Criminal Section, often in collaboration with USAOs, investigates and prosecutes cases throughout the United States involving the interference with liberties and deprivation of rights defined in the Constitution or federal law. Prosecutors handle cases involving law enforcement misconduct, hate crimes, and human trafficking, among other federal civil rights crimes, including those based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity.
 - The Criminal Section prosecuted the case for [depriving Breonna Taylor of her constitutional rights](#) during the execution of a search warrant in March 2020 that led to her tragic death in her home.
 - The Criminal Section secured the first ever guilty verdict in trial for violence against a transgender person under the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, for the murder of [Dime Doe](#), a Black transgender woman from Allendale, South Carolina.
 - The Criminal Section's Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit (HTPU) and the USAO for the District of Columbia prosecuted two defendants for their role in a [sex trafficking operation](#) that used violence and threats of violence to coerce a 15-year-old girl and a 17-year-old girl to perform commercial sex acts. Law enforcement became involved in this investigation after the two victims ran away from a residential facility in Virginia and the NCMEC issued a missing person's report.

Enforcement, Outreach, and Guidance to Combat School Pushout of Black Girls

- CRT's Educational Opportunities Section (EOS) enforces federal laws to combat discriminatory practices in student discipline that push girls of color out of the classroom and into the criminal and juvenile justice systems.
 - In July 2024, EOS announced a settlement to protect students from discrimination in a [Kansas school district](#). Our investigation revealed, among other things, that the district's Black students were disciplined more frequently and more severely than white students who engaged in similar conduct and had similar backgrounds and disciplinary histories. This pattern was most evident when it came to subjective offenses such as insubordination, and it was especially stark when it came to discipline of Black girls.
 - EOS also works to ensure that schools respond effectively to sexual harassment, sexual assault, and trauma, which can disrupt education and increase vulnerability to abuse and exploitation. A recent [agreement with a Wyoming school district](#) is designed to strengthen the district's response to such complaints, and improve its policies and training on how to identify and support students who exhibit signs of depression, anxiety, self-harm or suicidality resulting from harassment.

- In addition to enforcement, CRT provides guidance and engages in outreach to stakeholders focused on protecting Black girls from discrimination that can push them out of school.
 - In May 2023, the Departments of Justice and Education jointly released a [Resource on Confronting Racial Discrimination](#) (PDF available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)), to provide examples of the departments' investigations over the last 10 years, conducted under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its regulations and Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and demonstrates ways school districts can take steps to proactively improve their administration of student discipline.
 - In October 2024, on the heels of a GAO report showing that Black girls receive harsher punishments than their white peers for similar behaviors, the Division's Educational Opportunity Section (EOS) and Special Litigation Section (SPL) hosted a Fall 2024 Back-to-School event, featuring a panel of researchers and advocates to help illuminate the scope and impact of this pernicious problem.

Civil Rights Cold Cases

- The Cold Case Unit of CRT's Criminal Section was created to enforce the Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act (Till Act) and its reauthorization. The Till Act directs the Department of Justice to identify, review, and prosecute (where possible) civil rights crimes that resulted in death and that occurred on or before December 31, 1979. The Cold Case Unit has opened and investigated over 130 matters involving approximately 160 victims. Over a dozen have included Black women and girls. For each case closed or referred, the Unit has issued a memorandum publicly available on the Civil Rights Division's [website](#). Anyone who wishes to report a civil rights cold case may do so by sending information to Coldcase.Civilrights@usdoj.gov.

➤ **CRIMINAL DIVISION (CRM)**

The Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS)

- CEOS's mission is to protect children from sexual exploitation through the vigorous enforcement of federal laws, and to continuously improve the federal response to these serious crimes. This work includes the prosecution of federal crimes which may involve missing children including, among others, (1) the online inducement of children for sexually predatory purposes; (2) the travel of offenders, or transportation of children by offenders, across state lines for sexually predatory purposes; and (3) the sex trafficking of children.

Project Safe Childhood (PSC)

- [PSC](#) is a nationwide initiative to combat child sexual exploitation and abuse. Led by the USAOs and CEOS, PSC marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate,

apprehend and prosecute individuals who use technology to sexually exploit children online and in-person. Missing children are often at risk for becoming victims of commercial child sexual exploitation.

➤ **EXECUTIVE OFFICE FOR UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS (EOUSA)**

NOTE: EOUSA provides general executive assistance and supervision to the 94 USAOs located throughout the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, the Marianas Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U. S. Virgin Islands. USAOs enforce federal laws, both criminal and civil. EOUSA supports USAOs in implementing the revised [Attorney General Guidelines for Victim and Witness Assistance \(Guidelines\)](#), announced by the Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General in October 2022, as well as the Department’s Strategic Plan.

Support for Victims

- The revised Guidelines reflect changes in the law, emerging technology issues, and improvements in our work to protect the most vulnerable victims.
- As part of the Department’s overall emphasis on advancing trauma-informed and culturally sensitive practices, a related Key Performance Indicator (KPI) was included in the 2022-2026 DOJ Strategic Plan. Specifically, [Objective 2.6 \(Protect Vulnerable Communities\)](#) notes that “[t]he Department will promote trauma-informed, victim-centered, culturally competent law enforcement and prosecutorial responses to crime.” The associated KPI is designed to increase the percent of USAOs conducting trauma-informed and culturally sensitive approaches for attorneys, victim witness specialists, and support staff, which should better equip USAOs to work with and support the families of missing and murdered Black women and girls.
- Putting the guidelines and the performance indicator into action, each USAO is staffed by talented Victim Witness Professionals (VWPs) who provide comprehensive and compassionate support to victims and witnesses, including families in federal cases associated with missing and murdered Black women and girls.
 - Specifically, VWPs provide safety planning, witness security assessments, travel/lodging coordination for out-of-town victims and witnesses, court accompaniment, emotional support, crisis response, notification services, and referrals for counseling, housing, transportation, crime victims’ compensation, and medical or mental health needs.
 - VWPs also facilitate notification through the Victim Notification System (VNS), assist with victim impact statements, and support victims and witnesses through all phases of a prosecution, including trial.

➤ **FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (FBI)**

The National Crime Information Center (NCIC)

- NCIC is a computerized index of missing persons and criminal information and is designed for the rapid exchange of information between criminal justice agencies. Users access the NCIC computer located at FBI headquarters through regional or State computer systems or with direct tie-ins to the NCIC computer.
 - In accordance with Title 34, United States code (U.S.C.), Section 41307(a), all LEAs are required to enter records into the NCIC Missing Person File for missing individuals under the age of 21.
 - Since passage of the Missing Children Act (Pub. L. 97-272, amending, 28 U.S.C. § 534), information pertaining to certain categories of missing persons, including missing children, may be entered into NCIC by parents of missing children if the local law enforcement agency will not do so.

Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP)

- ViCAP maintains the largest investigative repository of major violent crime cases in the U.S. It is designed to collect and analyze information about homicides, sexual assaults, missing persons, and other violent crimes involving unidentified human remains.

Child Abduction Rapid Deployment (CARD)

- The CARD Team consists of experienced Crimes Against Children investigators. CARD Special Agents and Analysts are strategically located in Field Divisions throughout the United States to facilitate rapid, on-site response in cases where a child has been abducted by someone other than a family member. The CARD Team is designed to provide investigative, technical, and resource assistance to FBI Offices and state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement during the most critical time period following the abduction of a child. The teams work closely with representatives from the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU), National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime coordinators, and child exploitation task force members.

Cellular Analysis Survey Team (CAST)

- CAST provides expertise in the collection and analysis of historical and real-time mobile communications and geo-location data in a wide array of investigations. This includes providing assistance when requested to partner agencies investigating violent crimes, including homicides, abductions, and sexual assaults. CAST works with all investigative elements within the FBI as well as with other Federal, State, Local and Tribal law enforcement agencies, and routinely deploys to supplement the CARD team.

Investigative Genetic Genealogy (IGG)

- IGG is an investigative technique utilizing DNA evidence to further investigations into violent offenders. The technique can also be utilized to identify unknown victims of homicide that have not been identified through traditional investigative methods. This program provides investigative assistance to Federal, State, Local, and Tribal law enforcement communities in resolving unsolved crimes committed by violent offenders. It can be used on active cases without viable investigative leads and long-standing cold cases.

Trace Evidence Unit at the FBI Laboratory

- Nationwide, about 4,400 unidentified remains are found each year. Medical examiners and local police departments most frequently become the stewards of unidentified remains. And each year, about 20 requests are made to the Trace Evidence Unit to develop facial approximations of unidentified individuals to help investigators ultimately put a name to a face. The process is a free service provided to support the law enforcement community. The Unit also works with NamUs to deconflict DNA within both systems.

Deceased Persons Identification (DPI) Services

- The Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division offers DPI Services to further increase the deceased identification tools available to the law enforcement community and authorized medical examiners and coroners. Formerly known as the Next Generation Identification (NGI) Cold Case/Unknown Deceased Service, the DPI Services provide a fingerprint-based identification service for active and cold cases. The DPI Services uses the NGI System's advanced search algorithms and cascades the deceased person's fingerprints against all identities, as well as the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Department of Defense's fingerprint systems. This tool strengthens criminal investigations and humanitarian aid through the use of state-of-the-art biometric technologies.