

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
311 W. SARATOGA STREET
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201**

DATE: November 30, 2011

CIRCULAR LETTER: SSA# 12-22

TO: Directors, Local Department of Social Services
Assistant Directors of Services

FROM: Carnitra D. White
Executive Director
Social Services Administration

RE: Access to children to conduct Child Protective Service
Investigations or to provide In-Home Family Services.

PROGRAM AFFECTED: In-Home Family Services and Investigation

ORIGINATING OFFICE: In-Home Family Services

BACKGROUND: This policy provides guidance to caseworkers who are
unable to locate a child or children to conduct an
investigation or to make contacts as mandated by Family
Law §5-706 in circumstances where the child is not at the
family home or known residence and the family is not
providing information regarding the child's whereabouts.

ACTION REQUIRED OF: In-Home Services

REQUIRED ACTION: Operationalize the policies and procedures when
child(ren) is not able to be located in order to make
mandated contact with the child(ren) to ensure safety.

ACTION DUE DATE: Immediately

CONTACT PERSONS: Steve Berry, Program Manager
In-Home Services
410-767-7018

Debbie Ramelmeier, Deputy Executive Director
Child Welfare Practice & Policy
410-767-7506

PURPOSE:

This policy sets forth all efforts that shall be taken by the worker when the worker is unable to locate a child(ren) and thus is unable to meet mandated contact of within 24 hours for abuse and 5 days for neglect in accordance with COMAR 07.02.07.08 (On-Site Investigations) and for mandated contacts required by COMAR 07.02.01.06D (Intensive Family Services), 07.02.01.07C (Families Now), 07.02.01.08E (Continuing Protective Services), and 07.02.01.09E (Consolidated Family Services).

SERVICE DELIVERY PROCESS:

Service delivery is needed to ensure that children reported to be at risk of maltreatment are seen within mandated time frames and when unable to be located that workers take all immediate necessary steps to locate the child (ren) and document these steps to ensure safety and compliance.

In-Home Services:

- Worker shall make contact in accordance with COMAR 07.02.07.08, 07.02.01.06D, 07.02.01.07C, 07.02.01.08E, 07.02.01.09E.
- In cases where an on-site investigation is being conducted and the mandated time for an on-site investigation is within 24 hours or 5 days (COMAR 07.02.07.08A) and at any time while providing In-Home Services (COMAR 07.02.06.D, COMAR 07.02.01.07C, 07.02.01.08E and 07.02.01.09E) and the child is neither in the home or at school the worker shall immediately do the following to seek the child(ren)'s whereabouts if the parent is unwilling to produce the child(ren) or provide information on where to find the child:
 - Work in conjunction with law enforcement. In cases involving serious allegations of maltreatment, request both immediate assistance and that an officer be sent out after hours to locate the child(ren);
 - Contact any known relatives by phone or in person;
 - Contact any known family friends by phone or in person;
 - Canvas the neighbors for information regarding the child, where child might be and when last seen;
 - Contact Daycare Provider(s), if applicable, for any knowledge of child(ren)'s whereabouts or knowledge of anyone involved with the family;
 - Check with any other children or adults residing in the home for information regarding the unlocatable child(ren);
 - If available to the Local Department of Social Services (LDSS), request that extended hours make after hour visits to the home to locate the child(ren);
 - Review all agency historical records for information as to child(ren)'s whereabouts;

- Search social networking sites on the Internet such as Facebook, My Space, Twitter, etc;
 - Return to the home unannounced at different times of the day;
 - Contact school staff for information regarding when the child was last in attendance as well as to request notification to worker immediately upon child's return to school;
 - Search or request a search of CIS database for information in:
 - Family Investment Administration (FIA) (including narrative sections); and
 - Inform FIA worker that child is not in the home and request a redetermination;
 - Contact Local (family's address) Social Security Administration (SSA) if child is known to be on or to determine if child is receiving any disability or death benefit. Worker can inform SSA that child is not in the home and/or attempt to secure information on child; and
 - Contact other service providers as identified in historical information with whom the family may have had prior contact.
- Worker shall send a certified letter to the family noting efforts to see the child and requesting immediate knowledge of child's whereabouts.
 - Worker shall document all efforts made and follow-up on any lead that is provided in all searches conducted and document follow-up efforts.

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From the **Home Page**, open the **Investigation** folder, open case and click on **Collateral** folder. Enter the collateral by using the **Collateral** screen. Enter all identifying and demographic information available.

Enter **Contact Information** by clicking **Edit**

Click **Edit** to enter **Attestable Information**, scroll down to see remainder of screen.

Click **Edit** to enter information regarding **"What does this person know about the family and/or situation? How does this person come by this information?"**

Click **Edit** to enter information regarding **Collateral Comments**.

Click Edit above Address box to enter address (if known).

Save.

From the **Home Page**, open the **Investigation** folder, open case and click on **Contacts** folder.

Click the **New Contact** hyperlink. Enter all information on the **New Contact** screen (date, time, location, duration, status, reason, non client/ collateral) Click OK when completed.

Click on the **Comments** tab. Enter comments regarding all contacts made in worker attempts to locate child(ren).

Save.