
Sample Protocol for Tracking and Location

- Phase I

- Search for updated address and telephone number using on-line tools
 - Mail request for updated contact information to last known address

- Phase II

- Attempt to contact youth directly at last known address or telephone number
 - Attempt to contact youth indirectly using address and telephone numbers for biological parents, former foster parents, other caregivers, caseworkers, siblings, other relatives or friends
 - Pursue former foster parents and/or former foster siblings first because they often maintain contact with youth or know someone who does.
 - Mother and other relatives (i.e., grandparents or aunts/uncles) have proven to be the next most helpful. Siblings and father tend to be less helpful because they are often difficult to locate.
 - Contact former caseworkers or other agency staff almost as a last resort. They may have heard that a youth is in the military, in school, in a correctional facility, etc.
 - Friends have traditionally yielded very little useful information and are very difficult to locate.
 - Contacts that may be relevant in some cases—spouse (or former spouse), personal acquaintance, neighbor (or former neighbor), co-worker (or former coworker), service provider or other “professional,” current occupant of former address, U.S. Post Office branch, public school district office

- Phase III:

- After multiple attempts to contact youth using existing information have failed
 - Search web sites for correctional facilities and social service agencies
 - Send faxes or other information to “gatekeepers” with the potential to provide information about youth’s location
 - Search web sites like “MySpace” or “Face Book” because registered users will have an e-mail address

Other Recommendations

- Continue to search until all options have been exhausted
 - Use all tracking tools to search for youth directly before attempting to search for other contacts
 - New on-line resources are constantly being introduced
 - Online “web-based” tools may need to be used in combination (e.g., one source may provide an address and another may provide the phone number)
 - Individuals listed as “contacts” may also need to be traced so cases may require multiple levels of tracking
 - Maintain a “hotline” so that interviewers in the field can call tracking staff directly

This sample protocol is based on information provided by Robert Breen, UWSC Tracking and Locating Supervisor, as documented in the publication “National Youth in Transition Database Instruction Guidebook and Architectural Blueprint”, June 2009, produced by the American Public Human Services Association, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, and the Center for State Foster Care and Adoptive Data.