



# TEXAS

## Department of Family and Protective Services

### **Finding Families**

#### **Resource Guide**

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## Purpose

This Resource Guide is intended to provide you with strategies for locating families. It provides some examples of common situations and what you could do in those situations. This guide is not intended to be a mandate or policy. We hope you will find the strategies provided helpful in guiding you through related situations.

**When Do You Do This?** - In an Investigation (INV), Alternative Response (AR), or Family Based Safety Services (FBSS) stage, the caseworker must begin a diligent search after the first attempt to contact the child and family.

Maintaining contact with the family is critical to ensuring child safety. It not only allows you to identify any dangers to the child, but also is vital to engaging in a collaborative effort with caregivers and other individuals important to the family to establish a safety network that is committed to sustaining the child's safety.

Remember that no single strategy or set of strategies applies to all situations. What you do in each situation depends largely on the unique circumstances of that situation. Consult with your supervisor and determine the best strategic approach to each case.

## Strategies for Finding Families

### Collecting and Documenting Contact Information

The best way you can help yourself and other caseworkers find families is to collect as much contact and identifying information about family members as possible. This includes not just basic information such as addresses and telephone numbers, but also information such as family history, habits and detailed identifying information (see *Strategies* below). This information can give you or other caseworkers clues as to how to locate a family if the agency later needs to contact that family or individual members.

**Try to find out who is important to the family.** Don't just ask who is in their support network, ask who the contacts on their cell phone are, who is on their Social Media pages, and who they see regularly. Who would they turn to for help? Who have they known the longest? Ask about community members who are important to them (such as pastors, doctors, etc.). These may be potential resources in locating the family in future cases.

### Strategies

**Try to find out where the family has lived before,** or where they have family or friends. This information can assist in locating the family later.

**When interviewing collaterals, ask deeper questions.** Engage the collateral in a conversation about the family in addition to gathering facts about the incident. Be prepared to spend time to gain the collateral's trust, emphasizing that you are seeking to ensure the child's safety. Try to find out what the collateral knows about the family's habits and characteristics. Ask detailed questions about ways to contact, last contact, and how to contact others who know the family. Leave your contact information or business card when making these contacts.

**Gather as much detailed information as you can from family and friends.** Information that may be useful in finding an individual includes (but is not limited to):

- Specific identifying information (DOB, SSN, Driver's License number, etc.)
- Physical description (age, height, weight, eye color, hair color, scars or tattoos)
- Alternate name spellings, nicknames, maiden names or aliases
- Where they were born or grew up
- Relatives/close friends, and where they live
- Schools they attended
- Work history, type of work they typically do (for example, welder, accountant, etc.)

- Former marriages
- Military history
- What kind of car they drive; license plate number
- Hobbies or interests
- Organizations they may belong to
- Social Media
- Persons the family member may see regularly
- Persons the family member has known the longest
- Community members
- Church affiliations
- Medical collaterals
- Parole/Probation

**Document this information in IMPACT.** It may help you or other caseworkers later. Don't just enter contact details in your contacts, but make sure you update all applicable information on the Person List. Document all attempted contacts in a contact narrative in IMPACT.

### **No Address was given at Intake**

Your first priority is to obtain possible addresses for the child and family. Once you determine an address, you should attempt contact, or request a courtesy visit immediately.

Always try to contact the reporter (unless anonymous) and see if they can provide contact information. Look through the intake and previous history for crucial locating information. This could include contact numbers or addresses (email, physical address, or P.O. Box) upon obtaining contact information, utilize it to contact the family and document the outcome. Don't just look for parents or caregivers; look for relatives and other adults who may know where the family is. Information that is useful, for example, current and previous employers, weekly meetings an adult may attend or a church they may attend regularly.

Run the family's information through various databases (for example: TIERS, Social Media, Google, local law enforcement, and so on). Support staff, such as Admin Techs, can do some of these tasks. (When a Special Investigator is assigned, he or she will also search databases such as Accurant and the Texas Education Agency.)

Speak with local school districts, if the child is school-aged. Check for current enrollment which could include the hours that the child is at school, how the child gets to and from school and the hours if they ride the bus or whether a records request was received from another district.

If you cannot locate the family, see [3111 Diligent Searches](#).

### **The Address does exist**

In this situation you have an address, but it is clearly incorrect. Maybe the address is to a vacant lot, abandoned building, or even a business. In this scenario you want to obtain as much information as you can about the area around the reported address.

Use the same strategies for "No Address Given at Intake".

Speak with a property manager, neighbors, or any other collaterals around the address. Check the corner grocery, gas station, pharmacy or other location an individual may have frequented. (See Page 4: Strategies - When interviewing collaterals).

### **The Address Exists; but the family has moved**

In this scenario you have a valid address, but the family is clearly no longer there. The goal in this scenario is twofold: gain as much information from collaterals who might have known the family and find the family. Use the same strategies for "No Address Given at Intake" and "The Address Does Not Exist".

- Contact the property owner or manager to determine if they have any information on the family's current location or if they have assessed the condition of the home.
- Send registered and non-registered mail to the former or last known address.

If you cannot locate the family, see [3111 Diligent searches](#).

### **Family will not respond**

In this scenario all evidence points to the family living in the home, but not answering the door. Continue to take necessary steps to assess safety.

Contact all principals and collaterals associated with the case. (See Page 5: Strategies - When interviewing collaterals).

Conduct visits at different times of the day, especially "after hours", including before 8AM and after 7PM.

Try meeting the parents at the school or call the parents from the school's landline.

Try to schedule appointments with the family at other locations and times to meet their needs.

Staff with supervisor to assess whether a call needs to be made for a police welfare check after hours. If law enforcement makes contact with the family, be prepared to respond to the residence if necessary.

### **Caregivers Refuse to Cooperate**

If you know where the family is but they refuse to cooperate, do not conduct a diligent search and do not put the family and child on the CSCAL.

See [3113 Exceptions to Placing a Family on CSCAL](#).

You know where the parents are, but they refuse to cooperate with you. Gather as much information as you can during any conversations.

Contact all principals, personal collaterals and professional collaterals (school, personal, medical, etc.) associated with the case.

**NOTE:** Once you have obtained as much information as possible and the family still refuses to meet, you should:

- For AR: Stage progress to INV and see bullet below;
- For INV: Staff the case with legal counsel for legal intervention. If an order is needed, continue attempts to engage the family while waiting on the order.
- For FBSS: Continue attempts to engage the family. If a parent fails to participate in services for two consecutive months, and there are danger indicators impacting child safety, then during the following month the caseworker and supervisor must consult with the program director to determine whether to request a court order for services or removal. (see policy 12580 Family's Lack of Participation)

## **Placing the family on the Child Safety Check Alert List (CSCAL)**

### **Conducting a Diligent Search**

In an Investigation (INV), Alternative Response (AR), or Family Based Safety Services (FBSS) stage, the caseworker must begin a diligent search after the first attempt to contact the child and family.

See [3111.3 Required Preliminary Search Actions](#)

The caseworker must conduct the preliminary search for the following time periods, beginning with the day of the caseworker's first attempt to contact the child and family and followed by a referral to the SIPD within:

- Four days for Priority 1 INV
- Ten days for Priority 2 INV, AR, and FBSS stages

See [3111.2 Time Frames for Preliminary and Diligent Searches](#)

## Exceptions

### A Child in Imminent Danger

If at any time you believe that the child is in imminent danger, immediately staff with your supervisor. If the supervisor agrees the child is in imminent danger, the supervisor will staff with the special investigator program director (SIPD) to submit a referral to DPS immediately

### Listing a Family on the Child Safety Check Alert List (CSCAL)

If the family has not been located within the appropriate time period, the SI completes the form to have the child and family placed on the Child Safety Check Alert List (CSCAL). The special investigator forwards the form to the special investigator program director (SIPD). The SIPD submits a request to the Texas Crime Information Center (TCIC) at the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to have the child or family placed on CSCAL. SI will then check the CSCAL indicator in IMPACT.

If you are unable to locate the family by the end of the fourth or tenth day, respectively, take the actions listed in [3111.3 Required Preliminary Search Actions](#).

The supervisor will request that a Special Investigator (SI) be assigned to the case when either of the following apply:

- On the fourth day after the diligent search began for Priority 1 Investigations.
- On the tenth day for P2 INV, AR and FBSS cases.

See [3112 Making the referral to request CSCAL](#).

When requesting an SI, provide as much specific detail about the individuals as possible. For example, age or date of birth, SSN, appearance (height, weight, eye and hair color, scars, marks or tattoos), driver's license info, car make and model, license plate and state of registration.

Thoroughly document your efforts for the SI, so he or she doesn't duplicate efforts. Provide extensive details about contact attempts and efforts to locate the family. Before requesting an SI, make sure the *Person List* is updated with the most accurate information.

Once the SI request is assigned, be sure to make the SI the secondary on the case.

The SI will take further actions to locate the family.

See [3111.4 Required Actions During the Diligent Search](#).

### Actions During a Preliminary Search and a Diligent Search

During the diligent search, complete all reasonable actions and use all available resources appropriate for the case to locate the child/family as quickly as possible. Additionally, when the action is reasonable based on the case circumstances:

- Contact the reporter unless anonymous.
- Contact property managers or landlords or any other collaterals around the address, such as the corner grocery, gas station, pharmacy or other location an individual may have frequented.
- Contact the school or day care center that the child attended.

- Contact the parents' employers.
- Request or conduct available online searches through various databases, including but not limited to social media, internet search engines, etc.
- Attempt to contact everyone listed on the intake. This includes calling all phone numbers listed on the Intake (reporter, family members and collaterals) or anyone associated with the person(s) in IMPACT and updating their information in IMPACT if phone numbers and addresses are found to be invalid.
- Review DFPS history on the family and make attempts to contact absent fathers and other family members listed in those cases.
- Contact other professionals involved with the family (medical, school, etc.).
- Review FINDRS search returns and follow up on any information that might help locate the person(s). Include or forward these returns with the request to the SIPD.
- If information is available, phone or e-mail or text the family members that can't be located. Call the parents using the school or day care's landline.
- Send registered and non-registered mail to the former or last known address, if any.
- Document all contacts and attempted contacts.
- Review the current case documentation to ensure it is up to date and complete. The supervisor needs to verify this.

**This is not an exhaustive list of steps.** The caseworker and the supervisor need to look at the circumstances surrounding each case and determine the appropriate steps.

See [3111.3 Required Preliminary Search Actions](#)  
[3111.4 Required Actions During the Diligent Search](#)

## Child in DFPS Conservatorship is missing

If a child in DFPS conservatorship is abducted by his or her biological family or runs away, the caseworker must report the child as missing to the appropriate law enforcement officials, for placement onto the National Crime Information Center Database (NCIC) as a missing person.

See [6460 When a child or Youth is Missing from CPS Conservatorship](#)

If the law enforcement officials decline to enter the child as a missing person on NCIC, the caseworker must, immediately or if immediately is not possible, within 8 hours of learning of law enforcement's decision not to enter the child as a missing person, do all of the following:

- Notify the supervisor.
- Request an SI, who will complete the *CSCAL Data Entry Form*, stating the name of the law enforcement agency contacted.
- Continue searching for the child.

The caseworker and SI must continue searching for the child in DFPS conservatorship until the child is found or a court dismisses conservatorship of the child.

If the biological family flees with the child and DFPS obtains conservatorship so we can place the child in substitute care when located, follow Policy [3117 Child in DFPS Conservatorship Goes Missing](#).

## Removing the Child and Family from the CSCAL

State law requires that DFPS remove a child or family from CSCAL once DFPS locates the child or family.

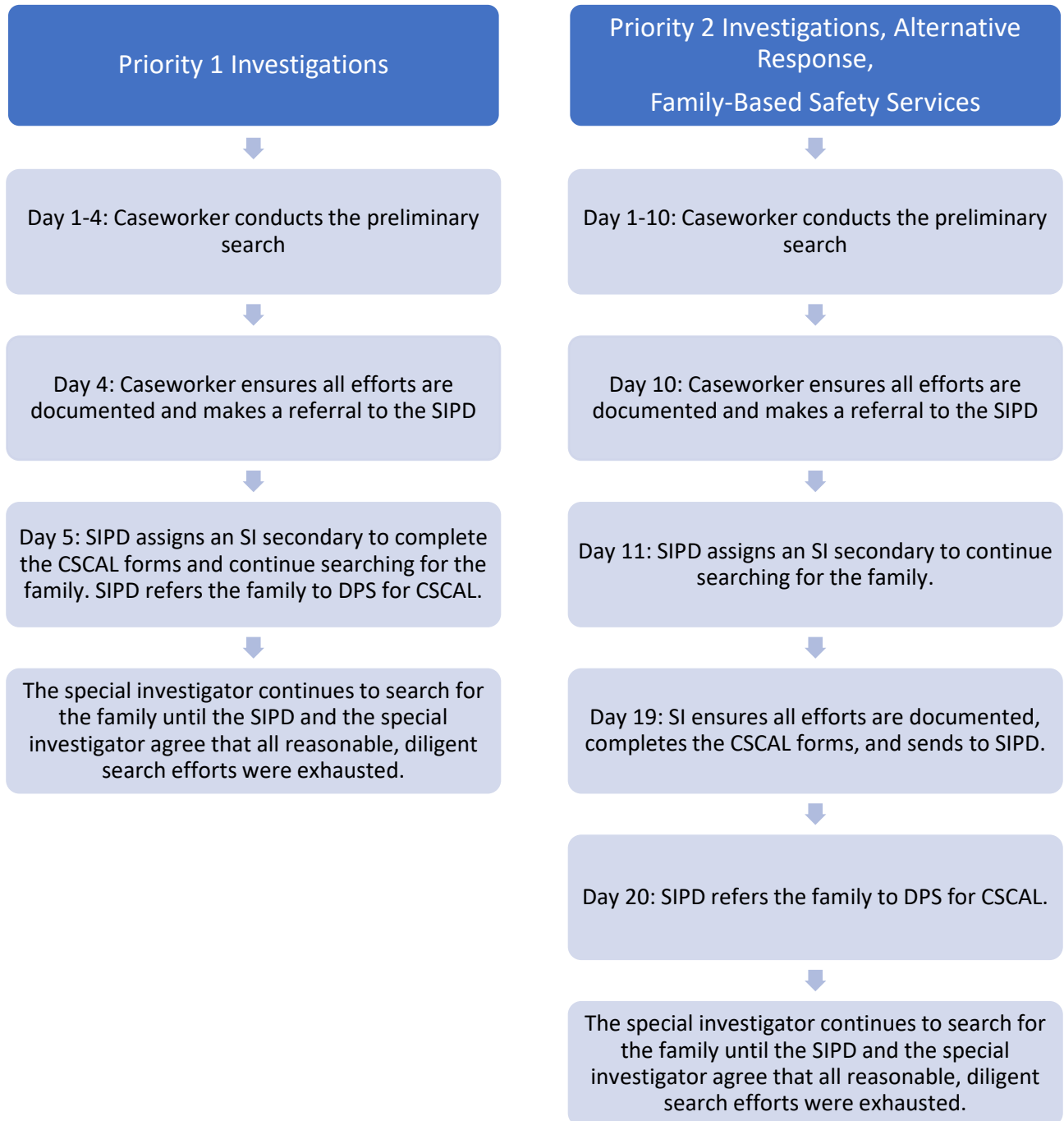
If you locate a child or family who is on CSCAL and in an INV, AR FBSS or CVS case, immediately notify your supervisor and the SIPD. The SIPD will take immediate steps to remove the child or family from CSCAL.

See:

[3111.5 When the Family is Located During Diligent Search Process](#)  
[3113 Exceptions to Placing a Family on CSCAL](#)  
[3116 Requesting a Family Be Removed from CSCAL](#)

# CSCAL Flow Chart

## Searching for and Entering Child and Family on CSCAL



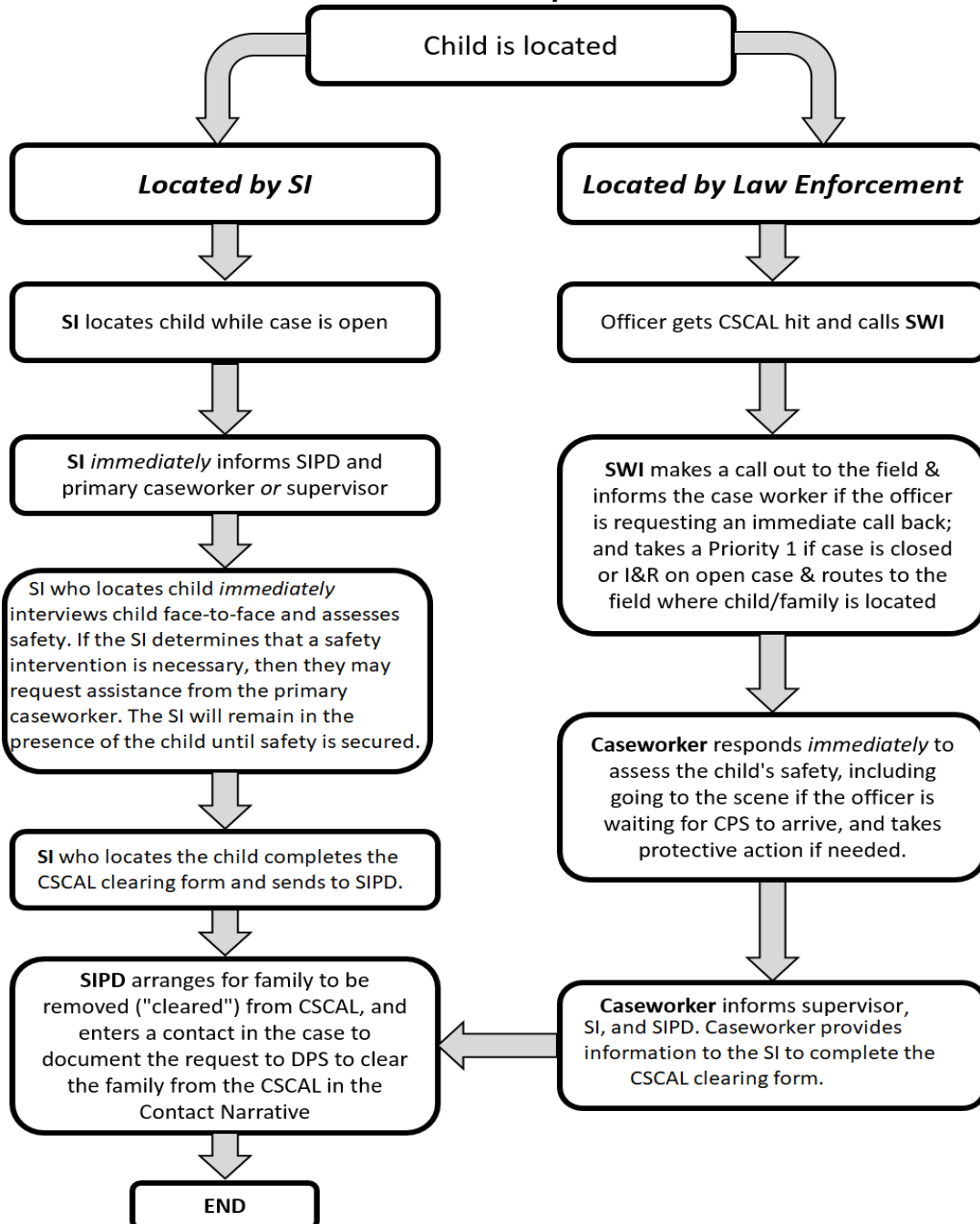
### After the child and family are placed on the CSCAL

After the family is placed on CSCAL and the SI continues to search for the family until the child is located, avenues for searching for the family have been exhausted, or 30 days have passed since CSCAL was filed, whichever comes first. If the family is located in person through their diligent search efforts, then the SI will interview the child and members of the household and complete the safety assessment. If the special investigator determines there is danger to a



child, the special investigator takes one of the actions described in [3200 DFPS Actions When Danger to a Child Is Present](#). The special investigator may request assistance from the caseworker, if needed. If caseworker assistance is requested, the caseworker or supervisor must respond immediately. The special investigator does not leave the child or family until child safety is secured (see Policy [3111.5 When the Family Is Located During Diligent Search Process](#)). After contact with the family and documentation is complete, the SI is removed from secondary on the case. If the family is not located in an investigation and the SI and SIPD agree to close the case, the caseworker completes their documentation. The SIPD will review the case and documents that the SI has exhausted all diligent search efforts and the investigations supervisor can proceed with approving for closure and then sending to CSS for secondary approval.

### Child is Located and CSCAL is cleared in an Open Case



## Legislative Changes

The 2021 87<sup>th</sup> Legislative session has updated requirements for The Department of Family & Protective Services (DFPS) to notify certain adults who may have a relationship with the child that a child has been removed. House bill 567 requires DFPS use due diligence to find another parent, adult relative, or fictive kin of a child within 14 calendar days after removal. DFPS is required to send [Form 2277 Request for Diligent Search](#) to the [DFPS FINDRS mailbox](#) within 24 hours of receiving a signed court order ordering removal or a judge's verbal order. DFPS is required to conduct its due diligence in locating missing or absent parents or any person who has legal authority of the child before the adversary hearing. All Child Protective Investigations (CPI), Family Based Safety Services (FBSS), and Conservatorship (CVS) staff will be required to send Form 2277 Request for Diligent Search to the DFPS FINDRS mailbox within 24 hours of receiving a signed court order ordering removal or a judge has given a verbal order to remove the child.

The requests are required to be marked:

- Email Subject Line: ADVERSARY HEARING
- Body of the email "ADVERSARY HEARING DATE IS XX/XX/XX.
- Completed 2277 Request for Diligent Search Form
  - Staff must include both parents (even if known and located) on the form
  - If both parents are known, but only one is located, staff must check the box for the parent a search is requested for.
  - Staff must "check the box" for relatives so DSU can complete a diligent search for relatives from both parents.

Failure to follow the above listed timeframe will prevent the FINDRS team from providing the due diligence results within 3 business days and could render DFPS non-compliant with this legislation.

Once the diligent search results are received, the caseworker must forward those results to the assigned secondary CVS caseworker and supervisor within 24 hours.

House bill 3041 requires DFPS to provide notice, at initial removal and at any time during the case, of DFPS conservatorship of a child in writing.

DFPS must provide notice of DFPS conservatorship to the following:

- All paternal and maternal relatives of the child (including adult relatives of the legal or alleged father) who are related to the child within the fourth degree of consanguinity (House Bill 2926).
- All adult grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and siblings of the child's legal father or alleged father, if DFPS has a reasonable basis to believe the alleged father is the child's biological father.
- All legal custodians of the child's minor siblings.
- All adult siblings of the child.
- Everyone designated by the parent as a potential caregiver on [Form 2625 Child Caregiver Resource](#).
- Any other relative or fictive kin the caseworker determines should receive notice.

Any time an individual listed above is identified and located, DFPS provides [Form 2134 Notice to Relative or Potential Caregiver of DFPS Conservatorship](#) to the relative or potential caregiver immediately.

## Policy

Refer to policy in CPS Handbook:

[3100 When a Child Who is With His or Her Family Cannot be Located](#)

[3222 Diligent Search for Possible Relative or Fictive Kin Placement](#)

[6123 Ongoing Duty to Provide Notice of DFPS Conservatorship](#)