



# Obtaining and Submitting Legible Fingerprints from Deceased Individuals

## Quick Reference Guide

Unknown deceased individuals can be identified rapidly using their fingerprints. This document offers postmortem fingerprint guidance:

- *Postmortem fingerprint collection*
- *Training for legible fingerprint collection*
- *When to submit*
- *What to submit/retain*
- *How to submit*
- *Additional assistance*

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## Collecting Postmortem Fingerprints

### *FBI's Laboratory Division Video Series*

<https://fbibiospecs.fbi.gov/video-repository>

- Postmortem printing
- Tissue builder techniques
- Photography of friction ridge
- Postmortem palm printing
- Degloving method
- Boiling rehydration method
- Casting techniques
- And more

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## When to Submit

- Submit fingerprints for active or newly opened cold cases to the state's fingerprint based system, the Next Generation Identification (NGI) System, and the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as soon as possible.
- Determine if the fingerprints for cold cases previously were submitted to the NGI System by contacting the Special Processing Center (SPC). *(All contact information located on back page.)*
- Consider recurring submission as search algorithms may improve over time.
- Determine whether fingerprints have been submitted to NamUs by contacting the Regional Program Specialist at NamUs.

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## What to Submit/Retain

- **Submission**
  - Presumed name(s)
  - Date of birth
  - Fingerprint data.
- **Retention**
  - Presumed Names
  - FBI Universal Control Number **and** Date Submitted
  - NamUs Case Number **and** Date Submitted
  - Medical Examiner Case **and** Date Submitted
  - Originating Agency Point of Contact
  - Originating Agency Identifier
  - Controlling Agency Identifier
  - National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Number
  - Missing Person File Queried Date
  - Unidentified Person File Queried Date
  - NCIC Offline Search Request Date

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## How to Submit

- **Submit to the state's fingerprint-based system.**
  - Use the Unknown Deceased (DEU) and Known Deceased (DEK) types of transactions (TOT) (if programmed).
    - Use the DEU when name is not available.
    - Use the DEK when you have a presumed name.
  - Submit as Type-14 records (as described in [ANSI/NIST-ITL 1-2011](#))<sup>1</sup> as these provide valuable information for troubleshooting.
  - If the state is not programmed for DEU and DEK TOTs or submissions, contact the state's repository for a manual fingerprint search.
  - Submit to a state Missing and Unidentified Persons Clearinghouse, if available.
- **Submit to the NGI System.**
  - Submit from the state as a DEU or DEK (if programmed).
  - Submit to the FBI's SPC (if not programmed for DEU or DEK).
    - Submit photos of casts/three-dimensional impressions to SPC.
    - Use common file format (.pdf, .tif, etc.).
    - Use minimum resolution of 500 pixels per inch.
    - Fax using ultrafine/superfine resolutions and use direct import for best resolution.
- **Submit to the NamUs.**
  - Drag and drop—If listed as a case contributor on the case, you can drag and drop the fingerprint card into the NamUs case file.
  - Digitize and upload fingerprints to send via email.
  - Submit hard copy cards via mail.
  - Coordinate with your NamUs Regional Program Specialist for submission.

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1 <https://www.nist.gov/programs-projects/ansinist-itl-standard>

## Additional Assistance

**FBI's CJIS Division  
Deceased Persons  
Identification (DPI)  
Services**  
DPIServices@fbi.gov

- Staffs the analytical arm of DPI Services.
- Conducts agency outreach.
- Performs program enhancement.
- Provides programming assistance.
- Is available to law enforcement agencies, medical examiners, and coroners.

**FBI's CJIS Division SPC**  
SPC\_Team@fbi.gov

- Staffs the operational arm of DPI Services.
- Conducts deceased identification research.
- Is available to law enforcement agencies, medical examiners, and coroners.

**NCIC files**  
Contact your state  
CJIS Systems Agency regarding  
policy for entry/inquiry

- NCIC Missing Person File.
- NCIC Unidentified Person File.
- Is available to authorized law enforcement and criminal justice agencies.
- Is available to authorized medical examiners and coroners.

**FBI's CJIS Division  
NCIC Staff**  
IOAU@fbi.gov  
304-625-3000

- NCIC Offline Search.
- Is available to authorized law enforcement and criminal justice agencies.

**NamUs**  
<https://namus.nij.ojp.gov/contact>

- Nationwide missing and unidentified clearinghouse.
- Regional coordinators to assist with missing person and unidentified remains cases.
- Is available to law enforcement and the public.

**FBI's CJIS Division  
Customer Service Group**  
304-625-5590

- Provides guidance for obtaining legible fingerprints.

This document was produced by the DPI Services Best Practices Focus Group, formed to close the identification gap for unknown deceased individuals. This group includes subject matter experts from the FBI; federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies; medical examiners and coroners; the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System; the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children; the Black and Missing Foundation; the Doe Network; and The National Consortium of Justice Information and Statistics. For more information, email DPIServices@fbi.gov.