

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 13: Background Checks	Effective Date: July 1, 2017
	Section 7: Conducting Background Checks for Adoptions	Version: 7

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will complete the following background checks on members of the prospective DCS adoptive household or members of a prospective private adoptive household who are applying for the Indiana Adoption Assistance Program (AAP), which will vary based on the age of the subject of the check and the type of check being conducted:

1. Fingerprint-Based Check;
2. Child Protection Services (CPS) History Check;
3. National Sex Offender Registry Check; and
4. Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) Arrest Records Check.

Note: DCS will not conduct background checks on children under DCS care and supervision.

DCS requires background checks on all persons who live in a:

1. Prospective adoptive home wishing to adopt a DCS ward;
2. Prospective private adoptive home applying for the AAP; or
3. Prospective adoptive home seeking approval only for a Special Needs Adoption.

Background checks must be completed for purposes of the adoption home study, adoption summary, or AAP eligibility determination. If it has been 12 months since the last background check, new background checks must be completed prior to the following:

1. Pre-adoptive placement;
2. Adoption home study or adoption summary;
3. Submission of the Indiana Adoption Program Application; or
4. Filing the petition for adoption.

Note: Fingerprint-Based Checks conducted for the purpose of adoption cannot be used for foster care licensing, employment, or any other purpose and a new fingerprint check is required.

After a child is placed in a prospective adoptive home, DCS requires background checks on:

1. New household members who have an intent to reside in the home for 21 days or more (the days do not have to be consecutive). Checks must be completed prior to the new household member moving into the prospective adoptive home and then completed annually; or
2. Current household members who turn 14 or 18 years old; Fingerprint-Based National Criminal History Check (Fingerprint-Based Check) and local LEA are required within 30 days of his/her 18th birthday; and National Sex Offender Registry checks are required within 30 days of his/her 14th birthday.

The type of background check conducted will vary based on the age of the subject of the check.

1. For all persons in the home age 18 and older, the background check will consist of the following:
 - a. Fingerprint-Based Check,
 - b. CPS History Check in every state the subject of the check has resided during the past five (5) years,
 - c. National Sex Offender Registry check in every state the subject of the check has resided during the past five (5) years, and
 - d. LEA records check must be completed by requesting a search from the appropriate LEA corresponding to each residential address the subject of the check has resided during the past five (5) years.
2. For all persons in the home age 14-17 years, the background check will consist of the following:
 - a. CPS History Check in every state the subject of the check has resided during the past five (5) years, and
 - b. National Sex Offender Registry Check in every state the subject of the check has resided during the past five (5) years.
3. For all persons age 6-13 years, a CPS History Check must be completed and initiated in every other state the subject of the check has lived in the last five (5) years either prior to placement or within 72 hours of placement.

Note: The CPS History check should be completed within 30 days of the child's 6th birthday.

Exceptions to Fingerprinting

An exception may only be granted by the DCS Central Office Background Check Unit (COBCU) and is for limited and case-specific situations, such as the following:

1. When the subject does not have fingers;
2. When a person trained to take fingerprints has documented that the subject's disabling condition prevents fingerprinting; or
3. When a qualified medical practitioner has documented the subject's disabling condition prevents fingerprinting.

To request an exception, the following information must be sent to the COBCU:

1. A letter requesting the exception and explaining the disabling condition; and
2. The required documentation from the person trained to take fingerprints or a qualified medical practitioner or evidence that the individual does not have fingers.

If the exception is granted, the COBCU will complete the Indiana Limited Criminal History Check (LCH) on the subject of the check and provide official notice of the fingerprint exception status. If the subject lived in any other state in the last five (5) years, contact the COBCU for guidance on what type of check is needed in that state.

Extracurricular Activities

DCS does not have the statutory authority to request individuals to be fingerprinted who are involved in the extracurricular activities in which the child participates. These activities would include, but are not limited to: scouting, youth groups, school parties, sleepovers, roller skating parties, and birthday parties (see separate policy, [8.23 Extracurricular Activities](#)). However,

discretion should be used when deciding whether CPS History Checks, Sex Offender Registry Checks and/or LCH Checks are needed.

Employees and Volunteers of the Prospective Adoptive Home, including Child Care Providers

If the family utilizes a child care provider who is licensed by the Division of Family Resources (DFR), all background checks have already been completed as part of the licensing process. DCS should not complete additional background checks. Background checks are not required on employees and/or volunteers of a prospective adoptive home including child care providers. Discretion should be used when deciding if a CPS History Check, National Sex Offender Registry, and/or Limited Criminal History Check are needed. Fingerprint-Based Checks should not be conducted.

Private Adoptions

DCS does not conduct Fingerprint-Based Checks for domestic or international private adoptions. The private agencies and/or legal representative will run Fingerprint-Based Checks through the Indiana State Police (ISP). The only exception is when the prospective private adoptive home is applying for AAP through DCS.

DCS will maintain confidentiality of all information gained during the background check process, following all applicable state and federal laws. See separate policy [2.6 Sharing Confidential Information](#).

Code References

1. [IC 31-19-11-1: Decree; affidavit; criminal convictions and juvenile adjudications](#)
2. [IC 31-19-7-1: Prior written approval of placements; criminal history checks](#)
3. [IC 31-9-2-22.5: "Conduct a criminal history check"](#)
4. [IC 31-19-2-7.3: Waiver of criminal history check requirements prohibited](#)
5. [IC 31-19-2-7.5: Submission of information, forms, or consents for criminal history check](#)
6. [IC 31-19-8-5: Agency report and recommendation; filing requirements; waiver of report](#)
7. [IC 12-17.2-2-8: Licensure exemptions](#)

PROCEDURE

The DCS local office or Licensed Child Placing Agency (LCPA) adoption worker¹ will:

Note: For private adoption cases where the prospective adoptive parent is applying for AAP, the LCPA adoption worker will complete the following procedure.

1. Verify the identity of each subject of the check, regardless of age (see separate policy, [2.9 Verifying Identity](#)); by reviewing one (1) available and valid, government-issued identification document (ID) such as, but not limited to, a:
 - a. Social Security card,
 - b. Birth certificate,
 - c. Passport,
 - d. Photo identification card, or
 - e. Driver's license.

¹ In cases where the home study is contracted out, the "adoption worker" may either be the DCS or the LCPA worker. The person conducting the home study would complete the required background checks.

2. Have each subject of the check complete the [Application for Criminal History Background Check \(SF 53259\)](#) using his or her legal name as it appears on the current government issued picture ID: The subject of the check must sign and date the form. The adoption worker must place the original form in the file after completion of the Background Check Process;
3. Register each person age 18 and older for a Fingerprint-Based Check, unless he or she requests an Exception to Fingerprinting. This consists of the adoption worker:
 - a. Completing the registration process for the purpose of adoption and making an appointment for the subject of the check for electronic fingerprinting through the DCS approved fingerprint vendor and providing the subject of the check with a copy of the registration confirmation number given at the end of the registration process (if unable to complete the registration/make the appointment, see “b”);
 - b. Providing the subject of the check with the customized [DCS Ward Adoption Registration Instruction for Fingerprinting in Indiana](#), which provides step-by-step instructions for registering for fingerprints if the adoption worker is unable to register the subject of the check, and
 - c. Informing the subject of the check to use the same government issued ID used during registration for fingerprints.
4. Ensure the subject of the check is successfully fingerprinted by obtaining the results of the Fingerprint-Based Check from the COBCU. The COBCU will provide a letter via e-mail to the DCS local office or LCPA contact person handling all background check material to inform him or her of the Fingerprint-Based Check status. For additional information concerning Fingerprint-Based Check results, see separate policy, [13.8 Evaluating Background Checks for Adoptions](#),

Note: If fingerprints are rejected, follow the instructions on the Reprint Notice. A ‘reprint’ appointment must be scheduled. Do not start a new registration or there will be a duplicate charge for cost of printing. Provide the subject of the check a copy of the notice if he or she will be scheduling his or her own ‘reprint’ appointment.

5. Conduct a National Sex Offender Registry Check for all persons 14 years of age and older and print the results off of the Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public website at <http://www.nsopw.gov/Core/Portal.aspx>. If a match is found, refer to separate policy, [13.8 Evaluating Background Checks for Adoptions](#);

Note: Narrow the search by state if searching a common name results in multiple matches. Complete a search of every state the subject of the check has resided during the past five (5) years.

6. Conduct a CPS History Check for all persons in Indiana by:
 - a. Completing Section A of the [Indiana Request for a Child Protection Services \(CPS\) History Check \(SF 52802\)](#);
 - b. Having the subject of the check or representative, if a minor, complete Section B of the [Indiana Request for a Child Protection Services \(CPS\) History Check \(SF 52802\)](#); and
 - c. Completing a search of the Management Gateway for Indiana’s Kids (MaGIK) and hardcopy files, if available, and reflect the results of the search in Section C.

Note: LCPAs are unable to access this information and will need to send a copy of the [Indiana Request for a Child Protection Services \(CPS\) History Check \(SF 52802\)](#) to COBCU or the DCS local office to be completed.

7. Conduct a CPS search for every other state where a household member has lived during the past five (5) years, if applicable. Locate information for a CPS administrator to process the search request at <http://www.cclid.ca.gov/AdamWalsh/2609.htm> (select “List of Contacts for Other State’s Child Abuse and Neglect Registries”); and

Note: If a household member has CPS history in any state, refer to separate policy, [13.8 Evaluating Background Checks for Adoptions](#) for further required action.

8. Conduct a local LEA Records Check by requesting a search from the appropriate LEA corresponding to each residential address the subject of the check has resided in during the past five (5) years. If the LEA does not require its own specific form or have a procedure, the [Application for Criminal History Background Check \(SF 53259\)](#), section titled “For Law Enforcement Use Only” may be utilized. Upon receiving the results of each check, see separate policy [13.8 Evaluating Background Checks for Adoptions](#).

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Undocumented Individuals

If an individual is undocumented, the adoption worker should contact the COBCU for instructions and approval as background checks, including fingerprints, are still required. The fingerprint registration cannot be completed without a social security number or the assistance of the COBCU.

Notifying the Adoption Worker of Arrest, Conviction, or Substantiation of Abuse or Neglect

The prospective adoptive home must notify the adoption worker within 24 hours of the arrest, conviction or substantiation of abuse or neglect of the prospective adoptive parent, or a household member. The adoption worker and supervisor will evaluate the severity and seriousness of the offense on a case-by-case basis. If there is an arrest that results in a conviction or CPS substantiation, the COBCU should be contacted for additional guidance and instruction.

Registering for Fingerprints

If the adoption worker is unable to complete the registration process for the subject of the check, the worker is to provide the subject of the check with the step-by-step instructions for registering for fingerprints through the DCS approved vendor. The instructions should include the correct DCS local office or LCPA, adoption worker’s name, adoption worker’s phone number, and the reason for printing.

Exception to Fingerprinting

If an Exception to Fingerprinting request is granted, COBCU will run an Indiana LCH check. The adoption worker will provide the non-fingerprint based checks for all other states the subject of the check has resided in during the past five (5) years to the COBCU. The COBCU will provide a letter via e-mail to the DCS local office or LCPA contact person handling all background check material and inform them of the clearance status resulting from the search.

For purposes of the exception for a physical disability, a "qualified medical practitioner" means the following:

1. A physician licensed under [IC 25-22.5](#);
2. A physician assistant licensed under [IC 25-27.5](#);
3. A physical therapist licensed under [IC 25-27](#);
4. An advanced practice nurse licensed under [IC 25-23](#);
5. A chiropractor licensed under [IC 25-10](#); and
6. A psychologist licensed under [IC 25-33](#).

Searching CPS History

Search all available hardcopy records and complete a MaGIK search.

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Application for Criminal History Background Check \(SF 53259\)](#)
2. [Request for Child Protection Service \(CPS\) History Check \(SF 52802\)](#)
3. [Background Check Matrix Adoptions Desk Guide](#)
4. [DCS Ward Adoption Registration Instruction for Fingerprinting in Indiana](#)

RELATED INFORMATION

Exceptions to Fingerprint-Based Checks

Neither the court nor any other person or organization has the authority to exclude the subject of the check from completing all required background checks. The only exception to this is if the COBCU grants an Exception to Fingerprinting outlined in the above policy.

DCS may only complete Fingerprint-Based Checks on those over whom DCS has statutory authority to fingerprint.

If the FCM believes at any time that DCS is being required to complete background checks outside the statutory authority, the FCM shall contact the Deputy Director of Placement Support and Compliance for assistance.

Special Fingerprinting Issues

Homebound

If the subject of a check is unable to leave his or her home for fingerprinting, the adoption worker should contact the COBCU for appropriate instruction and approval.

Unreadable Fingerprints and Reprint Notice

Fingerprints may be rejected by Indiana State Police (ISP) or the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) for a number of reasons. Each rejection is evaluated individually. For each reprint notice issued the subject of the check must schedule a reprint appointment. COBCU will request that a non-emergency Name-Based Check be processed if the individual's fingerprints are rejected. This may occur several times. If the worker receives the notification of rejection and reprint appointment, this needs to be completed within 10 days. This must be scheduled as a reprint appointment. The processing time for the Name-Based Check takes longer than that of a fingerprint check.

Checking the Status of a Fingerprint-Based Checks Report

The DCS local office COBCU contact person is provided access to the administrative website to check the status of prints. Questions regarding the username and password for the website may be e-mailed to the COBCU at background.checkunit@dcs.in.gov.

Limited Criminal History (LCH) Check

An LCH check is a name-based search of the ISP database that contains only felonies and Class A misdemeanor arrests within the State of Indiana and can only be conducted on individuals 18 years of age and older. **This search should not be used if fingerprinting is being completed.** Accuracy of this information is dependent upon local law enforcement participation. DCS may provide a copy of the Indiana LCH to the subject of the check. This search is available online at <https://secure.in.gov/apps/isp/lch/>. This site may be accessed by the general public and results are immediate. Designated DCS local office staff has access to this site. For assistance with username or password issues, please e-mail background.checkunit@dcs.in.gov.

If any of the checks conducted by DCS are contested by the subject of the check, the record may be formally challenged by that subject. A Review Challenge of inaccurate information must be submitted to the arresting agency. For Indiana convictions, this challenge would be submitted to the ISP.

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