



State of Tennessee
 Department of Children's Services
Diligent Search Quick Tips

Supplemental to DCS Policies: 16.48, Conducting Diligent Search

Brian A Requirement: Diligent searches for parents and relatives of a child placed in custody shall be conducted and documented according to policy by the DCS case manager prior to the child coming into custody, if possible, but no later than 30 days after the child comes into custody, and thereafter as needed, but at least within three (3) months from when a child enters custody and again three (3) months after that.

Purpose of Diligent Search: To promote permanence and when necessary prevent delay in the TPR process by finding and engaging individuals as supports for the child and family while they are involved with DCS.

What Diligent Search IS NOT:	What Diligent Search IS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking to an engaged parent about what time the following day's court hearing starts • Sending the same letter to the same person at the same address more than once as an attempt to locate them with no other efforts documented • Sending ICPC paperwork to Central Office • Waiting an indefinite period of time for a parent to return a phone call with no other efforts documented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting the grandparents' addresses from a known parent or the child and sending them the Family Notification Letter • Asking the mother when her child is removed if she can identify any family or friends as possible placement options for the child • Calling the utility company to find dad's address and following up with a visit to the address • Asking the child for his coaches contact information and contacting the coach to engage him in the Team • Engaging a newly located aunt to supervise visitation between the child and parents

1. Initiating Diligent Search: (When, Where, What, Who and How)

- a) Before custody or within 30 days, complete [CS-1013, Kinship Exception Request \(KER\)](#), and document the information in TFACTS.
- b) Any time you are talking to the family:

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- ◆ Ask about relatives, friends, or significant kin
- ◆ Ask for any information that is helpful in finding resources for the child such as
 - addresses,
 - telephone numbers,
 - name of the last school the child attended,
 - doctor's names,
 - tribal affiliation (if applicable)
- c) When age appropriate, ask the child to identify relationships important to him/her

2. What To Do When A Person Is Located:

- a) Get them involved
- b) See what they are willing to do to help
- c) Encourage them to join the Team, even if they cannot be a placement resource for the child
- d) Ask if they are willing to supervise visits, provide transportation or anything else the child and family may need
- e) Tap into their knowledge by asking about resources they know of that may help the child and family
- f) At six months, ask about new people in the child's and family's lives
- g) If age appropriate, ask the child if there is anyone new they want to engage

3. Why Continue Diligent Search:

- a) Things change
 - ◆ New people enter the child's and family's lives
 - ◆ The child may be getting comfortable enough to talk about how important his/her coach, teacher, pastor, friend, friend's parent, etc. is in his/her life.
- b) To check in with someone who hasn't been involved in a while. If you can't reengage, document your effort.
- c) The more supports the child and family have, the more supports DCS has in helping the child achieve timely and lasting permanence.

4. How To Get Credit For Your Hard Work:

- ◆ **DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT!**
 - **Document** all diligent search efforts in TFACTS within thirty (30) days (Case Recordings>Contact Type>Diligent Search)
 - I. If contact is made, **document** your efforts
 - II. If contact is not made, **document** your efforts anyway
 - If contacting any relative or kin causes a safety issue, **document** the reasons for no contact in TFACTS

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Some Diligent Search Resources

- Post offices
- Schools
- DHS
- Jails
- DCS
- Police Records
- County Clerk
- Utility companies
- Internet
- CLEAR
- Last known landlord
- Last known employer
- TFACTS
- City directories
- Drivers' License Agencies
- Family Notification Letter
- Military

Examples for using resources

- Call DHS for any information they may have about the person
- Mail a letter to the last known address marked "Do not forward- Address Correction Requested" when you don't know the current address
- Send family notification letters
- Check with the military branch a person may be serving in or has served in
- Contact the child's previous school for the parent's contact information
- Ask CWB or Child Support for information on missing parents

5. What do I document if I don't know where else to search?

Document a summary of all your diligent search efforts as evidence that you don't know where else to search and why you don't know where else to search. This will show that you have been so diligent in your efforts that no new resources have become available to you.

6. What do I document if all known parties are engaged?

Part of diligent search is periodically asking the child and family if there is anyone new they can think of to add to the team. Even if no new people are identified, document that you have asked the question.