

In the early 1990s, the Government Accountability Office mandated that a mechanism be developed to identify missing patients. This request is to utilize the Missing Patient Record Flag (MPRF), to replace the Missing Patient Registry software system, which is no longer in use. The now defunct software system would have been costly due to required redesigning, to bring the registry into compliance with current Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and encryption requirements.

The Patient Record Flag is a nationally deployed application within the Veterans Information System and Technology Architecture (VistA) and the Computerized Patient Record System (CPRS) that creates a flag on the patient's chart to emphasize the presence of significant risk factors for the patient. Currently, the only Category 1 Flag authorized for national release is a Behavioral Flag. Under current guidelines, this flag is to be used in the event that a significant risk for violence is present.

The Patient Record Flag Advisory Board reviews all software requests to maintain compliance with the National Patient Record Flag VHA Directive 2003-048 and has approved this new Category 1 Patient Record Flag for Missing Patients (PRF-MP). The use of PRF-MP in being able to identify a missing patient should that patient show anywhere in the system is crucial to being able to identify these high risk patients, while also allowing clinical care givers the ability to assist in location of missing patients across the VA Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) system.