

Protocol for Locating Fathers

Once paternity has been established, county child welfare agencies and the courts should make every effort to locate the legal father if his location is unknown. The early location of fathers will enable that father to take part in the proceedings from the beginning stages and for agencies to make their reasonable efforts in a complete and timely manner. As such, the group offers the following.

Agency Protocol for Locating Fathers

Make locating fathers a priority by:

- a) Explaining to mother the importance of locating father by asking/ interviewing the mother, the child, relatives, friends and associates regarding father. **Caseworkers should be trained in engagement skills with family members and youth.**
- b) Going to the last known address for the father in an attempt to personally engage with the father who may still be residing there; or by interviewing the current residents and neighbors, who may have information such as a forwarding address or other contacts.
- c) Completing a diligent search for the whereabouts of the father by checking databases related to jails and prisons, Department of Public Welfare records, Penn DOT records, voter registration rolls, Armed Forces, etc. Other sites to consider are social networking sites such as Facebook. If the father is paying child support through wage attachments or the court, check PACSES for a record of his address, employer, or other possibly useful information. Conduct an Accurint search.
- d) Sending letters to the last known address and requesting post office verification of receipt with the hope of getting a forwarding address. Contacting the Postmaster via the Freedom of Information Act to access a forwarding address and to verify a current mail delivery address. (Utilize Address Information Request Form.)
- e) Utilizing all six steps of the Family Finding process for fathers and extended family members. These steps are: Discovery, Engagement, Planning, Decision Making, Follow-Up, and Evaluation.
- f) If a child has been placed in out-of-home care, the Fostering Connections Act requires the agency to notify all adult relatives to the third degree within 30 days of placement. This action can lead to location of the father.
- g) If father's last known address in another state, contact the responsible child welfare agency and request a courtesy home visit to that address in an attempt to locate father or arrange a visit by the assigned caseworker, if within reasonable travel distance.
- h) Updating efforts to locate father every 3 months and completing a full search annually until father is located.