



Administrative Policies and Procedures: 16.48

Subject:	Conducting Diligent Searches
Authority:	TCA 37-5-106, Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, (P.L.110-351), TCA 37-4-201-207 et seq., Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act of 2006, (P.L. 109-239).
Standards:	None
Application:	To All Department of Children's Services Staff and Personnel.

Policy Statement:

The Department of Children's Services will assist all children/youth and families in careful search for known and unknown parents, maternal and paternal grandparents, and any other adult relatives/significant kin who may provide a support to both the child and family. This search will begin with the child/youth's first contact with DCS, will include a thorough search and identification of all potential resources, including those located in-state or out-of-state. The search results are documented as part of the Department's permanency planning efforts. The diligent search process will continue throughout the child/youth's involvement with DCS. The tools described within this policy are to be completed and updated during the family's continuing contact with DCS.

Purpose:

Maintaining or placement of children in a safe and secure environment is the primary focus of DCS. Building a supportive environment for a child/youth and family to succeed within their own home or in out of home care is of utmost importance. Failure to identify appropriate relative and significant kin resources in a timely manner may unnecessarily delay the achievement of permanent placement of children/youth. DCS emphasizes permanence for children with their parents, relatives or significant kin whenever possible. Completion of the tools will help capture information helpful in the development of the child's Lifebook, background information for formal presentations, full disclosure forms and subsidy documents.

Procedures:

A. Initiating a Diligent Search	<p>The following activities are suggested to complete a diligent search for a child's parent, known and unknown, grandparents, and any adult relatives or significant kin:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. During conversations with the parent gather information on any relatives, friends or significant kin that could be a resource for the child/youth or family. Obtain addresses, telephone numbers, and the last school the child attended, doctor's names, tribal affiliation (if applicable) and any other information that would be helpful in locating resources for the child. This
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information will be recorded in TFACTS, the **Family Functional Assessment**, and **form CS-0774, Contact Sheets for the Genogram**.

2. When trying to locate the whereabouts of a parent, an absent parent, grandparents, adult relatives, and significant kin contact all known relatives and friends. Family members and friends should be asked periodically about the whereabouts of absent parents and relatives since circumstances can change. Share information of relatives and friends with the regional attorney, to assist in achieving personal service of court documents.
3. Child and Family Team members will be asked during Team meetings if any new information on absent parents, grandparents, adult relatives and significant kin is available.
4. When it is age appropriate, children and youth should be asked to identify their family members, other significant adults or relationships that are important to them.
5. Review social service and public assistance records for identification of the parent, grandparents, adult relatives or significant kin and last known addresses.
6. Request information from the records of other states if the individual being sought is alleged to be residing in another state.
7. Check post offices, city directories and telephone directories for name and address listings.
8. Check police records for any records of address.
9. Check with in-state or out-of-state Driver's License Agencies for an address.
10. If the individuals are believed to be in the military or recently discharged from the military, check with the appropriate branch of the military service for a current address.
11. If the individual being sought is alleged to be a student, check with the appropriate school for information concerning the parent's address.
12. A letter asking for information about the parent will be sent to the last known address and marked "**Address Correction Requested – Do Not Forward**", when a current address is unknown. Document the results in TFACTS in the diligent search section.
13. Check the following sources as applicable:
 - a) Last known landlord,
 - b) Department of employment security,
 - c) Last known employer,
 - d) Utility companies,
 - e) Internet Searches
 - f) County records that are in the possession of the county tax assessor,
 - g) Registrar of deeds, or
 - h) County court clerk.
 - i) Lexis/Nexis

<p>B. Conducting a Diligent Search</p>	<p>Diligent Searches for parents, all grandparents, other adult relatives and significant kin shall be conducted in the following manner:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Worker assigned to the child's case will have the primary responsibility for conducting the diligent search. The diligent search process should begin prior to the child or youth entering state custody, but will be initiated within the first 30 days of custody entry date. The diligent search process should continue throughout the life of the case. 2. Document all efforts and results in the official case record. 3. All parents, maternal and paternal grandparents, and any other adult relative identified by the parents or child must be notified of a child's custodial status within 30 days of the child's entry into state custody. The Family Notification Letter can be used to document the worker's attempt to notify relatives. 4. The maternal and paternal grandparents must be notified of a child entering custody even if the parents will not give permission. The notification does not need to include any confidential health information. However, if the Child & Family Team determines that notifying a grandparent presents a safety risk for the child or youth, the notification does not have to be sent. The official record must reflect the justification for not sending out the notification. 5. All parents, maternal and paternal grandparents, and any other relatives identified by the parents or child will be notified of relative placement options, and supports available for relative placements. They will be given a copy of Relative Caregiver Brochure: Guide for Options and Available Services. The worker will have all parents; maternal and paternal grandparents and adult relatives identified by the parents or child sign Relative Caregivers Disclosure Statement Options/Available Services CS-0660, and place the form in the child's file. 6. If a worker cannot contact all parents, grandparents, and adult relatives within thirty (30) days, the diligent search efforts made to locate these family members will be documented in TFACTS. 7. If contacting a grandparent, adult relative or significant kin causes significant safety and risk issues for the child or parents, the reasons for failing to make those contacts must be documented in TFACTS. 8. If previously absent parent is located, reasonable efforts and engagement of that parent or relative will occur as soon as possible, and be evidenced in the permanency plan. 9. If a relative or other significant kin is located, the FSW will ask that individual if they will join the Child and Family Team. All parents, grandparents, relatives or significant kin should be encouraged to join the Child and Family Team even if they cannot be a placement resource for the child. 10. When engaging the child/youth and families the worker will inquire about resources that will assist in locating possible placement or support resources (e.g. mentor or visitation). This information will be recorded in TFACTS within thirty (30) days of the occurrence. 11. The diligent search process for parents, maternal and paternal grandparents,
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	adult relatives identified by the parents or child, and significant kin will be updated within three months of the child entering custody and when a child has been in custody for six months.
C. Data Systems Documentation	Information regarding diligent search efforts and outcomes should be documented in TFACTS by the staff person who is responsible for completing the searches and must be entered within thirty (30) days of date of the occurrence.

Forms:	<p><u>Relative Caregiver Brochure: Guide For Options and Available Services</u></p> <p><u>CS-0774 Contact Sheets for the Genogram</u></p> <p><u>CS-0660, Relative Caregivers Disclosure Statement Options/Available Services</u></p> <p><u>Family Notification Letter</u></p> <p>** The following forms will be integrated into TFACTS in the future</p> <p><u>CS-0584 Diligent Search Checklist</u></p> <p><u>CS-0777, Family Functional Assessment and Guide</u></p>
Collateral Documents:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lexis/Nexis Search Results

Case File/Record	A written compilation that describes the client and the services delivered. Records can be in hard copy and/or electronic format. The case record can be used as a source of information for quality improvement or other evaluation activities, for research purposes, or to demonstrate accountability to funding bodies.
Diligent Search	To search for/identification of relatives and/or significant kin to assist in provide in locating the child/youth and family. While also identifying supportive services to a child/youth during and after involvement with the Department to include such support as mentoring, respite or permanent placement. This process begins during the CPS investigation/assessment and continues until the child is in a permanent placement
Significant Kin	Non-relative adults who have a significant relationship with a child in out-of-home placement (e.g. godparents or family friend).