

## NCJTC- Fox Valley | A Glimpse into the Pandemics Landscape in the Search, Investigation, Identification, and Reunification of the Missing

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Welcome, everyone, to the National Criminal Justice Training Center webinar. Our topic today is a glimpse into the pandemic's landscape in the search, investigation, identification, and reunification of the missing. Presenting today's webinar is Jason Moran, Lieutenant with the Cook County Sheriff's Office and President of JEMM Consulting, LLC.

My name is Jodi Martin, and I will be your moderator for today. Before we begin the presentation, there are some items I need to go over. Participant recording of this webinar is strictly prohibited. The information presented on this webinar is collected, maintained, and provided purely for the convenience of the webinar participant. Any use of the webinar content without the express consent of NCJTC is strictly prohibited.

Poll questions will be asked during the webinar. With that, let's try our first poll question. The question is, which of the following best describes your role? Your choices are, search and rescue, law enforcement, government or tribal administration, social worker or victim service provider, or other.

As you can see from the results, at 4% we have search and rescue, at 22% we have law enforcement, at 13% we have government or tribal administration, at 40% we have social workers and victim service providers, and at 20% we have other. I'd like to welcome you again to our webinar. We are very pleased to introduce you to our presenter for today, Jason Moran. He is the president of JEMM Consulting, LLC. JEMM Consulting, LLC is a limited liability company organized to provide consulting and training services to individuals, businesses, and associations, educational institutions, and government agencies uncertain law enforcement subfields.

Some of these subfields are missing and unidentified persons, death investigations, human identification, cold or unresolved cases, and death care industry incidents. Jason is also a member of the Cook County Sheriff's Office where he has served for 23 years. He currently holds the rank of Lieutenant of Police. We are so fortunate to have Jason with us today. With that, Jason, I'll turn the time over to you.

All right. Well, thank you very much for tuning in. I appreciate it. This is a very important topic to me and I think it's very underserved. So to see so many people tuned in, it's remarkable, especially so many different groups from different fields. So again, my name is Jason Moran, and the opinions and viewpoints that I'm going to be talking about today are mine. Are mine and that of my teaching and consulting business, not any police department or government agency.

So the majority of my-- or a lot of my police and consulting and teaching career has focused around missing and unidentified persons. For long-term missing persons, unidentified deceased persons-- and that equals MUPS, by the way. So you'll see that acronym a lot, MUPS, Missing and Unidentified Persons.

Also, human identification. I've done a lot of that over the years. And complex deaths. This really all amounts to being cold case. Comparative osteology. Human bones versus animal bones. Death care industry. A lot of cold cases. Some missing and non-identified person cases leads you to cemeteries where exhumations are-- or the death care industry overall. Medical examiner, coroner's offices, old records. Again, this really is a part of cold cases, what we'll be talking about today.

DNA. Forensic genealogy, one of the newest methods that we're using. So this is where my background has been, and that's what we'll be talking about a lot today. What's the objectives? So we want to gain insight into how the pandemic has impacted all aspects of missing person cases. And this is multiple fields. Not just law enforcement, there's a lot of individuals and fields involved in missing person cases.

Understanding why this conference is important. This upcoming conference, the NCJTC Missing and Unidentified Person Conference. Why is this important to each participant during these times? What could you take from this? How do you use this information? Traveling to learn. What are you going to bring back with you? What's the resources that you can bring back with you to your respective agency or field? And determine how this conference impacts your role. How could you enhance your role? How could you make yourself better when it comes to these types of cases?

Let's talk a little bit about what changed during the pandemic. We're going to go over some numbers like we do with most things. In law enforcement, other fields, we talk about the numbers. We're going to use some numbers from the National Crime Information Center, NCIC. A criminal record database maintained by FBI, basically. It's the National Recognized Repository for Missing and Unidentified Persons.

So here are some numbers. 2018, we're going to concentrate on the left side of the screen. Pre-pandemic numbers. So 612,846 missing persons were entered into the system. So that means someone called local law enforcement to report someone missing, and law enforcement took the report and then entered the missing person into their state repository, whatever state they're from. And it automatically gets uploaded into NCIC, which is what we're looking at now. So we had almost 613,000 cases in 2018.

Now if you see, there are 615,629 were purged from NCIC in the same year. Purge means removed. It means-- and they're removed because the missing person returns or is located, or the record is canceled because it was invalid in some way. So in 2018, we actually purged more cases than we entered. And the reason that can be is because there's missing persons that roll over from the previous years. And that left us with 85,459 active missing person cases. Cases from 2018 and prior years.

Now we go into 2019. No one heard about the pandemic except for the very end of 2019 and it wasn't affecting this country. But we had 609,275 missing person records entered into NCIC. Now we only purged 607,000. A couple of thousand less than we entered. And that left us with about 87,438.

Now here's the weird thing or bizarre thing or something that we didn't really know was going to happen. Many people thought, because of some of the distractions with the pandemic in 2020, that we are going to have more missing person cases, more long-term or unresolved missing person cases. Well, that wasn't factual according to NCIC. We had less-- we entered less missing person records into NCIC than in the previous two years. Only 543,000 missing person records were entered. And we purged much less during the first year of the pandemic, 2020. 481,000 or so were purged, were removed from the system because the missing person returned or was located.

So that still left us, though, with a lot of active missing persons. We're still gaining every year. Now there's some factors that affect NCIC records like modified records or records removed by agencies that weren't the originally originating agency. I'm not going to get into all of the intricacies of it. But it just wasn't what we thought. We had a lot less missing persons, but we ended up with more active missing persons.

Juveniles. NCIC sort of separates-- the juveniles were sort of separated-- did not change as a result. So in that three-year period, there was not a substantial amount of change in missing juveniles if they're defined as either 18 or 21. It was still about 44% of the missing persons entered were juveniles. So that was sort of interesting, too. It did not affect-- the pandemic did not affect juveniles.

So what changed? We have less people reported missing. We also had fewer missing persons that were returned or relocated or cancelled out of our systems, and that was sort of surprising. What happened, though, is we were left with more active missing persons moving into the future.

Let's look at unidentified persons. Now this could be deceased, unidentified deceased, or other unidentified persons that are living. So we have unidentified deceased and unidentified living. Unidentified deceased are far more, but let's look at the numbers. 2018, 801 were entered into NCIC, which gave us about 8,135 active unidentified person records in NCIC.

Now this is similar to missing persons. They roll over from year to year. To 2019, 683 unidentified person records, which left us with about 8,200 active unidentified persons in the system rolling over again from each year. And then in 2020. But the same as 2018, nothing too different there. But each year we're adding 8,284 active unidentified person records.

Quick question, Jason.

Yes?

Excuse me. Is each year ending the running total overall? Or is the 2020 the final number of missing?

So they do roll over from year to year, but the purged number is sort of what confuses things. So you're purging missing person records from that year and from previous years, because sometimes a missing person is located that was reported missing, say, in 1995, but they were located this year, so they come out of this year's total. So it's a little confusing in that regards.

Two more questions, sorry. The number remaining active is cumulative. They include previous years. Do you know how far back those years date?

So the missing person index of NCIC started in 1975. 1975 or 1976. So it's rolling-- to my knowledge, it's rolling from that time.

Perfect. Thank you for the clarification. One final question. Is there an estimate of the percentage of the missing persons that were related to human trafficking cases?

Not in NCIC.

OK. Great. Thank you so much.

All right. So in 2020, according to NCIC, there were 89,637 active missing person records and only 8,284 unidentified person records. Now the difference there is 81,353. So if all 8,284 unidentified persons were entered as missing-- and now that's not to say that they were. But just as an example, if they were, that would still leave 81,353 active missing person records in the system. And that's the haunting number. Who are these people, where are these people?

Here's another repository. It's called NamUs, the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System. I know many of us are familiar with this. That's a national information clearinghouse, a resource center for missing unidentified-- and unclaimed. That's another subcategory name, it's unclaimed individuals. And we'll talk about unclaimed individuals later in the presentation. It's funded and administered by NIJ.

All right. So in 2020, NamUs recorded 2,916 missing person cases, about, and 984 unidentified person cases. Now this is-- there's a stark difference there between NCIC. NCIC had 89,637 active missing persons and 8,284 total. I'm sorry, let me go below there.

As of today, there are a total of 20,795 published missing person records and 13,824 published unidentified person records. So in contrast, NCIC had 89,637 active missing person records and 8,284 unidentified person records. So that's a stark contrast in a couple of ways. There's far more active missing person records in NCIC than there is in NamUs. But there's also more unidentified persons in NamUs than there is in NCIC.

Why is this? Well, NamUs is primarily used for long-term missing persons. So a lot of the missing person records, active missing person records we see in NCIC could be ones from yesterday or last week. They're not long-term missings. Whereas people turn to NamUs when their missing person cases become long-term. So that's one reason why there's less.

State mandates. A lot of states mandate that missing persons are entered into their state database, which then feeds into NCIC. Whereas there's only a handful of states that mandate missing person entry into NamUs. And then with the unidentified person records, why is there more unidentified person records in NamUs as opposed to NCIC? Could one reason be that medical examiners across the country are not necessarily law enforcement? Not statutorily considered law enforcement.

So they don't have access to NCIC. They depend on law enforcement to enter unidentified persons. And whereas NamUs coroners and MEs can enter unidentified. So that's one reason maybe why we have more unidentified persons in NamUs than NCIC.

Sorry, Jason. We have another audience question. Can a person be both unnamed on the site as well as named? For instance, a body is found but it is so badly decomposed that identification is almost impossible, but said body was listed as missing.

Well, you wouldn't know. So if a person-- if an unidentified deceased person was entered into NCIC or NamUs and they remain unidentified, we wouldn't know if they were entered in as a missing person because we don't know who they are. That's the whole point of these two systems, NCIC and NamUs, is to sort of give investigative leads on unidentified and missings. Associations. That's why both systems allow dental records to be entered. Dental records for missing persons and dental records from unidentified deceased persons. And then it'll give the users associations based on those dental records.

And it could be other identifiers. Height, weight, the area of disappearance, the area where the body was located. All these things help the systems help the users. I hope that helped. Any other questions?

There is one more question. Deaths from missing report. What was the biggest or highest cause? Do you know if it's mental health, drugs and alcohol, homicide, or unknown criminal activity?

So I think they're asking missing persons that have been located deceased. I think that's the question they're asking. And so how many people that were reported missing that were located as a deceased person were murdered or died of opioid overdose or whatever it may be? I don't have those statistics, but I think that's the question they're asking, and that is a good question, actually.

That's it for questions, thank you.

All right. So why the pandemic decrease/increase? The pandemic did not-- and I call it decrease/increase because the pandemic did not produce an increase in missing persons in 2020. Actually, missing persons entered in the system decreased during the pandemic year. And there's reasons for this, with lockdowns and other items. But the active missing person records did increase. The pandemic produced a small increase in active unidentified persons in 2020 over the previous year.

So less missing persons were removed from our state databases, therefore affecting the numbers in NCIC. We identified less unidentified persons during the same time period. Even though there was less missing persons reported, we also removed less from our systems because they returned or were located or we had to review and then cancel the record. And we identified less unidentified.

More long-term missing person cases and unidentified persons cases is precisely why we need this conference. If we're to continue to have these-- the more increases we have, the more conventional and contemporary investigative methods we need to apply. What else happened during the pandemic? Added to the active missing person numbers and the slight increase into the unidentified deceased person numbers.

Well, how about civil unrest? There's my city Chicago raising the bridges when looters and others were coming in to and save life and property. How about crime rates in 2020 and 2021? Assaults are up, carjackings murders. And this is most places. So what happens when you have a pandemic? Civil unrest and increased crime rates.

Well, non-criminal incidents like missing person investigations are not given the proper time and focus. And I call them non-criminal because according to our national statistic-- stat-keeping, being a missing person is not a criminal incident. Now I'm not talking about abductions or kidnappings. Those obviously are someone who is abducted or kidnapped is entered as a missing person and it's a criminal issue. But overwhelmingly, missing persons cases are looked at as non-criminal.

So when you have a pandemic, civil unrest, increased crime rates, missing person cases are often pushed to the side a little bit. They're not given the proper time and focus they deserve. This is also made worse by the fact that the majority of missing persons return or are located. We know this. We know that-- and thank God that the majority of missing persons return or are located. And that's another reason why it's easy to sort of push these cases to the side when there's other major incidents that's happening.

So what happens when you have, again, a pandemic, civil unrest, increased crime rates? Cold cases thrive. And all types of cold cases. People ask, well, what is a cold case? A lot of people think, well, it's just unsolved murders. Well, that's not true. There's other types of cold cases. And when you have all of these other things happening, they thrive. Unsolved murders thrive. Especially with the amount-- the increase in homicides across the country in most places, but many big cities, we're having more unsolved murders.

Long-term missings. We have more active missing persons after 2020. Unidentified deceased persons are up. This is another type of cold case. Open sexual assaults. Undetermined deaths. So undetermined deaths are when the cause and manner of death cannot be determined. All of these things go up.

So now we're accumulating lots of different types of cases. We have more open murders. More missings, more unidentified, more sex assaults that have not been closed. This is why we need to catch up on our game. We need more training. We need to be exposed to others who know how to resolve these cases.

So besides the civil unrest and crime rates, what else was happening? Then we resolve less cases. How about isolation and quarantine and distancing? How about if your missing person returned and families were hesitant to call the police because you didn't want to have contact, we were trying to avoid contact with each other? So therefore, the police were never made aware that your missing person return and they were never able to close the case.

How about law enforcement personnel being reassigned to pandemic-related duties? I know I was. Civil unrest duties. High crime areas. So law enforcement can't spend as much time on missing and unidentified persons and other types of cold cases or other types of incidents creating cold cases.

Coroners and medical examiners being inundated with pandemic-related deaths. Public health duties. So they have less focus on unidentified deceased. Our coroners and medical examiners, they don't just determine cause and manner of death or determine the post-mortem interval. Time of death til time of discovery. Or collect evidence in certain deaths for law enforcement and the criminal justice system overall. They also have an integral role in public health duties. And that's exactly what this pandemic was.

Just a brief focus on the medico-legal death profession. Many areas across the country-- in many areas across the country, every manner of death has increased during this pandemic period. There's more homicide. There's an uptick in suicide in some areas. More people taking their own lives during the pandemic. Accidental deaths. Car crashes. Opioid overdoses are considered accidental deaths. And of course, natural deaths are up because of the pandemic. COVID-19 deaths are considered a natural disease process, so our natural deaths have gone up.

Undetermined deaths have been on the rise even before the pandemic, but they have gone up. Perhaps law enforcement wasn't able to put as much time into assisting the ME or coroner understand the crime scene. Maybe the medical examiner or coroner wasn't able to-- some of their tests were delayed, so we had some undetermined deaths. Anyway, our coroners and medical examiners deserve a lot of praise during this pandemic. They've been through a lot also.

How about our scientists and laboratory professionals? They could benefit from this training as well, and we could benefit from understanding what they do. How about lab workers, lab professionals? Only one person in the lab at a time during the pandemic, So. As to distance from one another. Well, how does that slow our testing down? Like family reference samples for missing person cases, collecting family reference samples to try to learn about what happened to the missing. Those are being tested at a slower rate or were being tested at a slower rate.

How about our search and rescuer people? A lot of the search and rescuer people are volunteers. And now we're sending them-- we're asking them to come out during a pandemic and participate in searches. And they don't have-- some of them don't have liability insurance for this. What happens is they get sick? So they get up deserve a lot of credit for coming out to help during a pandemic.

Victim advocates, counseling services. Remember when we weren't meeting? The victim advocates and other counselors, they were doing it by phone, text, video conferencing. Is that always the best way? Is that always effective? Well, it was the best we can do at the time. And just all-- everybody-- all the fields that can benefit from the conference.

They're people and have families, too. I have a family also. Remember thinking about everything you touched at the beginning of the pandemic had a fatal disease? Spraying your packages down with Lysol? How easy is it to concentrate on a cold case or a murder case or a what you have going at the lab when your children are home doing remote learning? This was all very difficult.

And one reason why we have more active missing person cases and some more unidentified deceased. Every call for service, every new assignment, every public health emergency, the labs and testing, inability to travel to your office, this all affected what we were doing during the pandemic and how effective we were. It created a lot of anxiety. I remember being reassigned to a COVID-19 testing center for weeks at a time. Unable to work on the cold cases, because this was the priority.

So again, this is why we needed-- this is why we need the-- we need to catch up, we need to get back together, and we need to exchange ideas. What's working, what's not working? What's the new advances? How do you apply certain forensic methods? So here's just a little general introduction. Identifying innovative and effective technologies, approaches, and strategies. Investigation, identification, recovery, and reunification of missing persons.

Regardless of the circumstances, we investigate missing person cases the same. Or they should be. Doesn't matter. The group, the individual comes from the area. That the methods that we use are all the same or similar. Now there could be cultural differences that affect how we investigate. There could be topics, current topics that come up in a geographic area that may change certain things. But we use the same methods.

Day 1, when the unexpected happens, lessons learned and resources to help. Hear from experts from across the country. How they manage during these pandemic activities. So we could also prepare for the future, but how did they manage? What did they go through? What did they learn? Come learn about information-sharing. Like endless. How does one agency share information with another one?

Day 2, serving victims and families. Have you ever heard of victims' perspective? That's always been very important to me. When you're doing this every day and you're working with victims of crime, you're working with families of missing persons, how is what you do or say or operate, how does it affect the family? What's their perspective? That's really affected how I move forward in investigations or how I teach or how I consult.

Listening from victims of families. We're going to have a whole series of victims of families at the conference. What's new with NamUs, say? There's been some changes there. You can come listen to people that work directly for NamUs and NIJ. How about at-risk populations? What's the difference with someone that has dementia or autism when they go missing? At-risk populations? We're going to have experts there that can talk about best practices.

How about Day 3. When time passes, long-term missing cases. Forensic genealogy. When's the right time to use it? Is the DNA sample you use in conventional police work like the DNA sample you use in forensic genealogy? Or is it different? Well, it's different. We're going to have people that can talk about that.

How about drones? When are drones a good tool? So you're going to have everybody in one place that could talk about what's happening in the field. Law enforcement, cold case investigators, medico-legal death investigation, search and rescue, forensic science, victim advocacy, at-risk populations, juveniles. Everyone's going to be here in one place. There's no other conference with a more comprehensive agenda.

Knowing your own discipline. I've always said this is not enough. You have to know what the possibilities are. What's the limitations and what's the possibilities for other fields? You don't have to be the forensic pathologist to know what forensic pathology can accomplish for your investigation, say, if you're a law enforcement person. If learning-- if the individual had a particular drug in their case, drug in their system, toxicology testing, what if you had to learn before the toxicology could come back? Is there a STAT test that pathologists can do?

How good are they? What could you use them for? You don't have to be doing the STAT test, you don't have to be doing the toxicology to know what you could learn from it. Search and rescue people. How about cadaver dogs? Single-purpose cadaver dogs versus multipurpose. How do they train? How are they effective? You don't have to be the search and rescue professional, but you've got to know what their limitations are.

Victim advocate. When's the right time to bring a victim advocate into a sex trafficking case? Beginning, middle, end? How does it help the case? How does it further the case through prosecution, even? Knowledge is power. Knowing what each other do, knowing with all of us, everybody involved in this subfield-- all these subfields do helps us clear and close cases.

Learning best practices about what's happening during the pandemic. Case studies. How about-- I learned a lot from case studies. How about Project PRISM from Toronto, the 2018 campfire in Paradise, California, come listen to what they did when they had multiple deceased. How do you identify them all? How do you communicate with families?

Understand the most current search and rescuer policies and procedures. New technology. Computer science. What's available? Best practices and methods for locating missing persons in at-risk vulnerable populations. Native American population. The numbers are horrific in some areas. If you have Native American communities in your states or areas, this is important. Runaways, elderly.

What is human trafficking, really? There's a lot of misconceptions on human trafficking. We're going to have people there that could talk about human trafficking as it relates to missing persons. What could forensic genealogy do for you? All of these federal agencies-- DOJ, NIJ, FEMA. This is about bringing home resources to your agency. What could the feds bring back-- or offer you that you can bring back to your agencies?

How do we work with coroners and medical examiners. How do forensic labs work-- how can we better work together? The best in victim advocacy. What have we learned through the pandemic about victim advocacy? Your speakers and planning committee members. Well-published. We have this-- the impact of COVID-19 lockdown from England. And you know what? I read some of this. A lot of it was similar here. There was no drastic increase in missing persons during the pandemic here, but we had a lot of active missing still.

The *Journal of Search and Rescue*. These people all have helped plan the committee. This is a fantastic resource. Missing and murdered Indigenous women. NCJTC does a lot of field research and data. They collaborate with a lot of different groups and they can bring a lot of the research and data to you at the conference.

Here's a very interesting piece from the DOJ. Department of Justice journal, *Federal Law in Practice*. There's an article in there called "Living in a Cruel Limbo-- A Guide to Investigating Cold Missing Person Cases." Now I read that article, it's one of the best I've ever read. It's because I wrote it and I can't hear or see if you're laughing at that joke. But it has a lot-- this journal has a lot that's helpful.

I talk about in the journal-- or in this journal article how the existence of long-term missing person cases-- and this is just a little excerpt from it, the existence of long-term missing person cases is not just detrimental to the families and friends suffering from the absence of their loved one with so many unanswered questions. Law enforcement and society suffers from these cold cases, too.

The fact that there are people in society that have disappeared and have not returned or been located over a period of months, years, or decades can have several serious negative consequences for all of us. It can mean the citizens have become drug-addicted or are suffering from mental illness, which can lead to homelessness. It can mean that citizens have been forced into sex or labor trafficking. It could also mean that there is an active serial killer or killers in a particular region or throughout the country, traveling killers.

Any of these scenarios are serious societal ills there can be helped by proper missing person investigations. Again, it's not just the families that deserve answers as to the fate of their missing loved ones. Society needs to know what is happening to its citizenry. We need to know so we can put programs in place that assist the drug-addicted and mentally ill, or so law enforcement can arrest those that would prey on the community.

While being a long-term missing person is not illegal, it is an extremely bizarre status and one that communities should never accept. For this and other reasons, it is imperative that law enforcement implement effective cold case programs throughout the country. And that's exactly what this conference is going to help you do.



Here's just a little taste. I got a couple of minutes left. Just a little taste about missing person versus found persons. So we know what a missing person is. Any person who is reported missing to law enforcement when that person's location is unknown. Unknown person, though. We know who they are, their location is unknown.

A found person. An individual who is found and not aware of their identity or whereabouts and cannot make contact with a responsible person who has a concern for their welfare. So an example of this is an elderly individual, say, with Alzheimer's or dementia. They're walking around the neighborhood, the police get called, others get called, make contact with the individual, and they cannot tell you who they are. They don't know their name. They can't explain to you why they've come to this pass.

Or even a young child. Two or three-year-old walking through the neighborhood cannot tell you, this is my name, this is where I live. That's a found person. Now a found person can be a missing person, but you won't know until you identify that found person. And just a side note, too. Remember that a missing person that returns or is located is not a found person. These are two separate categories. Missing person and found person are different. When a missing person returns or is located, they're considered a missing person located, not a found person.

Here's another category of person. Unidentified person. An individual living or deceased who identity is unknown. So you could have a living-- an unidentified person that's living. These people are commonly referred to as John or Jane Does, or a first name that pertains to a fact pertinent to the case, and then Doe is the last name, like Gacy Doe or Norwood Park Township Doe.

We typically concentrate on unidentified deceased persons as opposed to unidentified living persons, simply because there's more unidentified deceased. But know, if you're doing these types of cases, that there's mental health centers across the country that have unidentified persons living there. And they very well could be your missing person. But you never knew that there was a specific population in the mental health systems that were unidentified.

For the unidentified deceased, you gotta know, what is the best practices for your coroner and your medical examiners? What is their policy? What is their procedures? Unclaimed person, here's another category. A deceased individual whose identity is known but who's next of kin is unknown or does not exist. It's unfortunate, but some people don't have anyone. They have no next of kin. But sometimes they do and they're just not located. So these people are unclaimed.

This classification of decedent is typically not a missing person in life, but can become missing in death if the next of kin is never located. And this was happening during the pandemic. So because we weren't visiting one another for a period of months or even a year, and people started visiting their family members, from out of state or trying to contact them, well, they had passed away and next of kin was never located. So people would file missing person reports for an individual that was already deceased.

But because there were unclaimed, their family or friends never knew it. These become public administrator cases. So when you're looking at a cold missing person cases or even current ones, are you looking to the public administrator's office? What is the policies of your medical examiner or coroner as it pertains to unclaimed decedents? Do they post them somewhere? Is law enforcement and our medico-legal death individuals talking to one another?

So most cases are complex. Missing and identified persons, cold cases, these are complex cases. And it really-- the old saying, it takes a village, it does. There's a lot of people that we all need to be firing-- all of our cylinders need to be firing to resolve these cases. Everybody that I mentioned, everybody that's tuned in from your respective field needs to be working together, because it's a complex subfield of investigations.

OK. It's time for our poll question. The question is, do you anticipate attending the National Missing and Unidentified Persons Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada scheduled April 25 through the 27th in 2022? Your choices are yes, no, unsure, or my agency does not allow travel at this time. All right. As you can see from our results, 18% stated yes, 26% stated no, 34% stated they were unsure, and 21% stated their agency does not allow travel at this time.

All right. So here are some attributing sources to some of my photos and images. And I guess I think it's time for any questions.

Thank you, Jason, for the excellent presentation today and sharing your insights and knowledge with us. We're now moving into the question-and-answer portion of the webinar. We do have a number of questions here for you, Jason. The first one, other than Interpol, what other databases maintain missing persons outside the US? For example, illegal immigrants come to mind.

Well, one, there is some in VICAP, in the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program-- it's an FBI program. There is some long-term missing person and unidentified deceased person cases in there. So that's one that sort of gets shared countrywide and a little bit beyond.

OK. Another question. With respect to long-term missing persons cases, when they are entered in NamUs, at what point will law enforcement cross-reference within CODIS and NDIS?

So the missing person agency responsible for the missing person record will be aware of-- I think-- did you mention CODIS there? And what was the other part, Jodi?

CODIS and NDIS.

OK. So NDIS, CODIS, really sort of the same thing. The national level of CODIS is NDIS. So if the originating agency that entered the case into NamUs or validated the case, because a family entered it, therefore allowing it to be published, they're the ones that are going to either collect samples from the missing person-- so a direct sample, say a missing person's razor blade they use for shaving. They will either collect and submit it to a lab or they'll have another agency do it. A courtesy collection.

Or family reference samples. So samples from family members of missing persons. If there's no direct reference sample available, they'll either collect the sample or request that another agency collect it, another courtesy collection. That'll be sent to an appropriate lab, the items will be tested, and the DNA profiles from those items will go from the local level to the state level to the national level of CODIS or NDIS, and will be searched against unidentified human remains throughout the country. And that will be - that'll be updated in NamUs accordingly.

Great, thank you. Another question. In your opinion, did COVID actually allow for investigators to spend more or less time on missing person cases?

That was really sort of a mix, I've noticed, from some of my friends and other agencies. Some detectives that we're doing cold cases or long-term cases-- long-term missing or unresolved cases, some of them got reassigned to other duties. So they had less time. Others, because everybody was trying to stay away from one another and the social distancing and they had some time to maybe look into some old cases, whether they be murders or missing or unidentifieds, whereas before they didn't have the time to do it.

So it was a little bit more of a mix. But overall, we are going to have more open murder cases and active missing and unidentified persons and other cold cases because of the pandemic than we did before.

Great. Thank you. My state's missing persons clearing house has 1,310 or more missing. Bulletins-- excuse me, I'm sorry. Bulletins link with less than 10% with bulletins. Can you make any recommendations on how to address this? Do you need me to reread that?

Well, yeah. I mean, I heard you, but I'm understanding, would bulletins linked to the entry? Is that what the individual is asking? Like a missing person, bulletin that's linked to the entry in the missing persons clearinghouse for that state?

Yes. They have over 1,300 missing with a bulletin link with less than 10%-- oh, OK. I'm sorry, I might need some clarification on that. Until I get that clarification, I'll just read the next question.

Well, I think what they're saying-- and if they want to send clarification, that's fine. I think what the individual is asking, sometimes there's missing person entries that don't have, say, a photograph of the missing. It's only their name and where they lived and there's no other bulletin or information attached. And that's going to be-- I think that's what they're asking, and that's sort of a hard--

Yes.

--where NamUs-- NamUs kind of helps with that, because you could attach the photos and everything right to it.

OK. He's confirming that is correct. Bullets equals less than 10% have passed here.

Yeah. That's sort of an investigative deficiency. We should be on missing person cases, especially missing person cases for-- the individual's been gone for more than 30 days. We really should be attaching photos, we should be doing bulletins, we should be attaching dental records. That's full-court press.

So if there's an option in your state database to enter these things, every day the person remains missing, we should be adding more information.

OK, great. Here's a question. Will the conference address the reintegration of national DNA processing services for law enforcement? We have been struggling since UNT froze their processing for other states other than Texas.

Yeah, that's a problem, isn't it? I know a lot of individuals and agencies that I know and work with have been affected by that, especially with the mitochondrial DNA. Because on long-term missing and unidentified human remains cases, especially historic cases, you want that mito DNA, and not all labs do it, and it was an incredible resource.

I know from talking with-- well, our own planning committee members with this conference and others, that's being worked on and I think it's going to be resolved in the near future. And we'll have another contract in another lab, another-- maybe even UNT that's going to be participating.

OK, great. The next question. Are the definitions for missing found in unidentified persons universal definitions used across all states and local jurisdictions? If not, can you explain?

Not always. Many people refer to a missing person that has returned or been located as a found person. And that sort of just adds to confusion. A found person, like I talked about before, is someone that we don't-- an individual that we come across, usually an older person or a very young child, they can't tell us who they are. And that's a found person. And it's our job to identify them. And we may learn through identifying them that they were reported missing. But that terminology is important.

And while in most places, missing persons are different than found persons, different than unidentified deceased or living or unclaimed persons, that's exactly why you need good policies and procedures in training, to sort of establish what all these different-- who all these different people that are in this subfield of cold case or long-term missings.

OK, great. Thank you. Do you know-- I'm sorry, do you have any information of when NamUs will be up and running again so that skeletal remains can be examined?

So NamUs is up and running. The database NamUs is up and running. It has not been offline. But I know what you're talking about. You're talking about those resources that UNT had offered, especially with skeletal analysis and specifically the DNA testing. So that is-- they're getting close. They're getting close. And hopefully by time the conference comes around, we'll be able to-- we'll have all the information we need. But they're getting close to getting back doing those-- providing those types of resources. And the old ontology, too. That was very important, the dental-- forensic dentistry. That was another important resource.

Great, thank you. Just a few more questions remaining. How do you address fatigue from missing person bulletins or notices to the public? I noticed many online will look up the history of the person and advise others of what they find, particularly if they have been missing multiple times.

I guess the question, you're probably talking about keeping the public engaged, because some missing persons go missing often in the case of, say, like a runaway. I think they're probably talking about how do you keep the missing person-- the public engaged, in other words. That happens to law enforcement enforcement, too, and not just the public.

Because the majority of missing persons return or are located, sometimes law enforcement and others involved in this work, we don't always take it seriously. Because they'll come back in a day or two or-- with this question, like a runaway. Well, this is the second time they went missing this month. So how are we going to continue to expend resources on this or bother the public with it?

I think it's-- we have to look at missing person cases almost like the unidentified deceased person laying on the slab down at the morgue. We cannot-- we have to look at it from that standpoint. That everything we do on a missing person case could help resolve the cold case or the unidentified deceased at the morgue or at your coroner, medical examiner's office. We cannot become apathetic just because the majority of missing persons return or are located or because we have runaways. So I think if we sort of frame it in that way and use good judgment, we could still keep people from losing interest.

Thanks, Jason. I have two questions remaining. One of them is, would it be considered a positive identification-- sorry, I just lost my spot. One moment. OK. Would it be considered a positive identification by the next of kin of the missing person based on the clothing and jewelry worn during the time of discovery of the missing whose cadaver was in a state of decomposition?

So that would have to be extremely-- just jewelry or just clothing alone, the jewelry has to be real, real unique if we're going to-- so human identification is based off of case facts and circumstances and a scientific method. So if a deceased person is found out in the public-- in a field, in a forest, in a car, in the water.

So they're outside of their own residence, they're out in the community and they're not recognizable-- so in other words, a family member cannot view their face or next of kin for this question. Cannot view their face because the individual's face is decomposed or there's trauma to the face. Then we have to use case facts and circumstances and one form of scientific ID. Fingerprints, dental, DNA.

So the circumstances would be provided with the clothing and the jewelry. What's one circumstance? The missing person and the unidentified person both had red shirts on and blue jeans. And they both wore a simple silver band on their middle finger. OK, we got circumstance. But if the body can't be viewed, we gotta use some sort of scientific ID-- fingerprints, dental DNA-- to support the circumstances surrounding the clothing and the jewelry.

But each case is different. I've had some cases where we've combined several circumstances, like jewelry and clothing, along with other things, and we were able to make the ID.

Thank you. Here's the final question. In the future, are there things that we as law enforcement officers or those involved in search and rescue should do or think about in the event another pandemic or disaster occurs? Any tips for planning ahead or advice for what we need to put in place now to address similar issues in the future?

Yeah, that's tough. That's a tough one. Only in that-- and God forbid there's another pandemic, but what is it going to be? What's the pandemic going to be, you know what I mean? So what's the natural disaster going to be? We just have to employ sound policies and procedures, stay up with our training, and have a support system that helps us with these cases.

We can't be scrambling to be looking for a search and rescue team during the next natural disaster. We gotta know who that is before. We gotta be training with them. Who are our victim advocates that could help with a sex trafficking case? You've got to identify that before you have are this type of case, daring that's going to be exacerbated by a pandemic. Who is your anthropologist? Who is your-- what is your ME and coroner's policy? You've got to have all these things going before. You've got to be trained, you've got to have the policies and procedures, and that's why conferences like this one are so important.

Thank you again, Jason. This concludes the question-and-answer portion of the webinar. I'd like to Thank Jason Moran a final time for his time and insight on this important topic. If you are interested in additional training, please visit [ncjtc.org](http://ncjtc.org) a listing of upcoming training opportunities or to review our on-demand online training. Thank you for joining us today and have a great day.