

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL	
	Chapter 5: General Case Management	Effective Date: September 1, 2008
	Section 6: Locating Absent Parents	Version: 2

POLICY

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 CHINS petition, after creating an informal adjustment (IA), prior to filing Termination of Parental Rights).

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 (ADI) 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](#)
2. 42 IAC 1-5-12 Use of state property
3. IC 4-2-7-12

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 the parent/guardian/custodian 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 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; and
7. Any benefits received (e.g., disability, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), etc.).

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 the Family Network Diagram and present to the court;

3. At the first court hearing, request the judge to put the custodial parent or other individuals under oath to answer questions regarding the noncustodial parent and extended family;
4. Obtain/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 order until the parent is located:

1. Search the databases available to the FCM including the Indiana Support Enforcement Tracking System (ISETS); Indiana Child Welfare Information System (ICWIS) and the Indiana Client Eligibility System (ICES);
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;
5. Search the Department of Corrections (DOC) at <http://www.in.gov/doc/>. Click on Offender Locator on the right side of the screen; and
6. Use <http://www.ussearch.com/> to locate parent. See practice guidance for instructions.

Note: The FCM must be prepared to present his/her findings with respect to the absent parent 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 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.

The FCM will also:

1. Document all efforts and the results of the search into Indiana Child Welfare Information System (ICWIS) contact log;
2. Advise the Child and Family Team (CFT) regarding the identity, or lack thereof, of the noncustodial parent and efforts to locate;

3. Complete/provide an ADI during the assessment phase outlining the efforts taken to identify/locate the absent parent to the local DCS 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 noncustodial/alleged parent is known, the FCM will provide the address of the parent to the local DCS attorney so the parent may receive notices of Court proceedings.

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/bmv>;
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.

US Search

The FCM Supervisor must approve all use of US Search.

1. Go to <http://www.ussearch.com> and click on *Community* at lower right, then click on *Log In*;
2. Type email address and group password. The password can be obtained from the Supervisor;
3. Provide information on person being searched;
4. Do not submit searches on children;
5. Use SSN when possible for best results;
6. Add information such as Social Security Number (SSN), Date of Birth (DOB), previous address, city and/or state of residence, if the absent parent has a common name;
7. Results will be sent via email within 24 hours; and
8. Submit follow-up questions or additional information via **email**, not through the website, or DCS will be charged for a new search.

FORMS AND TOOLS

[Family Network Diagram Guide](#)

RELATED INFORMATION

Importance of Conducting a Diligent Search for Absent Parents

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