

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 5: General Case Management	Effective Date: August 1, 2014
	Section 6: Locating Absent Parents	Version: 5

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will make diligent efforts to locate absent parents of children under DCS care and custody at the earliest possible time during the life of the case (e.g. after the initial assessment visit occurs, after referral to DCS, after the Detention or Initial Hearing, after filing a Child in Need of Services (CHINS) petition, after creating an informal adjustment (IA), prior to filing Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)).

When the identity and whereabouts of a parent of a child under DCS care and custody is unknown, DCS will attempt to identify and provide notification to the parent of the court proceedings using various means such as the Putative Father Registry and Parent Locator.

When the whereabouts of a parent of a child under DCS care and custody is unknown, DCS will complete an [Affidavit of Diligent Inquiry \(SF 54778\)](#) to document for the court the efforts to locate the child's parent and provide notice of court proceedings.

Code References

1. [IC 31-34-3-2: Procedures for notice; custodial parent, guardian, or custodian who cannot be located](#)

PROCEDURE

When the identity and whereabouts of a parent of a child under DCS care and custody is unknown, the Family Case Manager (FCM) will gather the following information about the absent parent from all available resources during the assessment process and throughout the life of the case, if necessary:

1. Full name of both parents and any known aliases;
2. Social security number (SSN) for both parents;
3. Date of birth for both parents;
4. Previous address and/or telephone number;
5. Present or previous employers;
6. Address and telephone number of any known relatives;
7. Any benefits received (e.g., disability, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), etc.); and

Note: When the parent is located, gather information regarding their income and resources for the removal month.

8. Ask about a history of domestic violence in the relationship. Check police records, protective order registry, and other sources to obtain additional information about potential domestic violence.

Note: If there is a history of domestic violence, the search for the absent parent must still be completed. The information obtained will help the FCM be more prepared when actually locating the parent and assessing permanency alternatives.

The FCM will make other efforts to identify the absent parent as necessary:

1. Ensure a letter is sent to the Department of Health requesting a search of the Putative Father Registry;
2. Utilize [5.B Tool: Family Network Diagram Instruction Guide](#) to create a family diagram and present a copy to the court. A hard copy of the family diagram should be kept in the case file and uploaded into the case management system;
3. At the first court hearing, request the judge to place the custodial parent or other individuals under oath to answer questions regarding the absent parent and extended family;
4. Obtain and review a copy of the birth certificates of the child(ren) to ascertain date of birth and the names of parents listed;
5. Inquire as to persons who were present at the time of the child's birth;
6. Ask the child, if age-appropriate, about the absent parent or extended family;
7. Inquire as to who is listed as the emergency contact at school or with a medical provider;
8. Review the child's health records for names of parents; and
9. Request service providers to assist DCS in obtaining information about the absent parent.

When the identity of a parent of a child under DCS care and custody is known but the whereabouts are unknown, the FCM must utilize the following tools in the order listed until the parent is located:

1. Search the databases available to the FCM including the Indiana Support Enforcement Tracking System (ISETS) and the case management system;
2. Search the white pages website at <http://www.whitepages.com/>;
3. Search the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) at <http://www.in.gov/bmv/>. See practice guidance for instructions;
4. Contact the county jail to see if the absent parent is being held; and
5. Search the Department of Corrections (DOC) at <http://www.in.gov/doc/>. Click on Offender Locator on the right side of the screen.

Note: The FCM must be prepared to submit an [Affidavit of Diligent Inquiry \(SF 54778\)](#) to the court at the time of the initial hearing.

In addition to the steps listed above, the FCM may utilize the following efforts to locate the absent parent:

1. Check other government information;
2. Search the worldwide military locator, if applicable;

Note: There may be a fee associated with this service.

3. Search databases related to career or hobbies;
4. Check the telephone directory;
5. Search other state offender locator services as available;
6. Attempt to contact the absent parent at their last known address; and
7. Attempt to make contact with other individuals (e.g., extended custodial family) who may assist in locating the absent parent; and/or

8. Make a referral to the DCS Investigator Unit to assist in identifying or searching for the absent parent prior to making a referral for a service provider to locate an absent parent.

Note: DCS Investigators have access to search the Accurint database for additional information.

The FCM will also:

1. Document all efforts and the results of the search in the case management system;
2. Advise the Child and Family Team (CFT) regarding the identity, or lack thereof, of the absent parent and efforts to locate;
3. Complete/provide an [Affidavit of Diligent Inquiry \(SF 54778\)](#) during the assessment phase outlining the efforts taken to identify and/or locate the absent parent to the DCS Staff Attorney to ensure that notice of proceedings is published as to the absent parent; and
4. Continue to pursue these efforts if necessary throughout the life of the case.

Note: When the identity and location of the absent or alleged parent is known, the FCM will provide the address of the parent to the DCS Staff Attorney so the parent may receive notices of court proceedings and may be considered for placement and services.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

BMV Search

Use the following steps to complete a BMV search to locate an absent parent:

1. Go to BMV homepage at <http://www.in.gov/bmy>;
2. Click *Search BMV Records* on the far right side of the site;
3. Click *Start a driver's license records search*;
4. Choose the radio button *For use by a government agency to carry out its functions*; and
5. Enter the search criteria based on the information you have available.

Utilizing DCS Investigators

DCS Investigators are employees of DCS who are responsible for assisting FCMs in locating absent parents, relatives, and/or other identified persons of interest to the case and/or assessment. FCMs may make a referral for this assistance in situations where all procedural steps have been completed and their efforts have been unsuccessful.

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Family Network Diagram](#)
2. [5.B Tool: Family Network Diagram Instruction Guide](#)
3. [Affidavit of Diligent Inquiry \(SF 54778\)](#) – available in the case management system

RELATED INFORMATION

Importance of Conducting a Diligent Search and Engaging Absent Parents

Failure to complete a diligent search for the absent parent may delay appropriate permanency options for the child under the care and custody of DCS. It is necessary to demonstrate to the court that a diligent search has been made to locate and engage an absent parent before a court can involuntarily terminate that person's parental rights. Locating and engaging an absent

parent may lead to several positive outcomes. It may aid in establishing a relationship or connection between a child and parent that may lead to an expedited permanency outcome.

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