

For Families of the Missing

According to [NamUs](#), the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System, over 600,000 individuals go missing in the United States every year. But for families who are missing a loved one, their person is the one that matters. Our hearts go out to these families who are desperate for answers.

The DNA Doe Project is unable to help with missing persons, only unidentified remains. However, if you have a family member who has gone missing, we want you to get the best advice possible. We suggest you consider the following steps:

- File a Missing Person Report with the local law enforcement agency in the area where your loved one last resided.
- Provide a DNA sample either from the Missing Person or an immediate family member. If possible, a DNA sample from the Missing Person is preferred. This could be a hairbrush, toothbrush or biological sample. A DNA sample from an immediate family member is also known as a Family Reference Sample (FRS). If a Family Reference Sample is taken, it will usually be done at the time the report is made, or shortly thereafter. If you are not invited to give a Family Reference Sample, inquire with the agency. Family members who provide a Family Reference Sample or DNA sample will need to complete paperwork. The agency might also ask for the dental records of the Missing Person. Filing a Missing Person Report and providing a DNA sample may prove to be daunting at first, but be persistent!
- Make sure there is an active record for the Missing Person in <https://www.namus.gov/>. The family can coordinate with a NamUs regional program director who can assist them. Check the NamUs record periodically because records get purged.
- Anyone who is related can help by taking a direct-to-consumer DNA test with [Ancestry](#), [23andMe](#), or [MyHeritage](#), and then uploading their results to the open-matching database <https://www.gedmatch.com> and to <https://www.familytreedna.com/>. Whoever does so should be sure their email is valid so that they can be reached if they are a match to a Doe.

- We recommend that if a family member chooses to DNA test, they test with either [Ancestry](#) or [23andMe](#) because they have the largest databases. There are over 30 million people combined between the two companies. Another reason for choosing one of these two companies is that you can then upload your data to the remaining direct-to-consumer databases and [GEDmatch](#). There is always the possibility that your missing family member may be alive and has also DNA tested. Uploading your results to [GEDmatch](#) and [FTDNA](#) is the only way that Law Enforcement can match your DNA profile to that of unidentified remains. There are smaller DNA databases which claim to have proprietary software, but they do not have the reach of [GEDmatch](#) and [FTDNA](#).
- Build a free online family tree with as much information as possible at [Ancestry.com](#), which is preferable, or [familysearch.org](#). If you build the tree on [Ancestry](#), be sure to make it public.

We do caution anyone who considers taking a direct-to-consumer DNA test to familiarize themselves with the company's Terms of Service so they understand how their data might be used. It is important to note that DNA testing can produce unexpected results. If uncovering a family secret would be upsetting, the person should not test.

If you have already taken a direct-to-consumer DNA test and choose to upload to either [GEDmatch](#), [FTDNA](#), or one of the other companies that allows uploads, make sure to read that company's Terms of Service, too, and also understand that unexpected results can occur at any time.

For those who wish to help, but do not feel comfortable with DNA testing, create an online family tree with as much information as possible and make sure it's public.

If you have a missing family member, friend or loved one, our hearts go out to you. We hope these recommendations are helpful.

DNA Doe Project

July 2021