

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE # 22
DILIGENT SEARCH
June 1, 2003 – P.T. 2003.13

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SECTION 22.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of these procedures is to provide instructions to staff on the necessity of conducting diligent searches and the use of the Diligent Search Service Center.

SECTION 22.2 REASONS FOR CONDUCTING A DILIGENT SEARCH

“Diligent search” is defined as a search that fulfills the minimum requirements as set forth in these procedures. A search as performed by the Diligent Search Service Center is defined as completion of the steps necessary (as further defined in these procedures) to obtain the location information of a given person.

Diligent searches are necessary for many reasons. Finding missing parents early in the case to ascertain parents’ intentions regarding their children, and searching for relatives to find the best possible placement for the child will lead to a quick and permanent solution for each child’s care. Finding missing parents and relatives will facilitate the placement of siblings together. In addition, a caseworker must testify at the adjudicatory hearing about the diligent search conducted for a missing parent. Diligent searches may be necessary or helpful to find relatives for intact families to help care for children while parents go to drug treatment.

Diligent searches are necessary before the parental rights of a missing parent can be terminated. When diligent searches have not been done, adoptions are delayed. The Juvenile Court will not accept searches completed more than 12 months prior to the court hearing. Therefore, in cases where a parent is missing, searches for that parent must be repeated every 12 months to ensure a valid search for court. **NOTE: In some counties judges may require that searches be done every six months.**

For all of the above reasons it is important that diligent searches be conducted at the beginning of a case.

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Because diligent searches are time intensive for workers, the Department has contracted with King Technology to provide assistance. King Technology has established the Diligent Search Service Center that workers can access either by computer or by phone. The process for utilizing the Center is described in Section VI. of this Policy Guide.

SECTION 22.3 WHEN A DILIGENT SEARCH SHOULD BE CONDUCTED

The Department shall conduct a diligent search to locate the following:

- a) Absent parents for the purpose of notifying them of a temporary custody hearing and other Juvenile Court proceedings in accordance with the Juvenile Court Act (705 ILCS 405), including missing parents for the purpose of terminating parental rights or adoption, or transfer to subsidized guardianship, unless a parent:
 - 1) is deceased (certified by Death Certificate); or
 - 2) has signed a consent to the adoption of the child; or
 - 3) has surrendered the child for adoption; or
 - 4) has already had his or her rights terminated with respect to the child who is the subject of the Juvenile Court Act proceeding; or
 - 5) has an address that the worker has been to and confirmed that the parent lives there (within the last month).
- b) Involved subjects of a child abuse or neglect report whose whereabouts are unknown for the purpose of conducting an investigation or informing them of the results of an investigation;
- c) Persons served by the Department (sometimes referred to as ward/client) either directly or through contractual services, including those served in intact family cases, who are unable to be located for the purpose of service delivery, risk assessment or service planning;
- d) Relatives or other significant persons of a child in Department custody for the purposes of finding the best and earliest placement for a child that will result in permanency or support for the family, or for day care and other assistance to intact families;
- e) Siblings of a child(ren) in the Department's custody for the purpose of placing the siblings together or to facilitate regular visitation.
- f) Children Absent from Placement. This includes any child up to 21 years of age for whom the Department is legally responsible who is absent from the child's approved/authorized placement without the consent of the child's caregiver or the Department. This also includes a child who is placed in protective custody and the child is abducted or the child's whereabouts become unknown during a pending investigation.

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SECTION 22.4 WORKER REQUIREMENTS TO LOCATE MISSING PARENTS AND RELATIVES

a) Protective Custody and Court Involvement Cases (Front End Searches)

The following are to be completed by the child protection service worker within **two working days (48 hours)** of taking protective custody or of the decision to screen with the State's Attorney:

- 1) If the caregiver is not the custodial parent(s), talk with the current caregiver about the whereabouts of the child's parent(s) and other relatives and any other known caregivers.
- 2) If a non-custodial parent(s) whereabouts is unknown, ask the custodial parent where you can find the other parent(s), and paternal/maternal grandparents, aunts, and uncles of the child(ren) involved.

Record all family information on the **CFS 915-7, Family Information Sheet**. This is valuable to the child's future. At the end of the 48-hours, place this information into the case record. This information should also be passed on to the courts, State's Attorney and other court personnel involved with the case

- 3) Make an in-person visit to the parent(s) last known address if there is reason to believe that the parent may be there. If there are multiple parents involved, make a good faith effort to make contact with all missing parents including: visits to last known address unless it can be verified that the parent no longer lives there. Document what is known about the parent and what attempts have been made to locate the parents.

If the missing parent lives a considerable distance from the worker's headquarters, these guidelines shall be followed:

- A) Workers need not travel outside their own county, if they do not have reliable information regarding the parent's address. If the address is in another Department region and the information is reliable, the worker may request that a worker in the other region contact the parent.
- B) If the parent lives in another state and the information is reliable, the worker may contact the Department's Interstate Compact Office for assistance in requesting that a worker in the other state contact the parent.
- C) If (A) and (B) above are not possible and the worker has a telephone number for the parent, the worker may contact the parent by phone and ask them to return a certified letter sent to their address.

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- 4) Review automated information systems for family information: CYCIS, CANTS, LEADS, IDOC/Jail check, Public Aid screen, phone book and Directory Assistance.

b) Protective Custody Is Not Taken and Court Involvement Is Not Sought

The following should be completed by the child protection service worker (CPSW) within ten days of the report where the child is not with either parent or with only one parent and the case is indicated and no court involvement is sought, and either the case is being opened for intake services or the CPSW will link the family to community based services.

- 1) If the caregiver is not the custodial parent(s), talk with the current caregiver about the whereabouts of the child's parent(s) and other relatives and any other known caregivers.
- 2) If a non-custodial parent(s) whereabouts is unknown, ask the custodial parent where you can find the other parent(s), and paternal/maternal grandparents, aunts, and uncles of the child(ren) involved.

Record all family information on the **CFS 915-7, Family Information Sheet**. This is very valuable to the child(s) future for identifying potential placements or sources of support for the family and child.

- 3) Make an in-person visit to the parent(s) last known address. If there are multiple parents involved, attempt to reach as many parents as reasonably possible.

Make a good faith effort to make contact with all missing parents including: visits to last known address unless it can be verified that the parent no longer lives there. Document these attempts including knowledge of all parents and where attempts were made.

See paragraph (a)(3) above for parents who live at considerable distance from the worker's headquarters.

- 4) Review automated information systems for family information: CYCIS, CANTS, LEADS, Public Aid screen, check phone book and call Directory Assistance.

c) Follow-up Worker

Whether or not custody is taken, the follow-up worker shall perform the following:

- 1) Contact the DCP investigator to obtain information and/or status of diligent search.

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- 2) Make sure that you have the **CFS 915-7, Family Information Sheet** from the DCP worker. Update it with any new information you discover.
- 3) Interview any relatives with whom the DCP worker was unable to speak.
- 4) Review all existing files including those records related to previous reports for the child(ren).
- 5) Check with the children's school personnel, school records, and emergency contacts.
- 6) Talk with the individual's most recent employer.
- 7) Send certified and regular mail letters to the last known address of missing parent(s).

If multiple persons with the same name are found, depending on the number of people with that name, the worker need not send more than 15 letters.

d) Diligent Search for Purposes of Termination of Parental Rights, Subsidized Guardianship, Adoption or Expedited Adoption (back-end searches)

When it is necessary to do a diligent search for purposes of termination of parental rights, in order to ensure that the diligent search meets the requirements of the Juvenile Court Act to support the notice by publication, it should have been done no more than **six months** in advance of the screening date.

In addition, when conducting diligent searches for the purpose of termination of parental rights, adoption, or subsidized guardianship, the following tasks are mandatory and it is recommended that they be completed in the order listed:

- 1) Review the complete file: Your agency's file may have information regarding the identity of a parent whose identity is currently unknown. In addition, you may find information regarding relatives who may be able to assist you in your search. Be sure to check the Social Investigation done at time of disposition for addresses.
- 2) You **must do an in-person visit** to the parent's last known address and **confirm whether or not the individual actually resides there**. See paragraph (a)(3) above for parents who live at considerable distance from the worker's headquarters
- 3) Relatives: Ask any available parent and relatives about names and addresses of the missing parent. Obtain as much information as you can from any relatives that you can find or have contact with. Relatives may have information as to where the parent is now residing. Document your conversations and any information you receive. You must do this again NOW, even if it was done before.

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- 4) Public Aid search and printout: Do a public aid computer search if the parent is known to have last resided in Illinois. Check the MARS/CYCIS CR08 and CR03 screens for names similar to the parent's name. Use the date of birth, if available (from child's birth certificate). If there is a match, send a letter to the person at the address shown. This letter is included in the total of 15 that must be sent. Send the letter by regular mail. Attach a copy of the letter and envelope. If there is no response to the letter, provide the information to the DSSC in the Search Request Form.
- 5) Review the complete court file. The court file may have information regarding the identity or address of a parent that is currently unknown. In addition, you may find information regarding attorneys who represent parents, or relatives who may be able to assist you in your search.
- 6) Do a jail check. Call the local County Jail (Cook County:1-800-425-Jail) and Illinois Department of Corrections. **Note Jail/DOC check must have been done within 48 hours of the first legal screening date and each subsequent legal prescreening and legal screening date and within 24 hours of the publication/default TPR hearing.**

Do a telephone book search: copy page from phone book of the city/town where parent(s) believed to reside. Check for exact or similar names and initials.

e) Confidentiality

Be aware that, when you are making inquiries with relatives, neighbors or other individuals, you may not reveal any confidential information regarding the investigation or parties involved. You may make inquiries as to the whereabouts of parents and identify yourself as a Department employee, but you may not provide any information regarding the circumstances of the case or the parties involved.

f) Unsuccessful Searches

If the persons being sought are not found upon completion of the above steps in paragraphs (a), (b), (c), or (d), submit a search request to the Diligent Search Service Center (DSSC) as described below in Section VII. Allow five days for response for parent, ward/client and DCP searches, 15 days for others. If you have information that the person resided in a particular city or town, include that information on the search request form, even if there is no specific address. Note: If additional resources or leads are found by DSSC, you must follow up on them. Following the response from the DSSC, you must send a total of 15 letters

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SECTION 22.5 The Diligent Search Service Center

The Diligent Search Service Center (DSSC) is open in two locations and serves DCFS and POS agencies according to region.

Cook Regions
10 W. 35th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60616
Toll Free 877-806-5914
Fax 312-842-7634

chicagodssc@diligentsearch.org

Northern, Central and Southern Regions
6045 N. Cotton Hill Rd.
Springfield, Illinois 62707
Toll Free 866-843-3772
Fax 866-211-0861

springfielddssc@diligentsearch.org

The Diligent Search Service Center (DSSC) makes a diligent effort, through the latest technological advances, to locate the person being sought. The DSSC has developed a system for sending and receiving all search request information electronically. The system is used in secure communication protocol (Secure Socket Layer), and is located in the DCFS intranet, which only authorized users may access. The DSSC has the capacity to screen users by cross-referencing the caseworker's license number against the child's case number. The DSSC has established interagency agreements through DCFS for access to multiple state and national databases. See Attachment I.

All DCFS and many POS caseworkers have access to the secure site. At any point in the search request or when viewing the "results viewing" screen, a caseworker may contact a DSSC Consultant for on-line and/or phone assistance by clicking "Contact Us" for e-mail and phone information

SECTION 22.6 HOW TO USE THE DILIGENT SEARCH SERVICE CENTER

a) The Electronic System if you have access to the D-net:

- At the DCFS intranet site, click on the "Resource" page link on the lower left side of the screen.
- The "Resource" page appears with the hyperlink "Diligent Search"
- Click on the hyperlink, which will bring up a temporary security alert
- Disregard the alert and click on "Yes" to proceed
- The DSSC secure site will appear
(The following can be viewed by clicking on "User Guide")
- Complete form **CFS 915-1, Steps Completed by Caseworker Prior to Search by the Diligent Search Center**, that is provided on the site. It is not necessary to submit this form to the DSSC.
- Click on "Submit a Request" to bring up the Search Request form **CFS 915-2**. On this screen, enter all information about the searchee including information about the child as well as caseworker information. **Any fields that are in red are required fields and, unless completed, the system will not allow the user to proceed.**

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- After completion of the page, scroll to the bottom and click “Submit”
- If an error page appears, call the DSSC Consultant for your DCFS Region.
- The next screen issues an ID number and a Tracking number. PRINT THIS INFORMATION AND KEEP IT IN THE FILE. These numbers are very important because they allow the search to be tracked and the results and missing person confirmation letters to be printed from the site. This screen also indicates that the search has been received by the DSSC database and at what time the search was submitted.
- At any time, you may return to the home page to submit another search or use other links.
- At the home page, click “View what you submitted” to review what you have submitted. Each Search ID number and Tracking number will be unique.
- At any time in the future, you may click “Search Results” for search results information. Previous searches can be tracked by entering the Search ID number, as well as the Tracking number issued after the original search submission.
- Any search results may be printed for hard copy file.

HOW TO GET SEARCH RESULTS WHEN THE SEARCH IS COMPLETE

- Enter the corresponding search number and tracking I.D. # to access the search results.
- A box will appear with five document titles:

SEARCH OUTCOME FORM
SEARCH RESULTS PAGE
DETAILED SEARCH RESULTS PAGE
DILIGENT SEARCH SERVICE CENTER CERTIFICATE
MISSING PERSONS CONFIRMATION LETTERS
- Click on each individual title to print out the Search Outcome Form, the Search Results Page, the Detailed Search Results Page, the Diligent Search Service Center Certificate and the Missing Person Confirmation Letters. The DSSC D-net site will then automatically generate up to 15 letters preaddressed to the different addresses the Diligent Search has located. If the letters are needed in Spanish, contact the DSSC.
- Mail the letters and wait for the searchee to respond
- The DSSC Consultant will mail the signed original DSSC Certificate of Diligent Search to the caseworker the same day.
- Visit the on-line Center for additional information on what's new at the DSSC.

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b) To submit a search request if you don't have access to the DCFS intranet:

- Obtain form **CFS 915-1, Steps Completed by Caseworker Prior to Search by the Diligent Search Center**, and **CFS 915-2, Search Request** referral form by calling the DSSC to have them faxed to you or by using those supplied to you by the DSSC
- Complete these forms as thoroughly as possible. If there is information you don't have, try to ascertain ways to obtain this information. For assistance, contact the DSSC via one of the toll-free numbers and speak to a Consultant.

After completing the forms, keep **CFS 915-1** for your records and fax **CFS 915-2** to the DSSC in your region. A consultant will contact you to confirm receipt of search request. When all the necessary information is included, the search will be processed and a Consultant will contact you with the search results. Assistance will be available regarding what to do with the results.

How to Get Search Results When is the Search Complete

1) If your agency has an e-mail address where you may print out your search results

- The results and preaddressed letters, generated by the DSSC will be sent to you by e-mail. The e-mail will contain five word documents titled as follows:

SEARCH OUTCOME FORM
SEARCH RESULTS PAGE
DETAILED SEARCH RESULTS PAGE
DILIGENT SEARCH SERVICE CENTER CERTIFICATE
MISSING PERSONS CONFIRMATION LETTERS

- Click on each individual document to open and print. The Missing Person Confirmation Letters document will contain up to 15 letters preaddressed to the different addresses the Diligent Search has located. If the letters are needed in Spanish, contact the DSSC.
- Mail out the letters and wait for the searchee to respond
- The DSSC Consultant will mail the signed original DSSC Certificate of Diligent Search to the caseworker the same day.

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- 2) If your agency has no e-mail but must rely on fax, the following search results documents and pre-addressed missing person confirmation letters will be sent to you by fax:

SEARCH OUTCOME FORM
SEARCH RESULTS PAGE
DETAILED SEARCH RESULTS PAGE
DILIGENT SEARCH SERVICE CENTER CERTIFICATE
MISSING PERSONS CONFIRMATION LETTERS

- There will be up to 15 letters pre-addressed to the different addresses the Diligent Search Center has located. If the letters are needed in Spanish, contact the DSSC.
- Mail the letters and wait for the searchee to respond
- The DSSC Consultant will mail the signed original DSSC Certification of Diligent Search to the caseworker the same day.

SECTION 22.7 WHAT TO DO WITH THE RESULTS OF A DILIGENT SEARCH

A caseworker can, at any time in the search process, contact a DSSC Consultant for assistance with a search request or search results. Some of the steps that a caseworker can follow are:

a) If no information is found

DSSC will continue to hold the case as the worker gets more information. This can be done by returning to the court files and the disposition order or by reviewing information with other caregivers

b) If several names are found

DSSC will do more searches as the worker narrows information. DSSC will also offer the worker additional support for narrowing the scope of search. DSSC suggests an in-person visit to persons found, when possible.

c) If the searchee is found

DSSC encourages the worker to conduct personal interviews with the found parent, sibling, or other relative and/or use family group conferencing to lead toward permanency for child(ren) in the system

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SECTION 22.8 FORMS, LETTERS, AND CERTIFICATES

The following forms, letters, and certificates may be used at various points in the diligent search process:

a) Forms

CFS 915-1, Steps Completed by Caseworker Prior to Search by the Diligent Search Center, this form is used by the worker and is for tasks to be completed prior to requesting a search from the DSSC.

CFS 915-2, Search Request Form

CFS 915-3, Search Outcome Form - The search outcome form provides the searchee's general information, the child's general information and the caseworkers general information. It also states if information was found for the searchee or if no information was found. The **CFS 915-3e** is used by the Diligent Search Service Center for purchase of service agencies that do not have access to the D-Net.

Search Results Form – The Search Result Form lists all databases utilized by the DSSC in the search. Next to each name, one of five outcomes may appear. The words FOUND, MULTIPLE RESULTS may appear which means that more than one address has been located from that database and those address will be listed there. The word PENDING may appear which means that particular database has not returned any information to the Diligent Search Center yet and that information will be provided at a later date when it is received. The words NOT FOUND may appear, which means that no information was found by that database. The words NOT ENOUGH INFORMATION may appear, which means the amount of available information was not enough to produce any results for that particular database.

Detailed Search Results Form - The detailed search results form specifies which of the different databases were utilized in the search, but in addition, any address found by each database will be listed.

CFS 915-7, Family Information Sheet

b) Missing Person Confirmation Letters

Caseworkers and/or the Consultant choose from three types of letters that will be mailed out to the missing person. These letters will be addressed to either a missing parent or a missing relative. There is a generalized letter in Spanish available. The letters are:

CFS 915-9, Missing Parent Letter

CFS 915-9S Carta de Confirmación de la persona desaparecida

CFS 915-10, Missing Relative Letter

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In all cases, the DSSC can make recommendations and suggestions for getting and using information that will enable a useful search.

c) Certifications

Certifications of diligent search are required and must be brought to the following court hearings to be tendered to the parties:

- 1) the temporary custody hearing (certifications provided by the child protective service worker),
- 2) the adjudicatory hearing (certifications provided from both Diligent Search Service Center and permanency worker)
- 3) the hearing for termination of parental rights or transfer to subsidized guardianship, or expedited adoption (certifications provided from both Diligent Search Service Center and permanency worker).

The certifications used for the above are:

- **CFS 915-4, Temporary Custody Hearing Certification of Diligent Search of Child Protective/Permanency Worker**
- **CFS 915-5, Adjudicatory Hearing Certification of Diligent Search of Child Protective/Permanency Worker**
- **CFS 915-6, TPR/Subsidized Guardianship/Expedited Adoption Certification of Diligent Search of Child Protective/Permanency Worker**

In addition, the permanency worker is required to include the certifications with the materials brought to the Permanency Hearings and legal pre-screenings and screenings at which the decisions regarding termination of parental rights for purposes of adoption are being considered or when subsidized guardianship or expedited adoption is being considered.

DSSC CERTIFICATE - The **CFS 915-8, Certificate of Diligent Search – Diligent Search Service Center** confirms the search was completed and lists the 16 individual databases utilized in the search. The Diligent Search Consultant will mail an original Diligent Search Service center Certification to the caseworker the same day.

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ATTACHMENT I

DATABASES ACCESSIBLE TO THE DILIGENT SEARCH SERVICE CENTER

The DSSC has established interagency agreements through IDCFS for access to multiple state and national databases. The following databases are searched:

- 1) **Departments of Corrections:** On-line search of the following states' prison inmates: Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin and the federal prisons located in South Dakota, Arizona, Michigan, Ohio and North Carolina. Searches in the remaining 20 states plus the District of Columbia can be performed via mail and fax but results may not be received with in the time requirements and will be considered pending.
- 2) **Military Locator Service:** Links to a record of each individual enlisted, past or present, in any of the four military branches, U.S. Coast Guard, or the National Guard.
- 3) **Putative Father Registry:** A database within the Department of Children and Family Services that identifies individuals who have voluntarily submitted information declaring possible paternity of a minor.
- 4) **Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Advocacy Office:** A database within the Department of Children and Family Services that includes identifying information about individuals who have been reported to the Department relative to the case of a minor. This is not an on-line service but usually provides next day service.
- 5) **Multi-State Sex Offender Registry:** Links to the sex offender registries in Alaska, Alabama, Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia and Wyoming.
- 6) **National Death Locator:** Links to the Social Security Death Index, which contains 66,124,141 names provided by the Social Security Administration through May 31, 2001.
- 7) **Illinois Secretary of State-Department of Motor Vehicle Record System:** Identifies all persons who have been issued a license to operate a motor vehicle in the state of Illinois.
- 8) **World Page Locator:** Provides 117 million U.S. and Canadian listings in white and yellow pages of telephone directories, 9 million e-mail addresses and 30 million URLs links to over 350 directories worldwide.

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- 9) **Directory Assistance Look-up:** Includes 5,200 white page telephone directories; federal, state, city and county government data; bankruptcy records and legal filings
- 10) **Cook County Jails:** Lists all individuals processed by the Cook County Jails. This is not an on-line source and relies on fax communication.
- 11) **Federal Parent Locator System:** A highly secure and sensitive computerized network of information on individuals amassed from information provided from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Internal Revenue Service, the Social Security Administration, the Department of Defense, the National Personnel Records Center, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the State Employment Security Agencies. The DSSC access to this is not on-line but relies on fax communication.
- 12) **Trace Reports:** A Trace report is a credit report without credit history. It requires a social security number. From this report the search center gains the DOB, telephone number, last known address and previous employer.
- 13) **Retrace Reports:** A Retrace report is used when the social security number is not available. It provides a list of social security numbers that match the name being searched. This information is then submitted to the Trace Report to gain the aforementioned information. These are subscriptions that the DSSC purchased for access to aid and expedite those search requests in which the caseworker has minimal information or repeat searches are necessary.
- 14) **Sangamon County Circuit Clerk files:** Electronic access to search all of the county's files, including juvenile and adult records pertaining to all matters of County business, such as criminal, child support, traffic offenses, civil suits, custody hearings (This database will be used as a test to determine the value of pursuing access to other County Circuit Clerk files).
- 15) **Illinois State Board of Elections:** Electronic access to voter registration records statewide via CD Rom.