

**The Philadelphia Department of Human Services  
Children and Youth Division  
Policy and Procedure Guide**

**Issue Date: May 2, 2008**

**TO:** All CYD Social Work Staff and Service Providers

**FROM:** Joseph E. Kuna, Ph.D. Acting Deputy Commissioner, CYD  
Pamela Mayo, Operations Director

**RE:** Diligent Search Efforts for Missing Parents of Children in Placement

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Immediately

To achieve permanency for a child, it is critical that all parents are identified and contacted as early in the case as possible. The purpose of the Diligent Search Policy and Procedure is to:

- combine existing policies ( Sections 4410.1 **Permanency planning initiated at the beginning of a child's placement**; 5222.2 **CYD Social worker Responsibilities if the child is placed in a CYD foster home**; 5222.3 **Provider agency responsibilities**) and implement procedure for an effective search for parents who are missing and whose whereabouts are unknown. A missing parent is not one who is necessarily absent, but one whose whereabouts are unknown.
- ensure diligent efforts are made to identify and locate parents at the earliest stages of a case and periodically throughout the progression of a case, and
- ensure clear documentation in the case file of all diligent efforts that demonstrates compliance with policy and regulations and assists with preparation for court hearings.

**Policy**

Search efforts to locate missing parents begin when a child is placed in CYD custody and continues through all phases of CYD planning. Social workers must obtain as much information as possible from the other parent and relatives regarding the identity and whereabouts of an unknown or missing parent. The CYD social worker must conduct a search, as described in this policy, for missing parents and update that search every six months in conjunction with the Family Service Plan/Child Permanency Plan (FSP/CPP) review cycle and the Court Review. The court sheet submitted to the Court must indicate the results of the search.

When children come into the custody of the CYD **under circumstances where the whereabouts of the parents are unknown**, the CYD social worker and provider agency will immediately undertake search efforts to locate the absent parents and other kin. These search efforts will be ongoing and documented in the case record. If the efforts do not yield the identity, location or contact with the parents or kin within three months, a special FSP Revision meeting will be held, notwithstanding the semiannual review cycle, and the goal on the FSP will be changed, if appropriate, to adoption.

The CYD social worker is responsible for the search efforts for parents of children in directly monitored kinship caregiver homes, and for ensuring that search efforts by provider agency social workers are completed.

The provider agency social worker will also conduct a search as described in this policy for all missing parents and update such search efforts every six months in conjunction with the FSP/PPP and Individual Service Plan (ISP) review cycle, unless the parents are located. In addition, providers must continue to ask children in placement and kin on a regular basis about the whereabouts of missing parents.

The CYD Social Worker will request a copy of a death certificate, if told that the parent is deceased at the time of *placement or anytime thereafter*. Search efforts shall continue until a copy of the death certificate is received. The information regarding the parent's death must be documented in the case record and in FACTS.

#### Parent Locator Service

The Parent Locator Service (PLS) search is conducted through the Law Department. The CYD social worker will contact the Law Department to request the PLS as soon as:

- the social worker identifies a missing parent.
- the whereabouts of a parent becomes unknown at anytime during the case.

The more identifying information provided, the greater the likelihood that the PLS will be successful. The most important information is an accurate first and last name, social security number, date of birth and last known address.

When a CYD social worker drafts a dependent petition and the whereabouts of one or both parents is unknown, the legal assistant in the Law Department will automatically submit a PLS request. If the whereabouts of a parent become unknown at anytime during the case, DHS staff must contact the assigned solicitor to request a new PLS. A PLS is also submitted when court ordered and when drafting a Goal Change/Termination of Parental Rights or PLC petition *when the whereabouts of the parent are unknown*.

A PLS report is generated and provided to the CYD Social Worker and Court, if court ordered. A PLS *accesses* the following sources of information:

- Parents/PACES/DMO2 = Statewide Family Court Computer System
- Department of Public Welfare
- PCIC/NCIC = State/National Criminal Information
- Statewide Monthly Prison Printout from the Criminal Justice Center
- Bureau of Motor Vehicles
- Credit Bureau Association
- Coles Directory – cross checking of addresses and /or telephone numbers
- Federal Parent Locator Service

If an address for the missing parent is identified, a letter must be sent by the CYD social worker via certified and regular mail to that individual. Results of the PLS search must be shared with the provider agency.

