

Chapter **2** Child Support Handbook

FINDING THE NONCUSTODIAL PARENT



In most cases, the child support agency must know where the other parent lives or works to establish the paternity of a child, obtain an order for support, and enforce that order.

The most important information that you can provide is the noncustodial parent’s Social Security number and any employer information that you know about. When a person makes a legal claim against another, the *defendant* must be given notice of the legal action to take the necessary steps to protect his or her rights. To notify the noncustodial parent in advance – for example, by certified mail or personal service – under the state’s service of process requirements child support officials need a correct address. If you do not have the address, the child support office can try to find it.

State and tribal child support agencies, with due process and security safeguards, have access to information from the following:

- State and local government:
 - vital statistics
 - state tax files
 - real and titled personal property records
 - occupational and professional licenses and business information
 - employment security agency
 - public assistance agency
 - motor vehicle department
 - law enforcement departments

- Records of private entities like public utilities and cable television companies (such as names and addresses of individuals and their employers as they appear in customer records)
- Credit bureaus
- Information held by financial institutions, including asset and liability data
- The *State Directory of New Hires (SDNH)*, to which employers must report new employees
- The *Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS)*

The FPLS, which includes the *Federal Case Registry (FCR)* and the *National Directory of New Hires (NDNH)*, has access to information from:

- The Internal Revenue Service, the Department of Defense, the National Personnel Records Center including quarterly wage data for federal employees, the Social Security Administration, and the Department of Veterans Affairs
- State Directories of New Hires
- *State Workforce Agencies (SWA)*



The FCR includes all *IV-D* child support cases from the 54 states and territories and non-*IV-D* support orders established after October 1998. The NDNH contains new hire records, quarterly wage records for almost all employed people, and unemployment insurance claims.

If you have access to the internet, there is information about the FPLS at:

www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css/fpls

I think the noncustodial parent is still in the area. What information will the child support office need to find him?

Most important are the Social Security number and any recent employer's name and address. Also helpful are the names, addresses and phone numbers of relatives, friends, or former employers who might know where he or she works or lives. Unions and local organizations, including professional organizations, might also have information.

What if I don't have the Social Security number?

Social Security numbers are now required on applications (not on the licenses themselves) for professional licenses, drivers' licenses, occupational and recreational licenses, and marriage licenses; on divorce records, support orders, and paternity determinations or acknowledgements; and on death records. If none of these is available, or the Social Security number was not yet required when the document was issued, the child support office can subpoena information about bank accounts, insurance policies, credit cards, pay slips, or income tax returns. If you and the other parent filed a joint federal income tax return in the last

three years, the child support office can get the Social Security number from the IRS.

Your caseworker may be able to get the Social Security number with at least three of the following pieces of information: the parent's name, place of birth, date of birth, his or her father's name, and his or her mother's maiden name.

What if the noncustodial parent cannot be found locally?

Your child support office will ask the State Parent Locator Service (SPLS) to do a search. Using the Social Security number, the SPLS will check the records of state agencies such as the motor vehicle department, state workforce agency, state revenue department, law enforcement agencies, and correctional facilities. If the SPLS finds that the parent has moved to another state, it can ask the other state to search, and send a request to the Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS).

Can my lawyer or I ask the FPLS to find an address for the other parent?

Not directly. However, you or your attorney can submit a request to use the FPLS through the local or state child support agency.

Can state and federal location efforts be made at the same time?

Yes. For instance, a search can be initiated by the state to another jurisdiction and to the FPLS at the same time. The FPLS matches child support case data with data in the FCR and with the employment data in the NDNH and has access to information from other federal agencies. Locate information is returned to the state(s) for processing.



Can enforcement agencies use the federal income tax return to find out where the noncustodial parent lives and what he or she earns?

Yes. Under certain conditions, the IRS, working through the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, may disclose information to the child support office that income providers submit on IRS Form 1099. This information is a valuable tool to help find a noncustodial parent and determine his or her financial assets. The information may only be used for the purpose of enforcing child support orders.

Information available through Form 1099 includes both earned and unearned income, including wages, earnings on stocks and bonds, interest from bank accounts, unemployment compensation, capital gains, royalties and prizes, and employer and financial institution addresses. Even very small businesses submit 1099 asset information to the IRS, so this can be a good source of information. Any information obtained from the IRS must be verified through a second source, such as an employer or bank, before the child support agency can use it.

What will happen when the caseworker has the current address of the noncustodial parent?

The caseworker will verify the home and work addresses and take the next appropriate action on the case, which may include asking the noncustodial parent to come to the child support office for an interview, or notifying him or her that legal action may be taken.

The father of my child is in the military, but I don't know where he is stationed. Can the child support agency find him?

Yes. The FPLS can provide the current duty station of a parent who is in any of the uniformed services.

If the child support office can't find the noncustodial parent, does that mean I can't get cash assistance?

No. You can get assistance from the TANF program if you are trying to help find the noncustodial parent. Your state, local, or tribal child support agency will tell you what information you will need to provide to get assistance.



For information about your specific child support case or how the child support system works in your state or tribe, contact your [state or tribal child support agency](#).

For general information about the child support program, contact the Office of Child Support Enforcement, 370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW, Washington, D.C. 20447, or visit our [website](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css) at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css. OCSE does not have case-specific information.