

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 13: Background Checks Section 14: Background Checks for Reunification	
	Effective Date: July 1, 2025	Version: 2

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POLICY OVERVIEW

The [Interstate Identification Index \(Triple I Check\)](#) must not be used on a child's parent, guardian, custodian, or household members. See policy 13.11 Conducting Background Checks for Emergency Unlicensed Placements for additional information.

The Department of Child Services (DCS) may conduct criminal history checks on a child's parent, guardian, custodian and/or any person residing with the parent, guardian, or custodian in the same home prior to reunifying a child with the family. DCS will provide the results of the criminal history check(s) to the court. DCS will consider case factors and use discretion in completing Child Protective Services (CPS) History Checks, National Sex Offender Registry Checks, Local Criminal Court Records Checks, and Fingerprint-Based Checks.

DCS **may** conduct the following **optional** background checks for the child's parent, guardian, or custodian and/or any person residing in the home of the child's parent, guardian, or custodian:

1. A CPS History Check in every state in which the subject of the check has resided the last five (5) years, for all persons six (6) years of age and older;
2. A National Sex Offender Registry Check in every state in which the subject of the check has resided the last five (5) years, for all persons 14 years of age and older;
3. A Local Criminal Court Records Check in every criminal court jurisdiction in which the subject of the check has resided the last five (5) years, for all persons 18 years of age and older; and/ or
4. A Fingerprint-Based Check for all persons 18 years of age and older. See policy 13.15 Fingerprint-Based Checks for further guidance.

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PROCEDURE

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Discuss details of the case and any concerns regarding reunification with the FCM Supervisor including, but not limited to:
 - a. Concerns about the household that have been communicated by the child and/or members of the Child and Family Team (CFT), and/or
 - b. Concerns regarding visitation (e.g., irregular visitation or concerns regarding interaction between the parent and the child).
2. Determine which background checks should be completed, if any;
3. When it is decided that background checks will be completed:
 - a. Verify the identity of each subject of a background check, regardless of age, by

reviewing one (1) available and current government-issued identification (ID) document. See policy 2.09 Verifying Identity for further guidance. A government-issued ID document may include, but is not limited to, a:

- i. Drivers' license;
 - ii. Government issued picture ID;
 - iii. Social Security Card;
 - iv. Birth Certificate; or
 - v. Passport.
- b. Ensure each subject of a background check, 6 years of age or older, completes the Combined Application for Criminal and CPS History Searches form using the subject's legal name as it appears on a current government issued photo ID:
 - i. The subject of the check, or parent, guardian, or custodian (if subject is under 18 years of age), must sign and date the form; and
 - ii. Place the original form in the file after completion of the background check process.
 - c. Discuss the results of all background checks with the FCM Supervisor to determine any steps needed to ensure the child's safety. See Practice Guidance for additional information.
4. Ensure all decisions and actions taken are documented in the case management system.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Discuss details of the case and any concerns with the FCM to determine which, if any, background checks should be completed prior to the child's reunification;
2. Review the results of any background checks completed and guide the FCM in planning for the child's safety;
3. Notify the DCS Staff Attorney of all results of criminal history checks which must be filed with the court; and
4. Ensure all decisions and actions taken are documented in the case management system.

The DCS Staff Attorney will ensure the results of any criminal history check are provided to the court.

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RELEVANT INFORMATION

Definitions

Child and Family Team (CFT)

The CFT is defined as a group of formal and informal supports, identified by the child and family, and convened by DCS, who work together to achieve positive outcomes with the DCS Practice Model by engaging in the CFT Meeting process.

Forms and Tools

- Background Check Matrix for Unlicensed Placement Guide – Available on the [Background Check Resources SharePoint](#)
- Central Office Background Check Unit (COBCU) email - cobcuinquiry@dcsl.in.gov
- [Combined Application for Criminal and Child Protective Services \(CPS\) History](#)

[Searches \(SF 57332\)](#)

- DCS Reunification Registration Instruction for Fingerprinting in Indiana – Available on the [Background Check Resources SharePoint](#)

Related Policies

- [2.09 Verifying Identity and Relationship](#)
- [2.22 International and Cultural Affairs Services](#)
- [13.11 Conducting Background Checks for Emergency Unlicensed Placements](#)
- [13.15 Fingerprint-Based Checks](#)

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LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 31-34-21-5.5 Reasonable Efforts to Preserve and Reunify Families](#)

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PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 13.14

Practice Guidance is designed to assist DCS staff with thoughtful and practical direction on how to effectively integrate tools and social work practice into daily case management in an effort to achieve positive family and child outcomes. Practice Guidance is separate from Policy.

Fingerprint-Based Check Results for Reunification

The Fingerprint-Based Check Result Letter for checks conducted for the purpose of reunification will not return with Qualified, Incomplete – Documentation Necessary, or Disqualified. The results will be in an informational format to inform the FCM of what has been returned on the criminal history check results. The FCM or FCM Supervisor may contact the Central Office Background Check Unit (COBCU) worker to obtain additional details if needed.

Inaccurate Criminal Records

If any of the Fingerprint-Based Criminal Checks conducted by DCS reveal an inaccurate record, the record may be formally challenged by the subject of the check. A Review Challenge of inaccurate information in Indiana is made to the ISP. A criminal history records Review Challenge outside of Indiana must be made to the Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) that posted the record.

Undocumented Immigrants

For the purpose of reunification, an undocumented immigrant may be fingerprinted even if he or she does not have a valid Social Security Number as long as he or she has a current government issued picture ID, even if the ID is issued by the individual's native country. Under other circumstances, contact COBCUinquiry@dcs.in.gov for guidance.

Note: The FCM may complete a Focused Needs referral through KidTraks if assistance is needed to locate or verify documents. See policy 2.22 International and Cultural Affairs Services for additional information.

Waivers for Reunification

Fingerprint-Based Checks and CPS History Checks are not mandatory for reunification. Therefore, there is no waiver process. The results of these checks provide additional information the local office may consider in conjunction with other case specifics to determine the overall safety of the home in which reunification of the child is being considered.

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