

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL	
	Chapter 5: General Case Management	Effective Date: May 1, 2008
	Section 4: Noncustodial Parents	Version: 1

POLICY	OLD POLICY: N/A
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The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will make diligent efforts beginning in the assessment phase to locate and engage the noncustodial parent. These efforts will continue throughout the life of the case. A noncustodial parent is a person who does not have legal or primary physical custody of the child.

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will clearly document the efforts made to locate and engage the noncustodial parent, if the noncustodial parent fails to participate at any point in the life of the case.

DCS will provide the [Advisement of Legal Rights Form \(SF 47114/CW 0010\)](#) to the noncustodial parent, and will inform the noncustodial parent of his or her rights to include:

1. Request that the child be placed with him or her;
2. Visit with the child, unless the court orders no visitation; and
3. Participate in case planning for the child through the Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting or Case Plan Conference.

If it is necessary to place a child outside of his or her home, DCS will give primary consideration to the noncustodial parent when selecting an out-of-home placement option. See separate policy, [8.1 Selecting a Placement Option](#).

If warranted, background checks may be conducted when moving a child to the custody of the noncustodial parent. See Related Information for further details.

DCS will inform noncustodial parents of their obligation to pay child support, if ordered. If not ordered, DCS will assist noncustodial parents in establishing child support responsibilities.

Note: The prosecutor's office is responsible for enforcement of all child support orders.

Code References

NA

PROCEDURE

The FCM will:

1. Ask the parent, guardian, or custodian the name and location of the noncustodial parent, at the time of the initial assessment;
2. Record the information in the Indiana Child Welfare Information System (ICWIS);

3. Complete a diligent search to locate the noncustodial parent if the parent's location is unknown. See separate policy, [5.6 Locating Absent Parents](#);
4. Continue to request names and locations of the noncustodial parent as necessary throughout the life of the case;
5. Notify the noncustodial parent of their rights and responsibilities, and all pending court hearings (i.e., once identified and located);

Note: In the case of an involuntary removal, notify the noncustodial parent according to separate policy, [4.28 Involuntary Removals](#).

6. Make copies of all correspondence sent to the noncustodial parent for the case file; and
7. Document in ICWIS efforts to engage the noncustodial parent.

The 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.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

N/A

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Advisement of Legal Rights Form \(SF 47114/CW 0010\)](#) – Available in ICWIS
2. [Case Plan \(SF 2956/DCS 0046\)](#) – Available in ICWIS

RELATED INFORMATION

Reasons for Engaging Noncustodial Parents

The DCS Vision and Mission supports that the FCM engages families by supporting them and partnering with them. Apart from the noncustodial parent's potential as a caregiver, through engaging noncustodial parents of children under the care and supervision of DCS:

1. There can be the potential benefit of a parent-child relationship (i.e., when such a relationship does not pose a risk to the child's safety or well-being);
2. Placement decisions are more complete and there is benefit to gaining access to resources for the child;
3. DCS may learn important medical information or that the child is the recipient of or is eligible for certain benefits; such as health insurance, survivor benefits, or child support;
4. The resources provided by the noncustodial parent's extended family might assist the CFT and support a reunification goal or a relative guardianship and therefore enhance permanency options for the child;
5. Additional information can be obtained about the child and the family circumstances upon which a stronger [Case Plan \(SF 2956/DCS 0046\)](#) and formal service support network can be built; and
6. DCS can facilitate an expansion of the informal support network that, in almost every case, must be in place in the child's and family's life when DCS intervention ceases,

thereby ensuring more permanency and stability that can continue for the rest of the child's life.

Conducting Background Checks on Noncustodial Parents

Background checks can be conducted on the noncustodial parent if the FCM has reason to question the safety of the placement or if risk factors are present. Safety or risk factors that would necessitate a criminal history check include but are not limited to the following:

1. Child(ren) raises concern regarding the placement;
2. Custodial parent or members of the CFT have concerns regarding the placement;
3. Custodial parent or member of the CFT report past or current criminal history perpetrated by the non-custodial parent; and
4. Non-custodial parent does not have regular visitation with the child(ren).

The FCM must document in ICWIS, if criminal history checks are not conducted on a noncustodial parent.

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