

## **COLLATERAL SOURCES**

### **In Non-Emergency Investigations**

Parents and subjects of a child abuse/neglect investigation have the right to refuse to cooperate or be interviewed, absent a search warrant or other court order. This does not mean that your immediate response is to return to the Agency and close your file. Be sure to thoroughly review Ohio Administrative Code section 5101:2-34-32: PCSA requirements for assessments and investigations; and also consult with your supervisor on a regular basis for advice and direction. You and your supervisor will seek legal advice, if necessary.

The following are some suggestions for taking the investigation a few steps further so that a determination can be made about whether or not an Access Order can be obtained from the court or other filing made; or if, in fact, the case can be closed, following some additional due diligence. You do not need a signed release to obtain the following information:

1. If the ACV and siblings attend a public school, you are entitled to receive what is known as Directory Information, without written consent of the parent, guardian or legal custodian. Directory Information includes:
  - Student's name, address, telephone listing
  - Date and place of birth
  - Major field of study
  - Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
  - Weight and height of members of athletic teams
  - Dates of attendance, date of graduation and award received
  
2. If the children are home-schooled, this can be verified by contacting the local school district in which the child resides. It is the local school district that approves the home schooling curriculum used by the family, and conducts an annual review of the home schooling plan.
  
3. Criminal and Civil cases are public records. Go online to Cuyahoga County's homepage [[www.cuyahogacounty.us](http://www.cuyahogacounty.us)] Click on Legal & Judicial; then click on the criminal or civil docket link and enter as much information as you have on the subject. **Note:** The criminal docket only provides information on felonies committed in Cuyahoga County, and does not provide information on misdemeanor offenses committed in Cuyahoga County's suburbs; nor felonies or misdemeanors committed in other counties in Ohio nor other states.

Checking the civil docket for divorce and domestic violence cases can also be helpful. Be sure to also check the local municipal court in which the subjects of the investigation reside for any closed or pending case information.

4. Police Reports. Contact the local police department in which the child and/or parents/guardian or custodian reside to see if any calls were made to the police from the home, or if visits were made to the subject premises by the police.

5. Caregivers. If you have knowledge that a grandparent, relative or other caregiver provides care from time to time to the alleged child victim, contact the caregiver. Identify whom you are, title, agency and agency mandate. Indicate that a report was received – for example – that little Johnny has marks and bruises on his neck and face, and ask whether the caregiver knows how this might have happened. Stay child focused.

**Caution:** Do not share information about the family. Further, discretion must be exercised in the selection of collateral sources to protect the family or out-of-home care setting's right to privacy. To protect the confidentiality of the principals, persons shall not be randomly interviewed.

6. Check the federal and state prisons websites: [www.drc.state.oh.us](http://www.drc.state.oh.us) [Ohio Dept. of Rehabilitation and Correction; this links to the Ohio Offender Information Database]; and [www.bop.gov](http://www.bop.gov) [Federal Prisons: Bureau of Prisons].
7. For genealogy, birth and death records: [www.rootsweb.com](http://www.rootsweb.com)
8. 411 On-line: [www.411locate.com](http://www.411locate.com)
9. Birthdays: [www.anybirthday.com](http://www.anybirthday.com)
10. Sex offender registry by state: [www.sexoffender.com](http://www.sexoffender.com)

The foregoing list is not exhaustive. Be sure to read the Parent/Relative Locator Section's brochure and contact the PRL Section for additional investigative tips or further assistance.

Please keep in mind that when a parent or other subject of the investigation "slams the door in your face," and tells you to "get off my property and don't come back," this does not mean that you should throw in the towel on the investigation. Wait a few hours or the next day to allow the subject to "cool off," and give them a telephone call to try to reschedule a visit, or suggest an alternate site for the interview. Document the attempted home interview and the telephone call. If the subject is still uncooperative, send a letter. The letter should mention the attempted home visit, telephone call, and another request for their cooperation with the investigation. Documentation is critical.

Be sure to consult with your supervisor frequently so that as the situation changes, or not, your supervisor can advise you accordingly of next steps.