



**Administrative Policies and Procedures: 16.48**

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Conducting Diligent Searches</b>
<b>Authority:</b>	TCA 37-5-106, 36-1-102, 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).
<b>Standards:</b>	None
<b>Application:</b>	To All Department of Children's Services Staff and Personnel.
<b>Policy Statement:</b>	
<p>The Department of Children's Services assists 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 begins with the child/youth's first contact with DCS, includes 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 continues throughout the child/youth's involvement with DCS. The tools described within this policy are completed and updated during the family's continuing contact with DCS.</p>	
<b>Purpose:</b>	
<p>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. Timely identification of appropriate relative and significant kin resources is necessary for the achievement of permanent placement of children/youth.</p>	
<b>Procedures:</b>	
<b>A. Initiating a Diligent Search</b>	<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"> <li>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 information is recorded in TFACTS, the <b>Family Functional Assessment</b> and <b>form CS-0774, Genogram Contact Sheets</b>.</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>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.</li><li>3. Child and Family Team members are asked during Team meetings if any new information on absent parents, grandparents, adult relatives and significant kin is available.</li><li>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.</li><li>5. Review social service and public assistance records for identification of the parent, grandparents, adult relatives or significant kin and last known addresses.</li><li>6. Request information from the records of other states if the individual being sought is alleged to be residing in another state.</li><li>7. Check post offices, city directories and telephone directories for name and address listings.</li><li>8. Check police records for any records of address.</li><li>9. Check with in-state or out-of-state Driver's License Agencies for an address.</li><li>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.</li><li>11. If the individual being sought is alleged to be a student, check with the appropriate school for information concerning the parent's address.</li><li>12. A letter asking for information about the parent is sent to the last known address and marked "<b>Address Correction Requested – Do Not Forward</b>", when a current address is unknown. Document the results in TFACTS in the diligent search section.</li><li>13. Check the following sources, as applicable:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Last known landlord;</li><li>b) Department of employment security;</li><li>c) Last known employer;</li><li>d) Utility companies;</li><li>e) Internet Searches;</li><li>f) County records that are in the possession of the county tax assessor;</li><li>g) Registrar of deeds;</li><li>h) County court clerk; or</li><li>i) Clear Search Results</li></ol></li></ol>
--	---

Original Effective Date: DCS 16.48; 5/17/17  
Current Effective Date: DCS 16.48, 01/01/02

Supersedes: 16.48, 02/01/10  
CS-0001  
RDASW22

	<p>14. If the individual is reported as detained for deportation outside the United States, there is a federal database for verifying and locating these individuals. See attached Safety Notice: <a href="#">Verifying/Locating Case Members Reportedly Detained to Deportation</a> and <a href="#">Brochure for Online Deportee Locator System</a>.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> For a guide on completing diligent searches, refer to the <a href="#">Diligent Search Quick Tips</a>.</p>
<p><b>B. Conducting a Diligent Search</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Diligent Searches for parents, including parents of a sibling, half-sibling or step-sibling that have legal custody of the sibling, all grandparents and any other adult relatives or significant kin identified by the parents or child, are conducted in the following manner:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The Worker assigned to the child’s case has the primary responsibility for conducting the diligent search. The diligent search process should begin prior to the child or youth entering state custody, but is initiated within the first 30 days of custody entry date. The diligent search process continues throughout the life of the case.</li> <li>b) Documentation of all efforts and the results are placed in the official case record.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. All identified parents, including parents of a sibling, half-sibling or step-sibling that have legal custody of the sibling, maternal and paternal grandparents and any other adult relatives or significant kin are <i>notified</i> of the following:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) A child’s custodial status within thirty (30) days of the child’s entry into state custody. The <a href="#">Family Notification Letter</a> can be used to document the worker’s attempt to notify relatives.</li> <li>b) 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 &amp; Family Team determines that by notifying anyone identified above 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.</li> <li>c) Relative placement options and supports available for relative placements. They are given a copy of <a href="#">Becoming a Family Caregiver for a Child in Your Family Brochure</a>. The worker ensures all relatives or kin identified above sign form <b>CS-0660, Relative Caregivers Disclosure Statement Options/Available Services</b>, and place the form in the child’s file.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. If a worker cannot contact all relatives or kin identified above within thirty (30) days, the diligent search efforts made to locate these family members is documented in TFACTS.</li> <li>4. If by contacting any relative or kin listed above causes significant safety and risk issues for the child or parents, the reasons for failing to make those contacts must be is documented in TFACTS.</li> <li>5. If a previously absent parent is located, reasonable efforts and engagement of that parent or relative occurs as soon as possible, and is reflected in the permanency plan.</li> </ol>

Original Effective Date: DCS 16.48; 5/17/17  
 Current Effective Date: DCS 16.48, 01/01/02

Supersedes: 16.48, 02/01/10  
 CS-0001  
 RDASW22

	<p>6. If a relative or other significant kin, as listed above, is located, the FSW asks that individual if they will join the Child and Family Team (CFT). All parents, grandparents, relatives or significant kin are encouraged to join the CFT, even if they cannot be a placement resource for the child.</p> <p>7. When engaging the child/youth and families, the worker enquires about resources that may assist in locating possible placement or support resources (e.g. mentor or visitation). This information is recorded in TFACTS within thirty (30) days of the occurrence.</p> <p>8. The diligent search process for all parents, including parents of a sibling, half-sibling or step-sibling that have legal custody of the sibling, grandparents, adult relatives and significant kin identified by the parents or child is updated within three (3) months of the child entering custody and when a child has been in custody for six (6) months.</p>
<p><b>C. Data Systems Documentation</b></p>	<p>Information regarding diligent search efforts and outcomes is documented in TFACTS by the staff person who is responsible for completing the searches and is entered within thirty (30) days of date of the occurrence.</p>

<p><b>Forms:</b></p>	<p><a href="#"><u><i>Becoming a Family Caregiver for a Child in Your Family</i></u></a>  <a href="#"><u><i>CS-0774 Genogram Contact Sheets</i></u></a>  <a href="#"><u><i>CS-0660, Disclosure Statement: Options/Available Services for Relative Caregivers</i></u></a>  <a href="#"><u><i>Family Notification Letter</i></u></a>  <p><b>** The following form will be integrated into TFACTS in the future</b></p> <p><b>**CS-0584 Diligent Search Checklist</b></p> <a href="#"><u><i>CS-0777, Family Functional Assessment</i></u></a>  <a href="#"><u><i>Diligent Search Quick Tips</i></u></a></p>
<p><b>Collateral Documents:</b></p>	<p>Clear Search Results</p> <p><b>Safety Notice:</b> <a href="#"><u><i>Verifying/Locating Case Members Reportedly Detained for Deportation</i></u></a></p> <p><b>Safety Notice:</b> <a href="#"><u><i>Brochure for Online Deportee Locator System</i></u></a></p>

<b>Glossary:</b>	
<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Case File/Record</b>	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.
<b>Diligent Search</b>	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
<b>Significant Kin</b>	Non-relative adults who have a significant relationship with a child in out-of-home placement (e.g. godparents or family friend).
<b>Sibling</b>	Anyone having a sibling relationship; "Sibling relationship" means the biological or legal relationship between persons who have a common biological or legal parent. An individual who is considered by state law to be a sibling or who would be considered a sibling under state law if it were not for a disruption in parental rights, such as a termination of parental rights (TPR) or the death of a parent.

Original Effective Date: DCS 16.48; 5/17/17  
 Current Effective Date: DCS 16.48, 01/01/02

Supersedes: 16.48, 02/01/10  
 CS-0001  
 RDASW22