

# DSS Policy and Procedure Guide

Division 03: Child Welfare

Chapter 03: Initial Response/Detention

## Item 026: Timelines for Subsequent Contacts After Initial Attempts to Contact the Family Have Been Unsuccessful and Unable to Locate Procedure

Suggested changes send to: DSS PSOA Mailbox

References: N/A

Issued: **May 1, 2017**

Revisions are in Red

Replaces Issue: **August 16, 2013**

### Preamble

Child Welfare Policy and Procedure Guides are meant to be used as tools to relay best practice and staff expectations. It is understood that specific case scenarios may not always align themselves with the stated practices and that at all times what is of paramount importance is the Safety and Well-being of the children we are charged to protect.

### Policy

All Emergency Response (ER) and Voluntary Family Maintenance (VFM) Social Workers (SW) are required to respond to referrals within Departmental policy and Division 31 Regulations. When the responding SW is unable to make contact with the family on their initial attempt, subsequent attempts are required. The SW shall make valid efforts to locate the family utilizing all available resources.

### Purpose

To inform Department of Social Services (DSS) ER and VFM SW Staff of the policies, procedures, and general requirements for making subsequent contact attempts; and to ensure a uniform and standard method when attempting to locate a family with the assistance of DSS Eligibility Staff.

### Contact Attempts

There must be a minimum of three valid attempts to make face-to-face contact with all children in the home and with their custodial parent(s) or legal guardian(s). Valid attempts will be defined as; in-person at the known or suspected home address, at the children's school, at a relative home, daycare, or any other location the family is reasonably expected to be.

### Timeframes

**Non-Crisis:** The first attempt must always be made within the required time frame for a non-crisis response (10 days), the second attempt must be made no sooner than 24 hours of the first attempt, and the third attempt must be made prior to 20 days of the referral date. For any failed attempts to the home, a hand delivered "Request To Contact Letter" (see [Attachment A](#)) may be left. All attempts must be documented according to PPG 03-01-01, Mandatory Face-to-Face Contacts/Documentation Timeframes.

**Crisis:** The first attempt must always be made within the required timeframe (2 hours or 24 hours). Subsequent attempts should be made no sooner than one hour from previous attempts. A 10-day to the board is considered a crisis response and the initial response should be made within 2 hours of the time the referral is assigned. Contact attempts must be made and documented in CWS/CMS, and an FYI completed before a referral is passed on for follow up to the Swing-shift/Stand-by.

Following the third attempt and no face-to-face contact has been made with required participants, a contact letter will be sent to the parent(s)/legal guardian(s), giving them seven working days to contact the investigating SW. Fewer than three attempts are needed if all addresses have been confirmed to be invalid.

Documentation of attempts to contact will include a review of CalWIN and CWS/CMS for any updated information, contacts with collaterals such as the reporting party or family members, schools, **contact with another County**, etc.

### **Unable to Locate Procedure**

Concurrent with the mailing of the contact letter, the investigating SW shall initiate the following procedure:

- **Email the DSS-Unable to Locate-CW Crocker mailbox. The subject line of the email will read “Investigation Pending Unable to Contact Family”. The Social Work Supervisor (SWS) is to be cc'd to the email.**
- **The body of the email shall include:**
  - **The CWS Referral Number and CalWIN case number**
  - **The mother's name and names of the children**
  - **The date(s) in which the SW attempted the contacts and the reported CalWIN address**
  - **A summary of the concerns and type(s) of allegation i.e., physical abuse, etc.**

Upon receipt of the email, Eligibility Staff shall initiate the procedure as outlined in [PPG 15-07-075](#) and schedule an Unable to Locate appointment.

The Eligibility Worker (EW) shall email the SW the date, time, and location of the Unable to Locate appointment.

If the SW is unable to attend the Unable to Locate appointment, the SW and SWS are to arrange for another SW to attend the appointment.

If the client is a no-show for the appointment, the SW shall close their referral with an Inconclusive disposition within three business days.

The SW shall notify the EW of the referral closure date.

If the client comes in after their scheduled appointment, the EW shall contact the SWS.

The SWS shall review CWS/CMS to determine if the referral is still open or the referral was closed within the last forty-five days.

If the referral has been closed within the last forty-five days, the SWS shall re-open the referral and assign it to the previous SW or select a designee to meet with the client.

If the referral has been closed over forty-five days, the SWS or SWS designated staff person will generate a new referral, dependent on the family's circumstances, any unresolved issues of child safety, and any additional information that indicates a new referral and investigation is needed.

Reference [Desk Guide 0404](#), Emergency Response/VFM Guidelines for Unable to Locate Process When Investigating Abuse/Neglect.

### **Special Considerations**

Additional attempts to make contacts may be necessary prior to closing the referral depending on the situation. For example: the alleged victim is especially vulnerable due to being non-school age, non-verbal, or having special needs and/or the severity of the referral allegations. In situations such as these, an SWS should be consulted.



Department of Social Services  
Delfino Neira, Director

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*Protecting and healing children from abuse and neglect is everyone's responsibility*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear: \_\_\_\_\_

I am a social worker with the Fresno County Department of Social Services and have attempted to contact you at this address but have been unsuccessful. Our agency received a referral regarding your child(ren) and we would like to speak with you about the abuse/neglect allegations made in order to attempt to resolve this matter. Please contact me within 48 hours from the date on this notice by phone at (559) \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter,

Social Worker: \_\_\_\_\_