

# Best Reporting Practices for Postmortem Dental Records



The National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) is a national centralized repository and resource center for missing, unidentified, and unclaimed person cases throughout the United States.

Dental records provide an opportunity to make rapid, cost-effective, detailed comparisons between missing persons and unidentified decedent records. Agencies can directly upload dental information for missing and unidentified person cases to NamUs. Additionally, NamUs odontologists assist agencies with scanning, analyzing, coding, and comparing dental records, as well as the completion of NCIC dental worksheets to facilitate inclusions and exclusions of potential case matches. Please see the general guidelines of what to include in an unidentified remains case to allow for comparison and identification.

Agencies can directly upload dental information for missing and unidentified person cases to NamUs. Alternatively, NamUs forensic odontologists can digitally scan, code, and upload information to NamUs cases on behalf of investigating agencies. NamUs provides pre-paid shipping labels to submit dental information for processing, and all records will be returned to the submitting agency after upload to NamUs.

## The Ideal Dental Documentation for an Entry Includes:

### 1. Dental Radiographs

- Mark hard film radiographs and panorex film with the date taken and right-left orientation.
- Original radiographs are best for comparison purposes. Computer scans of the original films are acceptable when using a transparency scanner processed at 300 dpi or higher with appropriate brightness and contrast settings for the scan.
- Xerox copies of film will not be accepted. Copying machines do not produce adequate resolution for dental charting purposes.
- Digital dental radiographs should be saved in JPEG or TIFF formats and uploaded to the associated NamUs profile.
- Dental radiographs must be taken before teeth are removed for genetic testing.

### 2. Dental Photographs

- Include intraoral photographs showing occlusal and side views of the dentition.
- Original film is best for comparison purposes, but computer scans of the original film are acceptable when processed at 300 dpi or higher with appropriate brightness and contrast settings for the scan.
- Dental photographs must be taken before teeth are removed for genetic testing.
- Photograph any loose teeth separately.
- Digital dental photographs should be saved in JPEG or TIFF formats and uploaded to the associated NamUs profile.

### 3. Dental Charting

- If your agency already works with a forensic dentist, please have the forensic dentist include postmortem charting of existing restorations, missing teeth, etc. Ideally, this would be done using the NCIC Dental Condition Worksheet, which can be directly uploaded to the NamUs profile.
- If you do not employ or consult with a forensic dentist, NamUs will provide dental charting services for you at no cost.

*NOTE: 3D scanning images (e.g. CT scans) and medical lateral skull films DO NOT represent details of dental restorations and should not be used as a substitute for radiographic and photographic representations of the dental remains.*