Missing Residential Student Notification Policy

Summary/Purpose: To establish a set of procedures for the University of Mississippi on-campus Residential Student community regarding the reporting, investigating and required emergency notification when a Residential Student is deemed to be missing.

Definitions
A. Residential Student: a student who resides in on-campus housing under a housing contract/lease and is currently enrolled at the University.
B. Missing: (1) a Residential Student is presumed missing if she or he is overdue in reaching home or campus for more than 24 hours past an expected arrival and a check of the student’s residence supports that determination. (2) A Residential Student may be considered missing if she or he is overdue in reaching home, campus or another specific location past the expected arrival, additional factors lead University staff to believe she or he is missing, and a check of the student's residence supports that determination.

Notification to Residential Students
A. Residential Students will be informed of the option to identify an individual(s) to be contacted by the institution not later than 24 hours after the time the student is determined missing.
B. Residential Students under 18 years of age and not emancipated individuals are to be informed that the University is required to notify a custodial parent or guardian not later than 24 hours after the time that the student is determined missing.
C. Residential Students will be informed that the University will notify the appropriate law enforcement agency within 24 hours after the time that the student is determined missing.
D. Residential Students will be informed of the option to confidentially identify an individual, and her or his telephone number(s), to be contacted by the institution not later than 24 hours after the time that the student is determined missing. The Department of Student Housing and Residence Life will collect and maintain the confidential information by using StarRez (assignment program). The student is responsible for ensuring the contact information is up-to-date and accurate.

Procedures for Reporting and for Investigating Missing Students
A. Confirmed as a Residential Student: Any University employee or student who receives information that a student is missing, and believes he or she is a Residential Student, must immediately report the information or evidence to the UM Department of Student Housing and Residence Life.

B. Unable to confirm as a Residential Student: Any University employee who receives information that a student is missing, and is unable to confirm that he or she is a Residential Student, must immediately report the information or evidence to the Office of the Dean of Students. The Office of the Dean of Students will determine if the student lives on campus or off campus. If the student is a Residential Student, the Dean’s office will contact the Department of Student Housing and Residence Life to begin the investigation. If the student does not live on campus, the Dean’s office will work directly with law enforcement to investigate.
C. If the student is not a Residential Student, UM Police Department (UPD) will conduct a preliminary investigation to verify the situation and to determine the circumstances which exist relating to the reported missing student. If UPD determines that the student should be considered missing, an officer will contact the appropriate outside law enforcement agency and provide the relevant information.

All pertinent law enforcement agencies, including, if known, those operating in the student’s normal routes of travel or hometown, will be notified and requested to render assistance; all law enforcement agencies involved will receive routine investigation status reports during the course of the investigation. If UPD determines that the student should be considered missing, the person making the initial report will be encouraged to make an official missing person report to local police.

D. If the student is a Residential Student, the staff of the UM Department of Student Housing and Residence Life will conduct a preliminary investigation in order to verify the situation and to determine the circumstances which exist relating to the reported missing student.

1. A staff member will attempt to contact the student via her or his telephone by using the number(s) provided.

2. If the student cannot be reached by telephone, two staff members will visit the room of the Residential Student in question to verify the student’s whereabouts and/or wellness, and, in some cases, deliver a message to contact a parent or family member who is searching for the student.

3. If the Residential Student is not at the room, but the room is occupied, the Residence Life staff will attempt to gain information on the student’s whereabouts and/or wellness from questioning the occupants.

4. If there is no response when the staff members knock on the door of the room or there are occupants who do not know of the student’s whereabouts, the Residence Life staff will enter into the room in question, by key if necessary, to perform a health and safety inspection. The staff members will take note of the condition of the room and look for visible personal property (wallet, keys, cell phone, clothing, etc.) which might provide clues as to whether the student has taken an extended trip or leave from the residence hall.

5. If the student is not found in the room, the Residence Life staff will attempt to gain information on the student’s whereabouts from roommates, other members of the residential community, or other friends. The Residence Life staff also will attempt to acquire additional contact information for the student (if not already on file) and use it to initiate contact.

6. Staff members, at any step in the process, immediately will report any suspicious findings to the UM Police Department.
7. If all of these steps do not provide residential staff with an opportunity to speak with the missing student or to learn her or his whereabouts, UM Police will be contacted to investigate further.

8. If the missing student is determined to be under the age of eighteen, the Office of the Dean of Students will contact the parents or guardians within 24 hours. If the missing student is determined to be over the age of eighteen, the Office of the Dean of Students will contact the student’s confidential contact within 24 hours.

9. If these steps provide Residence Life staff with an opportunity to speak with the missing Residential Student, verification of the student’s state of health and intention of returning to campus should be made. A referral, if needed, will be made to the UM Counseling Center. The Department of Student Housing and Residence Life will contact UPD to document that a missing student investigation was begun and apprise them of the student’s state of health and well-being.