



FOR YOUR INFORMATION

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Issue 25-07

Date: 05/01/2025

SOCIAL MEDIA SEARCHES

The purpose of this FYI is to identify the staff that will be conducting Due Diligence/Family Finding searches for investigation purposes; as well as to include the procedure by which investigative social media searches should be conducted.

Due Diligence Procedures:

A due diligence report documents the systematic effort made by the Department of Children and Family Services to locate a parent(s) or guardian(s) whose whereabouts and/or identity are unknown. A due diligence ensures that all legal notice requirements are met and helps ensure that child welfare services are provided in accordance with the law. The purpose of the due diligence report is to show the court that reasonable efforts were made to locate a parent whose whereabouts and/or identity is unknown. The search is conducted in the hope of locating the parent, so that they can be notified of an upcoming dependency hearing. While a number of standard search approaches exist, each case is unique and therefore each search must be tailored and customized to locate the particular parent.

Social Media:

With the growing popularity and utilization of social media, it can be used as an additional tool in the search to locate a parent or legal guardian whose whereabouts and/or identity is unknown. In specialized units such as the Family Finding and Engagement Program (FFEP), social media can be utilized to locate relatives and non-relative extended family members (NREFMs) who can provide additional support to a child.

For the purpose of this FYI, the term “social media” includes any web-based forum and/or mobile technology that allows users to interact with each other in some way by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests online. This open communication on the internet includes, but not limited to Social Networking Websites such as LinkedIn, Facebook; Micro-blogging Sites such as X; Blogs, including departmental and personal blogs; Podcasts, Online Encyclopedias, Wikipedia, as well as video and photo sharing websites such as YouTube, Instagram, Flickr, Snapchat, and TikTok etc.

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Manual Policy No. 6.101, Use of County Information Technology (IT) Resources, dated July 13, 2004, states in part: “Unless expressly authorized by department management or policy; sending, disclosing, or otherwise disseminating confidential data, protected information, or other confidential information of the County is strictly prohibited. This includes information that is protected under HIPAA or any other privacy legislation.”

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Manual Policy No. 6.105, states in part: “Except as expressly authorized in this Board of Supervisors Policy No. 6.105, no County IT user shall access or use County IT resources to create, exchange, publish, or distribute in public forums (e.g., blog postings, bulletin boards, chat rooms, Twitter, Facebook, Myspace, and other social networking services) any information (e.g., personal information, confidential information, political lobbying, religious promotion, and opinions) not specifically approved by designated County Department management.”



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DCFS employees are prohibited from utilizing their own personal social media accounts to conduct searches for missing children, parents or legal guardians. Social media algorithms can make DCFS employee's personal social media accounts discoverable (i.e., suggested friends.) Identified and approved DCFS employees may use their county assigned email address that is specifically created for social media investigative searches, to set up social media accounts, such as Facebook, as an investigative tool to conduct these business related searches. Accounts set up for investigative purposes are to only be used for County business and not for personal use. Any time an identified and approved DCFS employee uses a social media account for investigative purposes and makes contact with an individual, they must identify themselves as an employee of DCFS, provide their job title, and state the general purpose for the contact. Identified and approved employees should not "Friend" or "Follow" the social media accounts of DCFS clients, as the social media account is to be utilized for an investigative tool for job related duties only.

Governing and Applicable Laws, Regulations, and Policies:

This FYI is governed in all respects in accordance with all applicable Federal, State of California, local, and Los Angeles County data and information protection rules, laws, regulations, mandates, ordinances, standards, best practices, guidelines, directives, policies and procedures including without limitation, the California Public Records Act, the California Education Code, California Information Practices Act of 1977, the Federal Privacy Act of 1974, and the Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, California Civil Code Section 1798.82, California Penal Code Section 502, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH), and Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Policy Manual Chapters 3 (3.040 - Records Management and Archive of County Records), and 6 of County's Policy Manual, which can be accessed at: https://library.municode.com/ca/la_county_-_bos/codes/board_policy?nodeId=CH6INTE.

Confidential Information:

"Confidential Information" means any data and information in any form, format, medium, in-transit and at-rest (i.e., oral, written, graphic, machine-readable form) including without limitation:

- a. Any technical and non-technical information related to Discloser's business and current, future, and proposed products and services of Discloser, including for example and without limitation, information concerning Discloser's research, development, case details, design details and specifications, financial information, information about Information Technology assets and resources, procurement, client/customer lists, business forecasts, data analytics, and business plans, expenses, trade secrets; and
- b. Any information Discloser has received from others and which Discloser is obligated to treat as confidential or proprietary for example and without limitation, data and information that is exempt from public disclosure in specific legislation or which is identified as personal, sensitive, or confidential such as personally identifiable information (PII), individually identifiable health information (PHI), medical records (MI), employment and education records, and non-public information as specified in all applicable federal, State and local laws and regulations and County policies.

Staff that have been identified and approved to conduct social media searches for investigation purposes, consist of the following:

- Due Diligence Search Clerks (DDSC)
- Dependency Investigation Assistants (DIA)



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- Adoptions Assistants (within the Dependency Investigation and FFEP sections only) (AA)
- Alternative staff items who have the ability to conduct investigative searches may be identified to complete social media searches at the discretion of their respective RA. This may include CSW's and SCSW's.
 - No more than five percent (5%) of alternative staff per office may be approved.

Prior to creating a social media profile, identified and approved staff must obtain approval from their Supervisor as well as complete a web-based training on the use of social media.

Once supervisor approval is obtained for social media access, identified and approved staff are to submit a Service Request through ISD via the [Enterprise Service Portal](#) or by calling: (562) 658-1606. Regional Offices may also elect to submit one Service Request on behalf of all identified and approved staff, to obtain social media access.

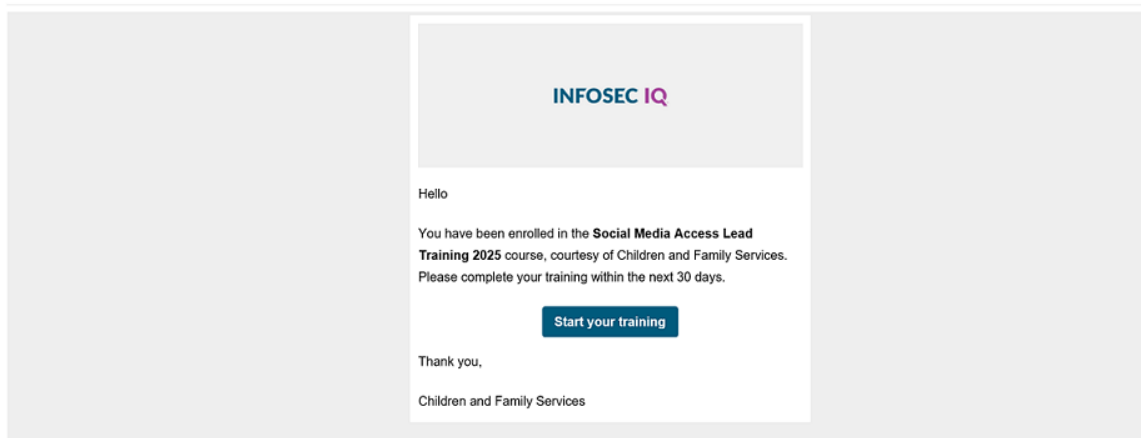
- When creating a Service Request, provide your employee number, title, office and indicate that you are requesting social media access for investigative purposes. The request should indicate that the service request is also a **"Social Media Lead Access Request."** The service request is also to be made to the attention of **"DCFS Information Security."**
- After creating the Service Request Ticket, ISD will confirm Supervisor Approval via email.
 - If RA approval is required, ISD will also confirm with RA via email.
- Once approved, you will be enrolled in a web-based social media training and will receive an email from **"Infosec IQ Notifications"** (notifications@securityiq-notifications.com) titled: **"Start your security awareness training"** with a link to begin the training. The training is titled: **Social Media Lead Access Training 2025** and is nine (9) minutes long.
 - Please allow three (3) to five (5) business days after the service request is submitted to receive the training enrollment email with the link to the training.
 - Ensure that you check your **Junk Email** and **Promotions** email folders, as there are times where the email may be routed to those folders instead of directly to your email inbox.
 - The email received will look like the following:



Retention Policy LACOUNTY 3 Year Delete (3 years)

Expires: 2/10/2028

If there are problems with how this message is displayed, click here to view it in a web browser.





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- Once the training is completed, DCFS Information Security will be automatically alerted and an alternative county issued email address will be created with a unique naming convention specific to those who are approved to have social media access only: EmployeeNumberSM@dcfs.lacounty.gov.
 - Please note that in order to move forward and receive the assignment of an alternate county issued email address to conduct investigative social media searches, you will also need to be current on the yearly Countywide Cybersecurity Awareness Training that is accessible via TalentWorks.
- After assignment of an alternative county issued email address, follow instructions below for “Creating a Social Media Profile for Investigation Purposes.”

Note: In the event that those that are approved to conduct social media searches can no longer complete the searches or change positions, a new service request needs to be submitted to disable the alternative county issued email address that was created.

Creating a Social Media Profile for Investigation Purposes:

On Desktop:

- Go to the respective social media platform (i.e. Facebook) and click on “Create a New Account” or “Sign Up.”
- Enter your name and county assigned email address (for social media investigative searches only) and follow any additional prompts/instructions.
 - In lieu of entering your name to create an account, an alternate generic phrase that identifies your office and position/section can be utilized. For example, “Compton Office DIA” or “Torrance Office DI.” However, please note that by utilizing an alternate generic phrase, the social media profile may be deleted by the respective platform; and in this case, a new social media profile will need to be created.

On Mobile Device:

- Download the respective social media application.
- Once downloaded, open the application and click on Create a New Account” or “Sign Up.”
- Enter your name and county assigned email address (for social media investigative searches only)/county issued mobile number and follow any additional prompts/instructions.
 - In lieu of entering your name to create an account, an alternate generic phrase that identifies your office and position/section can be utilized. For example, “Compton Office DIA” or “Torrance Office DI.” However, please note that by utilizing an alternate generic phrase, the social media profile may be deleted by the respective platform; and in this case, a new social media profile will need to be created.

Procedure:

CSW Responsibilities



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- Complete the [DCFS 136, Search Request](#) to initiate a record search (which includes a social media search).
 - Submit the DCFS 136 to the identified staff conducting the search.
- Follow up on any leads received by the DDSC, DIA, or AA as a result of the social media search (telephone number, email address, etc.)

DDSC, DIA, AA Responsibilities

Social Media searches should be included in every record search request.

- Follow all procedures indicated in: [0300-306.75, Due Diligence](#) and [C-300, Due Diligence Procedures](#).
- For Social Media Searches:
 - Conduct a social media search via CLEAR, utilizing all available identifying information (Name, DOB, etc.)
 - Review the results and make note of only those results which show “High” compatibility.
 - Log into the respective social media platform and complete a name search for each “High” compatibility result.
 - A message is to be sent to every “High” Compatibility result, using the respective social media messaging service.
 - Only the [Social Media Script](#) is to be utilized for every message sent.
 - Any case identifying information (child’s name, DOB, court case number, etc. is not to be disclosed).
 - For every message sent, take a screenshot of the message and paste it into a word document, print it out, and file it in the Due Diligence Search folder.
 - If a response to the initial message is received, forward the message to the CSW.

DDSC, DIA, AA Supervisor Responsibilities

- Periodically review your assigned staff’s social media page and activity, such as direct messages, to ensure compliance with confidentiality and social media access for investigative searches protocol.

If you have any questions regarding this release, please email your question to:

Policy@dcfs.lacounty.gov

Social Media Message Script

The following script is to be used for investigative purposes only, when utilizing social media as a search tool to locate a parent/guardian whose whereabouts and/or identity is unknown.

Hello,

My name is _____ and I am a _____ (Title) _____ with the LA County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). I am reaching out to you because I am currently conducting a Due Diligence search and you have been identified as the mother/father of a child who is currently under the supervision of DCFS. It is important that you make contact with the assigned social worker for your child so that you can be informed of the circumstances regarding the case as well as obtain information regarding any future dependency court hearings that will be held regarding your child. Please contact (Social Worker Name) , CSW at: (Telephone Number/Email Address) as soon as possible.

Thank You,
