



ONE CALL TO FIND THEM ALL

The Research Behind the Campaign

An Evidence Base for the Vulnerable Persons Alert Proposal

An Evidence Base for the Vulnerable Persons Alert Proposal, prepared by Parent Partnership Project Inc. (PPP), Calgary, Alberta, October 2026. It gathers in one place the evidence behind the proposed national standard, and says how strongly each piece supports it.

Parent Partnership Project Inc.

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What the Evidence Shows

Every year, people go missing in Canada whose lives are at immediate risk because they cannot recognize danger, say where they are, or get back to safety. The evidence gathered here supports five conclusions.

1. **The risk is serious and rises quickly with time.** This holds for people living with dementia who go missing and for autistic people who elope, particularly near water.
2. **Canada already has the alerting infrastructure, but no standing national pathway for these cases.** The event code exists. It has no Broadcast Immediate designation and no national standard for its use.
3. **Legal authority for an alert does not by itself put the alert on phones.** Two Canadian cases show this in practice.
4. **Other jurisdictions have built parts of the proposed model.** PPP's review did not find one that combines all three parts: age-neutral eligibility, a functional test, and delivery through an interrupting alert.
5. **Research supports the main design choices:** build on existing infrastructure, test function and not diagnosis, limit what an alert discloses, target alerts geographically, and train responders to a common standard.

What the Evidence Does Not Show

This document is candid about its limits, because a proposal to government should not claim more than its sources support.

- No study here measures whether Broadcast Immediate alerts improve recovery outcomes for vulnerable missing persons.
- Most of the research on alert systems concerns dementia. Direct research on alerts for autistic people is thin.
- Several statistics come from organizations or government releases, not peer-reviewed studies. Each is labelled.
- The comparison of jurisdictions covers those PPP reviewed. It is not a claim of exhaustive global research.

How to Read This Document

Each finding carries one of three labels.

Label	Meaning
Direct	The source directly supports the claim made.
Informs design	The source supports a design choice by analogy or as background. It does not test that choice.
Context	The source describes current law, policy, or events.

The Verification column identifies the extent to which each finding was checked against its source in October 2026 and clearly identifies any remaining limitations.

Part A: Evidence of Risk

People living with dementia

Finding	Source	Kind of source	Verification
If a person with Alzheimer's disease is not found within 12 hours, there is a 50 percent chance they will be found injured or dead.	Government of Canada news release, June 29, 2022	Government-reported figure, not a research finding	Checked October 2026
About 6 in 10 people living with dementia will wander at least once.	Alzheimer's Association	Organizational estimate	Checked October 2026
Among about 1.6 million long-stay home care clients in seven provinces and territories, 3.0 percent had critical wandering in the previous three days.	Cruz et al., <i>Alzheimer's & Dementia</i> , 2024	Peer-reviewed	Checked October 2026
Across 42 search-and-rescue incidents involving lost persons with possible Alzheimer's disease, none found within 24 hours died; 46 percent of those who took longer did.	Koester and Stooksbury, <i>Wilderness and Environmental Medicine</i> , 1995	Peer-reviewed, older, one U.S. state	Checked October 2026

The "6 in 10" figure and the 3.0 percent figure measure different things. The first is a lifetime estimate. The second is a snapshot of one population at one time. They do not contradict each other, and neither should be quoted as the other.

Autistic people who elope

Finding	Source	Kind of source	Verification
In a parent-reported U.S. survey, 598 of 1,218 autistic children (49 percent) had attempted to elope from a safe environment at least once after age four.	Anderson et al., <i>Pediatrics</i> , 2012	Peer-reviewed survey, not a national prevalence estimate	Checked October 2026
In the same survey, 215 of the 598 children who had eloped (about 36 percent) could not communicate their name, address, or phone number.	Anderson et al., <i>Pediatrics</i> , 2012	Peer-reviewed survey	Checked October 2026
Drowning was substantially overrepresented among recorded deaths of people with autism, with particularly elevated relative mortality among children.	Guan and Li, <i>American Journal of Public Health</i> , 2017	Peer-reviewed mortality analysis	Checked October 2026
In 808 U.S. missing-person cases involving autistic people from 2011 to 2016, 17 percent ended in death and a further 13 percent required medical attention. Drowning caused 98 of the 139 deaths, about 71 percent.	National Autism Association	Organizational case review, not peer-reviewed	Checked October 2026

The Guan and Li study uses a proportionate mortality measure. It shows how often drowning appears among recorded deaths. It does not measure an individual's chance of drowning, and should not be quoted as a risk multiplier.

What the two groups share

The conditions differ, and the research on each is separate. What links them is functional: a person who cannot recognize danger, communicate their identity or location, or return to safety faces rising risk the longer they are missing. The second autism finding above shows the point directly. Many children who elope cannot tell a stranger who they are. That shared functional picture, and not any diagnosis, is the basis for the eligibility test in the proposed standard.

PPP's review did not find a study comparing outcomes over time across the two groups.

Part B: Two Canadian Cases

These cases are context. Each shows a different part of the gap.

The elopement case in Calgary from summer 2026

On July 16, 2026, an 11-year-old nonspeaking autistic boy went missing from a day home in Calgary. Because the case did not meet the usual threshold for an AMBER Alert, an emergency alert was not issued until July 18, two days later, and only after the Government of Alberta granted a case-specific exemption. The search ended on July 29, 2026, when he was found deceased.

What it shows. No standing category existed for a child in this situation. Reaching the public's phones depended on an exemption granted for one case.

The disappearance of Earl Moberg: Winnipeg, December 2023

On December 12, 2023, Earl Moberg, an 81-year-old man living with dementia, left his home in Winnipeg and did not return. Police activated a Silver Alert under Manitoba's Missing Persons Act the same night. He was never found. His family later said publicly that the alert went out through news media and did not reach people who were not already following the news that evening. The case led to Bill C-263, the Silver Alert National Framework Act.

What it shows. A legal alert category existed and was used promptly. The gap was reach.

What the two cases show together

	Calgary, 2026	Winnipeg, 2023
A standing alert category applied	No	Yes
The alert reached phones as an interrupting alert	Only after an exemption, two days later	No
The gap	Eligibility	Reach

A national standard has to close both gaps. Fixing eligibility without reach, or reach without eligibility, leaves one of these cases unanswered.

Part C: Comparative Jurisdictions

PPP assessed each jurisdiction against the three elements of the proposed model. No jurisdiction reviewed combines all three in a routinely operating program.

Jurisdiction and program	Age-neutral	Functional, not diagnosis-based	Interrupting alert to phones	Verification
Manitoba: Silver Alert (2017)	No. Limited to adults, including legally defined vulnerable persons and other adults with cognitive impairment	Partly. Keyed to cognitive impairment	No. News media and other conventional means	Checked October 2026
Alberta: Silver Alert (legislated in 2017 and 2023; not found in force)	No. Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022, specified a threshold of 55 years or older. That wording does not appear in the Alberta King's Printer consolidation of the Missing Persons Act current to June 11, 2025	Partly	Not established	Bill text and June 2025 consolidation checked October 2026. Current legal status requires further verification
United States: Endangered Missing Advisory plans	Mixed. Of 34 state plans in a 2009 survey, 16 had no age restriction	Yes. Danger due to age, health, disability, environment, or other factors	No. A voluntary partnership with broadcasters and other agencies	Checked October 2026
United States: Ashanti Alert Act (2018)	No. Adults only	Largely. Disability, endangerment, or involuntary disappearance are alternative grounds, not all required	Historically no	Checked October 2026
United States: FCC Missing and Endangered Persons event code (2024)	Yes. All ages, by the FCC's own description	Yes. Endangerment outside AMBER criteria	Technically enabled since September 2025. Actual use by alert originators is unconfirmed	Code and effective date checked October 2026; use not verified
Florida: Purple Alert	No. Adults 18 and over	Yes. Broad disability categories plus a credible-danger threshold	No. Media, highway signs, and opt-in subscription. Florida distinguishes local and state activation	Checked October 2026

Jurisdiction and program	Age-neutral	Functional, not diagnosis-based	Interrupting alert to phones	Verification
Connecticut: Purple Alert	No, on the current statutory wording. Public Act 24-81, effective May 30, 2024, limits the provision to adults 18 and over. An earlier State Police bulletin had described the program as applying regardless of age	Yes	Not confirmed	Checked October 2026
Scotland: National Missing Persons Framework (2025) and the Herbert Protocol	Yes. The framework covers anyone who may go missing	Yes, in part. In some areas the Herbert Protocol is used for people without dementia who are identified as at risk	Not applicable. Neither is a public alert	Checked October 2026

What each comparison contributes

The U.S. Endangered Missing Advisory is the closest precedent for the approach. The U.S. Department of Justice's 2011 guide describes a second tier, built onto existing AMBER Alert partnerships, for missing persons who do not meet abduction criteria. Its criteria ask whether the person is in danger because of age, health, disability, environment, or another factor. State plans grew from five in a 2005 survey to 34 in a 2009 survey. Those plans existed before the guide was published; the guide documents and supports them, and did not cause them.

The FCC's Missing and Endangered Persons code is the most significant recent development. It gives the United States an age-neutral, endangerment-based event code that can be transmitted through its emergency alert and wireless alert systems. It is the nearest technical parallel to what PPP proposes for missingVPer. Whether and how often alert originators use it is not confirmed.

Scotland's framework shows a national government coordinating police, health, and social care around a risk-tiered approach to missing persons. The Herbert Protocol is a preparedness and information-sharing tool that lets a family record key details in advance. It supports the case for gathering caregiver knowledge early. It is not evidence about public alerting.

Canadian provincial Silver Alerts show that provinces have legislated, and that eligibility in those laws is tied to adulthood or age. They also show that legislating is not the same as having a working alert. In Winnipeg, a legislated alert fell short on reach. In Alberta, a Silver Alert was legislated twice and PPP has not found it in force.

What this means for Canada

Canada would not be inventing the concept. Each element has precedent somewhere. What PPP proposes that the reviewed jurisdictions lack is the combination: one nationally defined eligibility and activation standard, age-neutral and functional, connected to the existing national alerting system.

Part D: Research on Alert Systems

The five studies below were checked in October 2026. Three were read on the publishers' sites. For the weather-warning study, only the abstract was read. For the companion paper, only the publication details were confirmed. Four concern dementia; one concerns weather warnings.

Adekoya, Liu, Boscart and Hirdes (2026), *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research*

This is the most directly relevant study. It is a multiple case study of alert systems in three places: British Columbia's Silver Alert, Scotland's Purple Alert, and Silver Alert systems in the United States. The researchers, from the University of Waterloo, drew on interviews and focus groups with 40 participants, including people living with dementia, care partners, first responders, service providers, and policymakers.

Participants said effective systems need geographically targeted mobile notifications, prompt police reporting, and public education. They also called for better dementia-specific training for first responders.

One care partner, whose father went missing and was never found, told the researchers:

"I think a Silver Alert that went out, if it had been able to go to mobile phones, I think that [Alex] might still be alive."

The study does not state which country this participant is from, and this document does not assume it.

On training, a Scottish police officer described the scale of the task: "There are thousands of officers that need training as to what Herbert protocol is and how to use it." A Canadian officer said: "There's not a lot of specific training out there for police specific to missing persons [with dementia]."

Label: Direct, for the value of mobile notification as participants perceive it and for the training gap. It is qualitative research. It reports experience and belief, not measured outcomes.

Adekoya, Daum, Miguel-Cruz and Liu (2025), *BMC Medical Ethics*

This study interviewed 18 participants in Canada and Scotland about releasing personal information in alerts for missing persons with dementia. It identified four concerns: balancing safety and privacy, stigma, risk of victimization and abuse, and informed consent.

The authors recommend that alert systems "collect, use, and share only minimal, relevant information for locating the missing person," and that cognitive impairment be disclosed "only when absolutely necessary to ensure the missing person's safety." Participants' views varied, and the authors frame this as a balance, not a ban.

Label: Direct, for the minimum-necessary content standard and the consent provision in the proposed standard.

Neubauer, Daum, Miguel-Cruz and Liu (2021), *PLOS ONE*

The researchers developed and evaluated a geographically targeted, opt-in community alert application for missing persons living with dementia. The study involved 70 participants across three phases, including police and community stakeholders in three Canadian provinces. Participants generally found the application usable and promising.

Label: Direct, for the feasibility of involving the public in locating missing people within a targeted area. It does not establish the effectiveness of mandatory Broadcast Immediate distribution.

Adekoya, Liu, Boscart and Hirdes (2026), *Canadian Journal on Aging*

A companion paper by the same team applies a knowledge-to-action framework to implementing alert systems for missing persons with dementia. It was published online in October 2025 and appears in volume 45, issue 1.

Label: Informs design, for implementation planning.

Gulacsik, Joslyn, Robinson and Qin (2022), *Weather, Climate, and Society*

This study tested weather-briefing formats on emergency managers and members of the public, comparing a colour-coded format, the familiar watch, warning and advisory format, and plain text. It found that labels and formats changed how people rated risk and what action they recommended.

Label: Informs design. It shows that the form of a warning affects response. It does not study missing-person alerts and does not compare alert categories by condition.

How the Evidence Maps to the Design

Design choice in the proposed standard	Supporting evidence	Strength
Use existing national alerting infrastructure	The U.S. Endangered Missing Advisory was built onto AMBER Alert partnerships. The FCC added an event code to existing U.S. alert systems. Canada's missingVPer code already exists.	Direct
Decide eligibility by function, not diagnosis or age	U.S. advisory criteria are functional. The FCC's event code covers all ages. The elopement research shows many children who elope cannot give their name or address.	Direct for the precedents. Informs design for outcomes

Design choice in the proposed standard	Supporting evidence	Strength
Deliver qualifying alerts to phones	The Winnipeg case. Participant testimony in Adekoya et al. (2026).	Direct as experience and perception. No study measures outcomes
Limit what an alert discloses	Adekoya et al. (2025) recommend minimal, relevant information and disclosure of cognitive impairment only when necessary.	Direct
Consider the person's wishes and consent where practicable	Adekoya et al. (2025) identify informed consent as a concern.	Direct
Target alerts geographically	Adekoya et al. (2026) participants. Neubauer et al. (2021).	Direct for feasibility
Set national training competencies	The contrast between Scottish and Canadian officers in Adekoya et al. (2026).	Direct as testimony
Gather caregiver knowledge early	The Herbert Protocol, as used nationally in Scotland.	Informs design
Use one category, not a separate alert for each condition	Disclosure concerns in Adekoya et al. (2025). Warning-format effects in Gulacsik et al. (2022).	Informs design. This is a design rationale, not a research finding
Act quickly, with no minimum time missing	The 12-hour figure from the Government of Canada. The 24-hour finding in Koester and Stooksbury (1995).	Direct for the role of time. Neither source tests a waiting period

The weakest link is the one that matters most: no study yet shows that an interrupting phone alert improves recovery for these cases. That is why the proposed standard requires annual public reporting and a review within three years. These measures would build the evidence base needed to evaluate implementation, identify unintended consequences, and assess whether the alerting framework is improving outcomes.

Current Canadian Activity

These items are context. All can change, and each should be checked on the day this document is circulated.

Item	Status	Verification
Manitoba Silver Alert	The Missing Persons Amendment Act (Silver Alert), Bill 214, became chapter 29 of Manitoba's 2017 statutes.	Checked October 2026

Item	Status	Verification
Alberta Silver Alert, 2017	Bill 210 passed in 2017 and was not proclaimed. A May 2018 legislative committee review recorded it as awaiting proclamation.	Checked October 2026
Alberta Silver Alert, 2023	Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022 (SA 2023, c. 4), received Royal Assent on March 28, 2023, with a stated commencement date of March 31, 2023. As introduced, it amended the unproclaimed 2017 Act, and its direct amendment to the Missing Persons Act was to be repealed if the 2017 Act was not yet in force. The Silver Alert provisions do not appear in the consolidated Missing Persons Act current to June 11, 2025, and PPP has not found evidence that they have been brought into force.	Bill as introduced and June 2025 consolidation checked October 2026. Final enacted text and proclamation status not confirmed
Alberta engagement	On August 10, 2026, Alberta announced it would engage law enforcement, disability advocates, and community partners on emergency alert processes for missing vulnerable persons, including a review of its AMBER Alert criteria. PPP took part in the listening sessions in fall 2026.	Announcement checked October 2026
Bill C-263	The Silver Alert National Framework Act passed second reading on June 5, 2026 and is before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.	Checked October 8, 2026
Petition e-7643	Sponsored by MP Michelle Rempel Garner. Opened August 7, 2026 and closes November 5, 2026.	Number and sponsor checked October 2026
Petition e-7703	Sponsored by MP Mike Lake. Closes December 22, 2026. It asks for shared national standards for a vulnerable missing persons alert framework.	Checked October 2026

Item	Status	Verification
Ontario	Bill 74, the Missing Persons Amendment Act, 2023, was introduced on March 6, 2023 and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy on March 28, 2023. It did not receive Royal Assent during the 43rd Parliament's first session.	Checked October 2026

The existence of provincial legal authority does not, by itself, establish that an alert receives Broadcast Immediate distribution through Alert Ready.

Limits of This Evidence Base

- **Findings were checked against their sources.** Every finding in the tables of this document was checked against its source in October 2026, with one exception: the current legal status of Alberta's Silver Alert provisions, which do not appear in the June 2025 consolidation of the Missing Persons Act, requires further verification.
- **U.S. state programs vary and change.** Florida is the best documented. Connecticut's age scope changed in 2024, and the table reflects the amended statute. Other states run Purple Alert programs that this document does not review.
- **Use of the FCC code is unknown.** The code exists and the technical deadline has passed. How often it is used should be confirmed with the FCC.
- **Qualitative research reports experience.** It tells us what families and responders saw and believe. It does not measure outcomes.
- **Research on autistic people and alerting is limited.** The risk evidence is solid. Evidence on alert systems for this group is not.

Sources

Government and legal sources

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- Manitoba. The Missing Persons Amendment Act (Silver Alert), S.M. 2017, c. 29.
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- U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. [Guide for Implementing or Enhancing an Endangered Missing Advisory](#), NCJ 232001, March 2011.
- U.S. Ashanti Alert Act of 2018; 34 U.S.C. § 21904.
- Federal Communications Commission. Report and Order establishing the Missing and Endangered Persons event code, FCC 24-83, adopted August 7, 2024.
- Florida Statutes § 937.0205; Connecticut General Statutes § 29-1f, as amended by Public Act 23-137 and by Public Act 24-81 (effective May 30, 2024).
- Scottish Government. *National Missing Persons Framework for Scotland 2025*, September 2025.
- SOREM Broadcast Immediate Events List, Version 2.1, amended May 26, 2022.

Peer-reviewed research

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Organizational and media sources

- Alzheimer's Association. Public estimate on wandering and dementia.
- National Autism Association. Mortality and Risk in ASD Wandering/Elopement, 2011–2016, as presented to the U.S. Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee, July 2017.
- [LiveWire Calgary](#), July 18, 2026; [Red Deer Advocate](#), August 10, 2026.
- CTV News Winnipeg, August 2024, and CBC News, August 2025, on the Winnipeg case.