FORT LEWIS COLLEGE
DURANGO, COLORADO

Missing Student Notification and Preliminary Wellness Assessment Policy

Division of Student Affairs

Effective date: August 1, 2026
Review Date: Annually, each August
Issuing Authority: Vice President for Student Affairs
Applies To: All enrolled students
Supersedes: All prior missing student procedures

1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures for responding to reports of missing Fort Lewis College (College) students and to ensure compliance with Colorado Senate Bill 26-120 and as codified at C.R.S. § 23-5-141 and applicable state and federal law.

This policy applies to Fort Lewis College personnel who receive, respond to, coordinate, document, or otherwise participate in a report that a Fort Lewis College student may be missing.

Nothing in this policy limits or replaces the responsibilities of the Fort Lewis College Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA).

2. Definitions

Definitions related to this policy include:

Missing Student - A Fort Lewis College (College) student whose whereabouts are unknown and who has been reported missing or whose circumstances create reasonable concern regarding the student's location, safety, or welfare.

Preliminary Wellness Assessment - A College process authorized by Colorado law to make reasonable efforts to determine the location and welfare of a student reported missing before law enforcement notification when circumstances do not indicate an immediate risk to the student's safety. A preliminary wellness assessment is not a law enforcement investigation and shall not replace or unnecessarily delay a missing-person investigation.

Residential Verification - An attempt by authorized College personnel to determine whether a student who resides in College-controlled housing is present at the student's assigned residence.

3. Legal Authority and Background

It is the policy of Fort Lewis College (College) to respond promptly to reports that a student may be missing and to take reasonable measures to determine the student's location and welfare.
The College recognizes that there is no requirement for a student to be missing for 24 hours, 48 hours, or any other predetermined period before a missing-person concern may be reported to law enforcement.

Because the College maintains its own Police Department, College personnel are encouraged to promptly notify the Fort Lewis College Police Department (FLCPD) whenever there is a reasonable concern regarding a student's whereabouts or welfare.

A Preliminary Wellness Assessment (PWA) shall not be used to delay notification to law enforcement when circumstances indicate that immediate law enforcement involvement is appropriate.

4. Scope

This policy applies to all Fort Lewis College students, including:

- Students residing in College-managed residence halls or College apartments.
- Students living in off-campus housing whose well-being is reported to the College.
- Any enrolled student whose whereabouts or safety is reported as a concern by a roommate, family member, faculty member, peer, or College staff.

5. Receipt of a Missing Student Report

Any College community member (faculty/staff/student) receiving information that a student may be missing should initiate the College Person of Concern reporting process. Upon receiving a report that a student may be missing, the receiving staff member must immediately notify the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) or the FLCPD with reasonable available information regarding:

1. The student’s full name and identifying information.
2. The date and time the student was last seen or contacted.
3. The student’s last known location.
4. The circumstances surrounding the report.
5. The identity and contact information of the reporting party.
6. Known roommates, friends, family members, associates, or possible destination.
7. Known vehicle information.
8. Known medical, behavioral, or other circumstances that may affect the student’s safety.
9. Any other information reasonable relevant to determining the student’s whereabouts or welfare.

College personnel shall not refuse or unnecessarily delay a report based solely upon the amount of time the student has been missing.

Upon notification, the designated responding staff member will make an immediate determination:

Option A — Immediate Law Enforcement Contact

If there is immediate evidence of a credible risk to the student's safety, College personnel shall bypass the wellness assessment process and immediately contact:

- Fort Lewis College Police, or the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction over the student's address on file.

Credible risk indicators include but are not limited to: evidence of foul play, known mental health crisis, suicide risk, threats of self-harm, or circumstances suggesting imminent danger.

Option B — Preliminary Wellness Assessment

If no immediate credible risk is identified, the College will initiate a Preliminary Wellness Assessment (PWA). The assessment must be completed within a maximum of 6 hours from the time the report is received.

If the student is not located within the 6-hour window, or if a credible risk to the student's safety is identified at any point during the assessment, the College must immediately contact law enforcement.

6. Preliminary Wellness Assessment — Required Steps

When there is no credible evidence indicating an immediate risk to the student's safety, designated College personnel may conduct a Preliminary Wellness Assessment (PWA) consistent with Colorado law. A Preliminary Wellness Assessment shall not exceed six hours from the time the College initially receives the report that the student may be missing and FLCPD may be notified at any time during the PWA process.

The PWA should include the following as applicable:

1. Digital contact attempts.
2. Residential verification.
3. Academic inquiries.
4. Social inquiries.
5. Review of reasonably available University information.
6. Emergency-contact attempts when required.
7. Documentation of all actions taken.

The Preliminary Wellness Assessment must consist of at minimum the following three steps, completed in the order listed and documented contemporaneously:

Step 1 — Digital Contact Attempt

Attempt to contact the student through all institution-provided communications available to the College, including institutional email, the student portal system, and any personal contact information the student has provided for emergency notification purposes. All contact attempts must be logged with the time and method of each attempt and the outcome.

Step 2 — Residential Verification

If the student resides in College-located and managed housing, conduct a physical check of the student's residence. This step is performed by an authorized representative as defined in Section 10 of this policy. Staff must verify whether the student's belongings are present and whether roommates or neighbors have seen or heard from the student. Results must be documented immediately. (Note: this step applies only when the student resides in College-located and managed housing.)

Residential verification may include:

1. Knocking and attempting verbal contact.
2. Contacting roommates.
3. Checking common areas.
4. Reviewing relevant Housing information.
5. Entry into College-located and managed housing when authorized by College policy, housing agreements, emergency circumstances, or applicable law.

Personnel authorized to conduct College-located and managed housing verification may include:

1. College personnel.
2. Housing and Residence Life professional staff.
3. Housing personnel assigned on-call responsibilities.
4. Student Affairs personnel designated by the College.
5. Other personnel specifically authorized by the College.

At least one authorized category of College personnel or agent should be available outside normal business hours as required by applicable law.

Non-law enforcement personnel shall not conduct investigative searches outside the scope of their lawful College authority.

Step 3 — Academic and Social Inquiry

Query available faculty members and residential staff about the student's most recently known attendance. This inquiry is limited to information reasonably necessary to determine the student's location and must remain consistent with applicable student privacy law. Document all inquiries and responses.

Designated personnel may contact individuals reasonably believed to have information concerning the student’s whereabouts, including:

1. Roommates.
2. Friends or associates.
3. Classmates.
4. Faculty members.
5. Academic advisors.
6. Coaches or athletic personnel.
7. Student organization personnel.
8. Student employment supervisors.
9. Housing personnel.

The inquiry should be limited to information reasonably necessary to determine:

1. When the student was last seen or contacted.
2. Whether the student recently attended class or employment.
3. The student’s last known location.
4. Known travel or social plans.
5. Possible destinations.

6. Other information reasonably related to locating the student.

Step 4 (If Applicable) — Emergency Contact Attempt

If the student is not located within six hours after Steps 1–3 are initiated, the College must also conduct an emergency contact attempt — reaching out to the student's emergency contact person as listed in the student's official institutional record. This step is required in addition to, not instead of, notifying law enforcement at the expiration of the six-hour period.

Important — 6-Hour Clock and Circumstances Beyond the College's Control

The 6-hour assessment window begins when the missing person report is first received. If at any point a credible safety risk is identified, law enforcement must be contacted immediately, regardless of how much time remains.

The College is not deemed to have failed to conduct a Preliminary Wellness Assessment solely because circumstances beyond its reasonable control prevented a step from being completed within six hours — for example, unavailability of faculty or staff outside regular business hours, the student's residence being off campus or outside the College's jurisdiction, or an incorrect, disconnected, or unanswered emergency contact. In all such cases, the specific reason each step could not be completed must be documented in the same manner as the assessment itself.

The 6-hour period is a maximum period permitted for a Preliminary Wellness Assessment and shall not be interpreted as:

1. A required waiting period.
2. A prohibition against earlier law enforcement notification.
3. A limitation upon a person’s ability to report a missing student directly to FLCPD.
4. A limitation upon FLCPD’s authority to initiate a missing-person investigation.

7. Law Enforcement Notification

The College shall notify law enforcement under the following circumstances:

- The student is not located within the 6-hour Preliminary Wellness Assessment period — notification is made at the expiration of the six-hour period.
- The College elects not to conduct a Preliminary Wellness Assessment at all, in which case law enforcement must be notified immediately upon receipt of the report.
- At any point during the assessment, the College determines there is credible evidence of risk to the student's safety — notification in this case must be immediate, regardless of the six-hour window.

Law enforcement notification shall be made to the appropriate agency based on the student's address on file with the College:

- If the student's current local address is on file: notify the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction over that address.
- If only the student's permanent address is on file: notify the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction over that permanent address.
- If the student has no address on file or jurisdiction is unclear: contact Campus Police.

Role / Position	Department	Contact
Vice President for Student Affairs	Division of Student Affairs Office	970-247-7519
Campus Police (primary)	Law Enforcement	970-385-2900
Durango Police Department	Law Enforcement	970-385-2900
La Plata County Sheriff	Law Enforcement	970-385-2900
Student's Emergency Contact	As designated by student	Maxient

8. College Coordination

College departments should cooperate with FLCPD and provide reasonably available information that may assist in determining the location or welfare of a missing student, consistent with applicable law.

Departments that may assist include:

1. Student Affairs.
2. Housing and Residence Life.
3. Academic Affairs.
4. Athletics.
5. Information Technology.
6. Facilities.
7. Other College departments possessing information or resources relevant to locating the student.

9. Student Affairs Responsibilities

Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs should:

1. Assist in coordinating the College's administrative response.
2. Assist with academic and social inquiries.
3. Identify relevant student contacts or College resources.
4. Coordinate with other College departments.
5. Assist with support services when the student is located.
6. Ensure required Preliminary Wellness Assessment documentation is completed when Student Affairs coordinates the assessment

10. Housing and Residence Life Responsibilities

Housing and Residence Life should:

1. Promptly report missing-student concerns.
2. Assist with residential verification.
3. Identify roommates and known associates when appropriate.
4. Provide relevant Housing information as permitted by law.
5. Maintain appropriate after-hours response procedures.
6. Document actions taken as part of a Preliminary Wellness Assessment.

Housing personnel shall immediately notify FLCPD when information indicates a potential safety risk.

11. Documentation

When a Preliminary Wellness Assessment is conducted, designated College personnel shall create and maintain a contemporaneous written record consistent with applicable Colorado law.

The record should include, as applicable:

1. Student's name.
2. Date and time the report was received.
3. Identity and contact information of the reporting party.
4. Employee/personnel receiving the initial report.
5. Circumstances reported.
6. Date and time the assessment began.
7. Names of personnel involved.
8. Digital contact attempts.
9. Residential verification.
10. Academic inquiries.
11. Social inquiries.
12. Emergency-contact attempts.
13. Information obtained during the assessment.
14. Date and time FLCPD was notified.
15. Reason any required assessment step could not be completed.
16. Date and time the student was located, if applicable.
17. Any additional actions taken.

12. Record Retention

Records relating to a Preliminary Wellness Assessment shall be retained for at least three years following receipt of the missing-student report, consistent with Colorado law.

Records shall be maintained and disclosed in accordance with:

1. Applicable Colorado law.
2. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
3. The Jeanne Clery Campus Act
4. University records-retention requirements.
5. Other applicable state and federal laws.

Records should be made available to law enforcement when required or authorized by law.

13. Located Student

When a student is located during a Preliminary Wellness Assessment, designated personnel should:

1. Make reasonable effort to verify student’s identity.
2. Determine whether there is an immediate safety or welfare concern.
3. Document the date, time, and circumstances under which the student is located.
4. Notify FLCPD when FLCPD was previously involved or when circumstances warrant law enforcement involvement.
5. Make appropriate referrals for College support services when necessary.

If criminal activity or a continuing threat to the student's safety is identified, FLCPD shall be notified immediately.

14. After-Hours Response

The College shall maintain procedures that allow missing-student concerns to be acted upon outside normal College business hours.

The FLC Police Department is a 24/7 unit and will respond according to departmental procedures.

Housing and Residence Life should maintain appropriate on-call procedures to assist with residential verification and other housing-related responsibilities.

A missing-student report shall not be delayed until the next regular College business day.

15. Sharing Information

Information related to a missing-student report should be shared only as permitted by applicable law and should be limited to information reasonably necessary to:

1. Locate the student.
2. Determine the student's safety or welfare.
3. Protect the student or others.
4. Assist a lawful law enforcement investigation.
5. Fulfill applicable reporting requirements.

Nothing in this policy prohibits lawful disclosure of information in connection with a health or safety emergency.

16. Civil Liability Immunity

Under Colorado law, an institution that conducts a preliminary wellness assessment is immune from civil liability provided the institution acted in good faith. To ensure this protection applies, all staff must:

- Follow this policy as written.
- Complete all three required wellness assessment steps and document them contemporaneously.
- Escalate to law enforcement within the 6-hour window or immediately upon identification of credible risk.
- Not deviate from established procedures based on personal judgment about the likelihood of a student being in danger.

17. Training

The College should provide appropriate training for personnel responsible for receiving or responding to missing-student reports.

Training should include:

1. Requirements of SB26-120.
2. Recognition of circumstances requiring immediate law enforcement notification.
3. Preliminary Wellness Assessment procedures.
4. The 6-hour maximum assessment period.
5. Digital contact procedures.
6. Residential verification.
7. Academic and social inquiries.
8. Documentation requirements.
9. Emergency-contact procedures.
10. Applicable privacy requirements.
11. After-hours procedures.
12. FLCPD notification procedures.

College personnel shall receive missing-student training consistent with applicable Colorado law, Colorado POST requirements, the College's Missing Student Policy, and annual Table-Top activities.

18. Public Availability

The College shall make its Preliminary Wellness Assessment policy publicly available as required by Colorado law.

Public information concerning missing students should clearly communicate that no person is required to wait 24 hours, 48 hours, or any other predetermined period before reporting a student missing.

19. Policy Review and Contract

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Vice President for Student Affairs each August prior to the start of the academic year or immediately following any incident that reveals a need for revision.

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to:

Policy Contact

Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs
Fort Lewis College
Phone: 970-247-7519 | Skyhawk Station 230