Missing Student Notification Policy

Policy Type: Administrative  
Responsible Office: Division of Student Affairs  
Initial Policy Approved: 09/08/2010  
Current Revision Approved: 06/24/2013

Policy Statement and Purpose

The following policy has been developed to establish a missing student notification policy, accompanying missing student notification procedures and to comply with the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008.

Noncompliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. VCU supports an environment free from retaliation. Retaliation against any employee who brings forth a good faith concern, asks a clarifying question, or participates in an investigation is prohibited.

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Who Should Know This Policy

All VCU faculty, staff and students should read this policy.
Definitions

Emancipated Individual

A person less than 18 years of age who has been declared by a court to be independent of their parents.

Missing Student

A student will be deemed to be missing when there has been no contact with the student, through regular or normal contacts, for more than 24 hours.

Student

A person enrolled in one or more courses at Virginia Commonwealth University, including employees of Virginia Commonwealth University or the Virginia Commonwealth University Health System.

University Housing

Residential living areas managed by the University's Department of Residential Life and Housing.

Contacts

The Division of Student Affairs officially interprets this policy and shall revise or eliminate any or all parts as necessary to meet the changing needs of Virginia Commonwealth University. Please direct policy questions to the Division of Student Affairs.

Procedures

Student Registration Process

Students are encouraged to utilize forms prepared and made available by the University to provide their emergency contact information. The University will ensure that all students are able to update their contact information when needed. These procedures and form are communicated routinely to students during: new student orientation, residence hall meetings and the start of fall and spring semesters. Notification of this policy is referenced in the annual Campus Security Report and the VCU Insider. It is also located on the VCU Police Department website, and Division of Student Affairs Website.

Students must be reassured that their emergency contact information will be:

1) Registered confidentially
2) Accessible only to authorized campus officials
3) Disclosed only to law enforcement personnel for the sole purpose of their investigation.
**Missing Student Determination**

All students will have the opportunity and means to identify an individual or individuals to be contacted in an emergency, when the University determines that a student is missing. Upon receipt of a complaint, report or expression of concern about a missing student, the Virginia Commonwealth University Police Department (VCUPD) will undertake all reasonable efforts and attempts to contact the student. A student generally will be deemed missing when contact has not been made for more than 24 hours but the time period may be accelerated and appropriate intervention will occur sooner when:

- There is evidence of possible criminal activity in connection with the student’s disappearance;
- The student, regardless of age, has a known or suspected physical/mental disability or condition or is otherwise compromised and there is thought to exist risk of an immediate danger to his/her safety or the safety of others. The student, regardless of age, is believed to be in the company, voluntarily or involuntarily, of another person under circumstances indicating that his/her physical safety is in danger, or;
- If a student possibly poses a threat of harm to his or herself.

The responding VCUPD officer(s) will establish whether the student has been physically on VCU property or in an area within the scope of the VCUPD jurisdiction rather than in the jurisdiction of another police agency. If the student was last seen in another jurisdiction, the complainant shall be assisted in contacting the appropriate police department in order to file a report.

**Notification Procedures**

Any individual who believes a student may be missing should contact the VCUPD. After reliable information has been obtained, the appropriate individuals and authorities will be notified. Other steps that may be taken depending on the circumstance include:

- Attempting to contact the student through all reasonable and available means;
- Investigate the validity of the missing person report and manage the information according to established investigative standards;
- VCUPD will notify the Associate Vice Provost and Dean of Student Affairs, the Senior Vice President of Finance and Administration, and the Director of Residential Life and Housing to seek their aid in the investigation, and;
- VCUPD will contact any other appropriate law enforcement agencies as necessary to further its investigation.

If, within 24 hours of the missing student report, VCUPD is unable to locate the missing student and the student is not known to have returned to University property or not otherwise located, VCUPD will notify the appropriate University personnel for the following action(s):

- Notification to the individual(s) that the student has designated as their emergency contact and document the date and time of the notification.
• Notification to the custodial parents or legal guardian if a student is under the age of 18 and not emancipated and document the date and time of the notification.

When the missing student is located, VCUPD will contact the student to offer any appropriate support, as well the emergency contacts and/or parents to confirm the student has been located.

If the initial investigation is unsuccessful in locating the missing student, VCUPD will continue to investigate according to established police procedures.

**Forms**

There are no forms associated with this policy and procedures.

**Related Documents**


**Revision History**

This policy supersedes the following archived policies:

Approved 09/08/2010, Revision date 06/24/2013 *Missing Student Notification Policy*

**FAQs**

There are no FAQs associated with this policy and procedures.