

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 5: General Case Management	Effective Date: April 1, 2021
	Section 04: Locating and Engaging Noncustodial Parents	Version: 5

POLICY OVERVIEW

Locating and engaging the noncustodial parent may lead to several positive outcomes for the child. It may aid in establishing a relationship or connection between a child, parent, and/or other relatives, which may lead to an expedited permanency outcome. The noncustodial parent may:

1. Be a potential permanency option and lifelong connection for the child;
2. Provide additional information about the child and/or family members' medical history;
3. Provide information regarding benefits the child may be eligible to receive (e.g., child support and health benefits);
4. Participate in the Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting or Case Plan Conference process and help in the development of a permanency plan for the child; and/or
5. Identify extended family members that support the child and family and may be:
 - a. A potential placement option (if the noncustodial parent is not),
 - b. Active participants in the CFT meeting or Case Plan Conference, and
 - c. A potential permanency option.

PROCEDURE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will make diligent efforts, beginning in the assessment phase, to locate and engage the noncustodial parent throughout the life of the case. When it is necessary to remove a child from a custodial parent, DCS will give primary consideration to the placement with noncustodial parent prior to selecting an out-of-home placement option (see policy 8.01 Selecting a Placement Option).

Information gained from the noncustodial parent will be considered when developing the Case Plan/Prevention Plan, planning services, and establishing eligibility for federal funding. Engagement with the noncustodial parent may also assist DCS in identifying relatives that may serve as placement or support for the child.

Background checks may be conducted when moving a child to the care of the noncustodial parent if the FCM has reason to question the safety of the placement or if risk factors are present.

To engage the noncustodial parent, the FCM will:

1. Ask the parent, guardian, custodian, child, and other pertinent individuals the name and location of the noncustodial parent at the time of the initial assessment and, as necessary, throughout the life of the case;

2. Record the information in the case management system;
3. Complete a diligent search to locate the noncustodial parent if the parent's location is unknown (see policies 2.26 Diligent Search and 5.06 Locating Absent Parents).

Note: Complete a Permanency and Practice Support (PPS) Investigator referral in KidTraks for assistance in locating the noncustodial parent if the FCM is not otherwise able to make contact.

4. Notify the noncustodial parent (once identified and located) of the parent's rights and responsibilities and all pending court hearings;

Note: In the case of an involuntary removal, notify the noncustodial parent according to policy 4.28 Involuntary Removals.

5. Provide the Advisement of Legal Rights Form to the noncustodial parent. If the noncustodial parent is a minor, provide the Advisement of Legal Rights to the minor parent and the minor parent's parent, guardian, or custodian. Inform the noncustodial parent of the right to:
 - a. Request placement of the child,
 - b. Visit with the child, unless the court orders no visitation, and
 - c. Participate in case planning for the child through the Child and Family (CFT) meeting or Case Plan Conference.
6. Develop the Kinship Connection Diagram with the noncustodial parent;
7. Ensure the noncustodial parent is kept informed about the child and is included in all aspects of case planning;
8. Inform the noncustodial parent of the obligation to pay child support if ordered. Request that the court issue an order for child support if not ordered or redirect an order for child support if the child is placed in out-of-home placement (see policy 2.20 Establishment of Child Support Orders);
9. Make copies of all correspondences sent to the noncustodial parent for the case file; and
10. Document in the case management system the efforts to locate and engage the noncustodial parent (see policy 5.03 Engaging the Family).

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Review all efforts made by the FCM to locate and engage the noncustodial parent; and
2. Provide direction and support to the FCM as needed.

LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 31-9-2-22.1 Concurrent Planning](#)
- [IC 31-34-19-7 Placement of child; relative evaluation; background checks](#)

RELEVANT INFORMATION

Definitions

DCS Investigator

A DCS Investigator is an employee of DCS who is responsible for assisting FCMs in locating absent parents, relative, and/or other identified persons of interest to the case and/or assessment.

Noncustodial Parent

A noncustodial parent is a mother, father, or alleged father (biological or adoptive) who does not have legal or primary physical custody of the child. For any questions regarding custody or custodial arrangements, contact the Local Office Attorney.

Forms and Tools

- [Advisement of Legal Rights Form \(SF 47114\)](#)
- Case Plan/Prevention Plan (SF 2956) – Available in the case management system
- [Incarcerated Parent Letter-Assessment](#)
- [Incarcerated Parent Letter-Permanency](#)
- [Incarcerated Parent Demographic \(SF 56538\)](#)
- [Incarcerated Parent Information \(SF 56539\)](#)
- [Kinship Connection Diagram](#)
- [Plan of Safe Care \(SF 56565\)](#)
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Related Policies

- [2.20 Establishment of Child Support Orders](#)
- [2.26 Diligent Search](#)
- [4.28 Involuntary Removals](#)
- [5.03 Engaging the Family](#)
- [5.06 Locating Absent Parents](#)
- [5.15 Concurrent Planning](#)
- [8.01 Selecting a Placement Option](#)