

## Missing Student Notification Policy

In compliance with the Higher Education Reauthorization Act of 2008, the purpose of this policy is to provide the procedures for reporting, investigating and making emergency notifications regarding any residential student of Thomas University who is reported and believed to be missing. A Thomas University residential student is presumed to be “missing” when the student’s absence is inconsistent with the student’s established patterns of behavior and the deviation cannot be readily explained. Before presuming that a person is missing, reasonable measures should be taken to determine whether or not the person is at their home or campus residence and whether or not anyone familiar with the person has seen or heard from the person recently or is aware of where they may be.

Any member of the Thomas University community, including both employees and students, who is concerned that a member of the University community is missing should contact the Office of Student Life at 229-236-7770, as soon as it is determined that the individual is missing as defined above. The University will then determine the next appropriate course of action within local, state, and Federal guidelines

## Emergency Contacts

Every student (resident and non-resident) has their own student account and may either enter or change, under personal information/address, a designated contact person at any time by updating their emergency contact information.

Only authorized campus officials, as part of their responsibilities, and law enforcement officers in furtherance of a missing person investigation, may have access to this information.

### Reporting and Investigating Missing Persons

Any report of a missing student will be fully investigated by appropriate University personnel under the joint coordination of the Office of Student Life and the local police department. Further, the assistance of the Georgia State Patrol, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, or other appropriate law enforcement agency, will be sought if such assistance is indicated and deemed necessary by the initial campus investigation.

When a student is reported missing, Thomas University will/may

- Involve the Dean of Student’s office in the report and share all relevant information.
- Initiate an investigation to determine where the student might be and if the student can be located.
- Make reasonable efforts to contact the reported missing student via phone, cell phone, email, and in person via a visit to the student’s residence.
- Contact faculty, peers, roommates, and other university members to determine the potential whereabouts of the missing student.
- If the student cannot be located and remains missing, Thomas University will, according to the law, contact the Thomasville City Police and/or state-level law enforcement within 24 hours of the initial internal report.
- Notify the emergency contact or legal guardian of the status of the investigation within 24 hours of the initial report unless the student has been contacted.

In situations that may indicate a serious threat to a student's wellbeing, Thomas University may notify law enforcement agencies and emergency contact(s) immediately. Contact information will be kept confidential as appropriate.

The Office of Student Life is required by law to inform the designated contact person of a missing person who resides in University property-or the custodial parent or guardian in the case of a minor-within 24 hours of receiving a missing person report.

## **Designation of Emergency Contact Information**

- a. Students under the age of 18: if a student under the age of 18 is determined to be missing, the college is required to notify a custodial parent or guardian no more than 24 hours after the student is determined to be missing
- b. Students age 18 and above and emancipated minors: Students will be given an opportunity during the registration process to designate an individual(s) to be contacted by the college no more than 24 hours after the time that the student is determined to be missing. The designation will remain in effect until changed or withdrawn by the student
- c. All residential students (both cases above) If a student is determined to be missing, the college will notify the appropriate law enforcement agency not later than 24 hours after the determination has been made.