INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
Chapter 2: Assessment	**Effective Date:** July 1, 2019
Section 26: Diligent Search	**Version:** 3

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will conduct a diligent search for known, absent and non-custodial parents, along with all adult relatives and any non-relative kin, who may provide support to the child and/or family. The diligent search will begin with the child or youth's first contact with DCS, will include a thorough search of all potential resources, and will continue throughout the child or youth's involvement with DCS.

DCS shall conduct a diligent search including efforts that utilize search technology (including social media) throughout the life of the case to locate the following:

1. Absent and non-custodial parents for the purposes of notifying them of a Detention and Initial Hearing, other Juvenile Court proceedings, Termination of Parental Rights (TPR), or adoption unless a parent:
   a. Is deceased (certified by a Death Certificate),
   b. Has signed a Consent to Adoption (SF 12582) of the child,
   c. Has surrendered the child for adoption,
   d. TPR has been finalized with respect to the child who is the subject of the Juvenile Court proceeding, or
   e. Has an address that the Family Case Manager (FCM) has been to and confirmed the parent lives there (within the last month).

2. All individuals involved in a Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) intake report whose whereabouts are unknown for the purpose of conducting an assessment;
3. Relatives required by law to be notified within 30 days of a child's removal from his or her parent, guardian, or custodian. See policy 4.28 Involuntary Removals for additional information;
4. All adult relatives and other individuals with an established and significant relationship with a child in DCS custody for the purpose of conducting a diligent search to find the best and earliest placement for a child that will result in permanency or support for the family or for child care and other assistance to intact families. See policy 8.1 Selecting a Placement Option for further guidance;
5. Siblings of a child in DCS custody for the purpose of placing the siblings together or to facilitate regular visitation. See policy 8.12 Developing the Visitation Plan for additional information;
6. Individuals who may be possible informal supports and who are identified by the child and/or family of the child; and
7. Any child absent from placement, including any child for whom DCS is legally responsible who is absent from the child's approved/authorized placement without the consent of the child's caregiver or DCS. This also includes a child who is placed in protective custody and the child is abducted or the child's whereabouts become unknown during a pending assessment. See policy 2.24 Missing and Runaway Children for additional information.

Code Reference

1. IC 31-34-3-4.5: Procedures for notices to adult relatives and siblings
2. IC 31-9-2-107 (b) "Relative"
3. 31-34-18-2: Predispositional report; participation by parent, guardian, or custodian; out-of-home placement with blood or adoptive relative caretaker
4. 42 USC 671 (a)(29) Notification of Parents of Siblings

PROCEDURE

The FCM will:

1. Ask the custodial parent where DCS can find the other parent if a non-custodial parent's whereabouts are unknown;
2. During conversations with the custodial and non-custodial parents, the child, and any known relatives or other supports gather information to conduct a diligent search for siblings, all adult relatives, friends, or non-relative kin who could be a resource for the child and/or youth or family;

   Note: Obtain addresses, telephone numbers, aliases, veteran status, present or previous employers, the last school the child attended, doctor's names, tribal affiliation (if applicable), and any other information that would be helpful in locating relatives and resources for the child;

3. Talk with the current caregiver, if the caregiver is not the custodial parent, about the whereabouts of the child's parent, other relatives and any other known caregivers;

   Note: Results of efforts described in 1 - 3 above, must be documented in a contact within the case management system. These efforts must also be captured or updated in the Family Network Diagram. See 5.B Tool: Family Network Diagram Instruction Guide for additional information.

4. Make an in-person visit to the parent's last known address if there is reason to believe the parent may be there. See policy, 5.6 Locating Absent Parents for specific information. Contact the landlord, if applicable, ensuring the identified individual's confidentiality is being maintained. See policy 2.6 Sharing Confidential Information for further guidance. If there are multiple parents involved, make a good faith effort to make contact with all missing parents. See policy, 4.20 Good Faith Efforts for additional information;
5. Conduct a diligent search for siblings and all adult relatives of the child for notice, placement consideration (if applicable), and to encourage participation on the Child and Family Team (CFT). Also see below for additional requirements when a child is removed from his or her home;

   Note: Consider completing a Permanency and Practice Support (PPS) Investigator referral in Kidtraks for assistance in locating individuals which the FCM is not otherwise able to contact.

6. Document all diligent search efforts and the results of each search effort in a contact in the case management system within 24 hours of completion of each respective search;

7. Advise the CFT regarding the identity, or lack thereof, of a noncustodial parent and all adult relatives, efforts made to locate and contact the parent and identified relatives, and the identity and location of other persons contacted as requested by the child or the child's parent;
8. Continue to pursue diligent efforts to locate absent parents, noncustodial parents, all adult relatives, and siblings, if necessary, throughout the life of the case. See policies, 5.4 Noncustodial Parents, and 5.6 Locating Absent Parents for additional information; and
9. Include diligent search efforts in each progress report to the court, if applicable.

In the event of a removal, the FCM will:

1. Identify and conduct a diligent search for all adult relatives, including those individuals required by IC 31-34-3-4.5 to be notified of the removal. See Practice Guidance for more information;
2. Record in the case management system:
   a. The name, address, contact information, and relation to the child, of each person contacted or available to be contacted, and
   b. The name, relation to the child, and diligent efforts made to locate and contact each adult relative and sibling who has not been located for purposes of the written notice of removal.

3. Contact the located individuals as soon as possible to consider them for participation in CFT Meetings, placement for the child, and as informal supports for the child and family;
4. Provide each individual with written notice of the removal using Notice to Relatives (SF 55211) within 30 days of the removal;

   Note: When it is known or suspected that a relative has caused family or domestic violence, DCS may not notify that relative of the child's removal. The decision not to provide notice to any of the required relatives must be made jointly with the FCM Supervisor and documented in the case management system.

5. Follow all confidentiality requirements when communicating with relatives. See Practice Guidance for more information; and
6. Include diligent efforts to locate all adult relatives in each progress report to the court.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Notification Required by IC 31-34-3-4.5

Indiana state law requires the FCM to notify the following individuals within 30 days of a child's removal from his or her parent, guardian, or custodian:

1. Maternal and paternal grandparents;
2. Adult aunts and uncles;
3. A parent of a child's sibling if the parent has legal custody of the sibling;
4. Any other adult relatives suggested by either parent or the child; and
5. All of the child's siblings who are at least 18 years of age.

   Note: When it is known or suspected that a relative has caused family or domestic violence, DCS may not notify that relative of the child's removal. The decision not to provide notice to any of the required relatives must be made jointly with the FCM Supervisor and documented in the case management system.

Coping with Parental Resistance

Often when engaging parents, they will refuse to identify absent parents, relatives or other adults who care about their children. The following are some suggested strategies that may be of assistance in overcoming parental resistance. They include:

1. Informing parents about the benefits to children of having a relationship with the other parent and permanent connections with relatives and other caring adults and the harmful effects for children who do not have these supports;
2. Being persistent and recognizing that sometimes parents (and others) are not ready to provide information when first asked. Their resistance may lessen as they see other family members are concerned, participate in family preservation or reunification services, CFT Meetings, or reconsider their child's well-being;
3. Asking children and youth themselves about who is important to them and who they want to contact. See 4.A Tool – Interviewing Children for some techniques for interviewing children;
4. Seeking individuals who may be resources for all kinds of support to children and parents – not just limited to placement options; and
5. Partnering with the courts and attorneys to obtain court orders requiring that parents identify relatives to whom written notice of removal is required by law.

Confidentiality

The law requires DCS to notify certain relatives about a child's removal and the best way DCS may do this is to send a notification to each person. For example, DCS is unable to guarantee a grandmother will show the notice to the grandfather just because they live at the same address.

All DCS staff members are required to follow confidentiality requirements when communicating with relatives and other supportive individuals. When providing the Notice to Relatives (SF 55211) as required by law, DCS staff members are only permitted to share the information outlined below. If these relatives contact the FCM to request additional information about the case, the FCM should work with the child's parent to engage the relative in the CFT Meeting process and Visitation Plan, as appropriate. See 2.6 Sharing Confidential Information for further guidance.

Relatives should be told the following information when provided notice of the removal:

1. Notice that the child has been removed from his or her parent, guardian, or custodian by DCS;
2. Options the relative may have to become a relative placement for the child and failure to respond to the notice may result in the loss of this option;
3. The option for the relative to become a licensed resource parent and receive financial assistance;
4. The option for the relative to adopt or obtain guardianship of the child in the event the child is unable to safely return home. The relative may also be able to enter into an agreement with DCS to receive financial assistance; and
5. Additional services available to the child while in foster care.

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. Consent to Adoption (SF 12582)
2. Notice to Relatives (SF 55211) – Available in the case management system

3. 5.B Tool: Family Network Diagram Instruction Guide

RELATED INFORMATION

Sibling

1. A brother or sister by blood, half blood, step-sibling or adoption; and
2. Any other individual who would be considered a sibling if parental rights had not been terminated.

Assessing Family Members' Interest by Building Trust with Relatives

When family members do not respond immediately to DCS inquiries this does not necessarily mean that they do not care about the child. When DCS takes the time to build trust with relatives, it may go a long way to help them seriously consider the role they want to play in the child's life. DCS may help relatives see they do not have to limit their roles to providing a place to stay, but have a variety of ways they may be involved in the child's life.

Suggested strategies to build trust with relatives include:

1. Persevere – Continue to engage the family during each contact and during CFT Meetings to partner in the identification of family and important individuals in the lives of the child and family members; and
2. Provide Several Opportunities for Family Participation in CFT Meetings – It is important to let family members decide as much as possible about how they may help the child. Once the child's situation is clear, it is important to give relatives an opportunity to step forward. Family members often take the initiative to let others know about the child's situation. They often show their support in unanticipated ways – including traveling long distances at their own expense to participate in planning meetings.

Respecting Family and Community Culture

Throughout the relative search process, it is important to honor the family's culture and background and to integrate their cultural practices into plans for the child's care. In many cultures, family and community members have a range of supportive roles in caring for children. The family's cultural traditions may greatly enhance plans for child rearing, parenting, and supporting children. To build rapport with relatives and engage them in developing workable plans, DCS must be familiar with the family's culture and build on their unique traditions.

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. Additional information regarding how to make a referral, when to make a referral, and other helpful information can be found on the Permanency and Practice Support-Investigator website.