How does the process work?

The Missing Person's Database is a resource provided to law enforcement agencies. A missing person report should always be filed with the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the place where the individual was last seen or the place where the individual was last known to reside.

If the circumstances meet the criteria of a "high risk" case, the agency will contact the family within 30 days of the report to discuss the opportunity to utilize the database. Under Texas law there is no waiting period before a record of a missing person can be filed. For missing children, the law requires law enforcement agencies to immediately enter a record of a missing child into the National Crime Information Center's Missing Person File.

The DNA Identity Laboratory is housed at the University of North Texas Health Science Center in Fort Worth.

A family may be asked to submit personal articles belonging to the missing person, or several family members may be asked to provide their own DNA samples. The law enforcement agency will use a specimen collection kit provided by the DNA Identity Laboratory and submit it to the laboratory.

The results are then compared to results of DNA taken from unidentified remains and loaded into the database for comparison to future applicable results.

If a match occurs, the law enforcement agency will be notified so that the family can be contacted.

The process of identifying remains through DNA can be quite lengthy. It is even possible that not every victim will be identified. In the event of extreme conditions, the victim's remains may never be found. There may also be cases where no usable DNA is available for testing. Examples of this would include not having enough relatives available for testing, lack of availability of medical specimens, or no usable DNA found on the victim's personal effects.

To maximize the chance for a successful identification, full cooperation of the family and relatives of the victim is crucial.

STATE BILL 1304 WAS PASSED by the 77th Texas Legislature in 2001, laying the foundation for the creation of a Missing Persons DNA Database within the DNA Identity Laboratory at the University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth.

The DNA Identity Laboratory is led by Dr. Arthur Eisenberg, a world-renowned molecular biologist who is best known for his role in developing the procedures, techniques and quality control standards currently used in DNA identity testing.

Dr. Eisenberg is a consultant to the FBI on DNA identity testing, and chaired the U.S. DNA Advisory Board that recommended standards for quality assurance and proficient testing at forensic laboratories across the nation. He has also served on an international commission formed in 1991 to standardize testing in Europe.

He currently serves on the College of American Pathologists Parentage Ancillary Committee and is a member and former chair of the Texas Working Group on DNA Analysis Methods. He was also instrumental in developing the standards for identifying victims of the 2001 World Trade Center tragedy in New York City.

The DNA Identity Laboratory's professional management team also includes forensic specialists Dr. John Planz and Dr. Joseph Warren.

The forensic division of the DNA Identity Laboratory is certified by the National Forensic Science Technology Center and complies with the guidelines set forth by the DNA Advisory Board, the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors, the National Forensic Science Technology Center and the Scientific Working Group on DNA Analysis Methods.

The DNA Identity Lab provides sample collection kits and collection training for law enforcement personnel. It also maintains a Missing Persons web site, provides education and public awareness through community outreach programs, and makes available informational brochures and fliers to agencies and the public.

For questions the general public has regarding missing persons, call the Texas Missing Persons Clearinghouse 24-hour toll-free number at 1.800.346.3243, or visit their web site at www.txdps.state.tx.us.mpch.
For questions law enforcement officials may have regarding the Texas Missing Persons DNA Database, call 1.800.763.3147 or email us at txmissing@hsc.unt.edu.
For more information about the Texas Missing Persons DNA Database, visit our web site at www.hsc.unt.edu.

TEXAS MISSING PERSONS DNA DATABASE

A project ot the DNA Identity Laboratory at the University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth

MISSING

Information on the Texas Missing Persons DNA Database

A reliable resource to identify missing persons and human remains

Texas is taking the lead as one of the first states to participate in a nationwide DNA indexing database for solving missing persons cases. Through the state's new Missing Persons DNA Database, law enforcement officials will have access to records of profiles of missing persons or unidentified human remains developed from DNA samples. The database will be linked to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's DNA index system, CODIS, used for solving crimes.

CODIS
COmbined **D**NA **I**ndex **S**ystem

MISSING

A BODY THAT HAS NEVER BEEN IDENTIFIED simply because it wasn't found in the area where the person was last seen potentially could be matched to a missing person's DNA profile shared electronically through the database network, allowing unsolved cases from Texas and the rest of the country to eventually be closed. That's good news for law enforcement agencies across the nation facing a backlog of unsolved disappearances and unidentified remains. More importantly, it provides the families of missing persons with the assurance that the search for their loved ones will continue.

How is DNA used in identity testing?

A person's DNA is responsible for transmitting hereditary characteristics. Sequences of DNA vary tremendously from person to person, making it the most advanced and accurate method of testing available today for identification purposes. In fact, a good specimen of DNA has the power to determine the probability of identity with accuracy of more than 99 percent.

In identity testing, samples of DNA are collected from a specimen of blood, saliva, bones, teeth, hair or other tissues. These samples provide a profile, or "fingerprint," of the individual. They can then be compared to other DNA profiles to establish an accurate identity.

DNA SOURCES	EXAMPLES	USEFULNESS
Medical Specimens	Bone marrow donor sample	Most useful
	Biopsy sample	
	Newborn screen bloodspot	
Personal Effects	Toothbrush	Very useful
	Hairbrush	
Close Relatives	Biological parents of victim	Useful
	Children of victim	
	Brother of victim	
	Sister of victim	
Other Relatives	Maternal aunts	Less useful
	Maternal uncles	
	Maternal cousins	
	Half sisters	
	Half brothers	

What are the sources for DNA samples?

Medical specimens, such as a bone marrow donor sample, blood sample or biopsy taken from recent medical tests or procedures are the most useful types of specimens. A good DNA sample can also be taken from the victim's personal items such as a toothbrush or hairbrush, but **it is important that the items were used only by the victim.**

DNA from close relatives such as a biological parent or sibling can be useful, and, in some instances, a DNA match may be obtained through sample indexing with the DNA of other relatives such as half-siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles. In many if not most cases, reference samples from both parents and all or several siblings are necessary to improve the power of discrimination of the test.

Who is included in the state's database?

The database was created solely for identifying two groups – high risk missing persons and unidentified human remains.

A high risk missing person is defined as a person (adult or child) missing as a result of an abduction, missing under suspicious or unknown circumstances, missing more than 30 days, or if there is reason to believe that person is in danger or deceased.

Some examples of persons who might be included in the database are kidnapped children, runaways, someone who was physically or mentally disabled at the time of their disappearance, someone whose safety is in doubt due to circumstances of their disappearance, and those missing after a catastrophe.

TEXAS MISSING PERSONS
CODIS
Combined DNA Index System
DNA DATABASE

How does this fit into the CODIS system?

CODIS is the acronym for the FBI laboratory's Combined DNA Index System, which actually includes four separate indices. Two of them, the Missing Persons & Unidentified Human Remains Index and the Reference Samples from Personal Items & Family Index, are used to cross-reference samples submitted from all over the nation, including Texas, by law enforcement agencies trying to solve cases involving missing persons or unidentified human remains. Samples taken from family members are used only in the search for their missing loved one, and are not searched against any other indexes to solve unrelated crimes.

While CODIS is managed and maintained by the FBI, all law enforcement agencies can submit DNA samples or request an index search. By tying into the CODIS system, Texas can ensure its citizens have every available resource for finding their loved ones.