SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF SAN JOAQUIN
315 W. ELM STREET
LODI, CA 95240

FINDING PEOPLE

Tips to Locate a Hard-to-Find Person

Patrons frequently need to find people and businesses, for instance to serve them with legal papers. If you cannot find a person, it may be possible to serve them by publishing the notice in the newspaper. Before you can do this, you need to prove to the judge that you have made a thorough, diligent search for the person.

Here are some resources and strategies to help you locate people and businesses, or at least make a thorough search, both in the Law Library and on the Internet.

INTRODUCTION

It is very important to keep careful records of every search you make, and the results of that search, when looking for a person. This is good advice for any type of research, but it is crucial if you are trying to find someone so you can serve them with legal papers. You will use these records to prove that you have made a diligent search for the person, in order to get the Court's permission to let you move forward with your case, even though you cannot find the other person to serve. Keep copies of your letters and responses, and keep a diary of your contacts.

SUGGESTED STEPS

1. Finding People

Here are some steps you can take to search for individuals.

1. Try personal service at the last known home and work addresses, using the Sheriff or process server. Ask for documentation of the process server's attempts to locate the party.

2. If you know for sure that the person is no longer at his/her last known address, send a letter to that address and write on the envelope: "DO NOT FORWARD. ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED." If the person left a forwarding address the post office will return the letter to you with the new address.

3. Search the telephone directory for the city where party was last known to live, and attempt contact at any listings that could possibly be the person to be served. Call telephone information (411). Try online phone books like www.whitepages.com and www.zabasearch.com . If you have a phone number but no address, try the reverse telephone lookup on these sites.

Disclaimer: This Guide is intended as general information only. Your case may have factors requiring different procedures or forms. The information and instructions are provided for use in the San Joaquin County Superior Court. Please keep in mind that each court may have different requirements. If you need further assistance consult a lawyer.

4. Contact relatives and friends who might know the party's whereabouts. Keep records of all these contacts, such as a diary detailing telephone calls and copies of letters you send, etc.

5. Contact any current or former employers/employees of the person you are trying to serve to see if they have information.

6. Go to the last known home and work address of the person yourself and ask neighbors or co-workers if they know where to reach the person.

7. Send a letter to the person at their last known addresses. Be sure to label the envelope "Return in 5 days if undeliverable." Send the letters registered and keep returned envelopes to show failure.

8. File a motion to have the address of the person you are trying to serve disclosed by the Department of Child Support Services if there is a current case open for child support with their office.

9. Contact the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to see if they will provide you any information on the person you are trying to serve. It is very possible that the DMV will not give you any information, so just make note of when you called and what they told you.

10. Check the County Recorder's and County Tax Assessor's indexes for the location where the party was last known to live or own real property. Melissadata.com has full address information (www.melissadata.com/lookups/personatorsearch.asp) and owner names for specific properties (www.melissadata.com/lookups/propertyviewer.asp).

11. Search for the person using "people finder" sites on the Internet. Try more than one; results are different. Suggested sites are listed below under "Websites and Online Databases" below.

12. If you know a name but only an approximate age, try www.birthdatabase.com/ to find their exact date of birth. This can help narrow a search.

13. Search for their profile on social media sites, like Facebook, Instagram, dating sites, or other sites that fit their interests, such as music or art sites. The paid site Spokeo.com can search many of these sites at once.

14. Contact trade unions or professional associations to which the person may belong. If they are a member of a licensed occupation, find the licensing agency for their occupation at verifyprolicense.com.

15. Contact the US Military for information about a service member's whereabouts. Resources for the various services are listed at usmilitary.about.com/cs/locatorservices/a/millocate.htm .

16. If the person may be in detention for immigration issues, check ICE detentions at locator.ice.gov/odls/homePage.do.

17. If the person was ever on probation, contact the probation department in the city where that person was placed on probation.

18. Check the local jail inmate list, and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation inmate locator service. To locate an incarcerated person, visit the following websites:

a. California: www.cdcr.ca.gov/visitors/Inmate_Locator.html(916-445-6713) or www.vinelink.com/#/search

b. Federal: www.bop.gov/inmate_locator/index.jsp.

c. For resources on locating prisoners in other states, see websearch.about.com/od/dailywebsearchtips/qt/dnt0606.htm

d. Also see the San Joaquin Superior Court form Service of Documents

To Someone Who Is Incarcerated

19. Do a records search at the courthouse to see if any documents have been filed with a current address listed on the paperwork by the person you are trying to serve

20. Hire a private investigator or internet search service.

2. Websites and Online Databases

1. Telephone Directories and "People Search" Sites

These sites let you look up names, addresses, and phone numbers. If the person is listed, the information is provided on the results screen, without required payment. Most also include reverse directories, which let you search by phone number. Generally these sites offer limited information for free (landline phone number, address, age range, possible relatives). They then offer to sell you "full reports" which offer cell phone numbers, prior residences and phone numbers, names of relatives or neighbors, news articles, social media profiles, and the like. They often provide inconsistent results; try more than one; you may get some information for free. Also try nicknames, maiden names, alternate spellings, and other variations.

Here are a few to start with:

411.com
www.411.com
"Free details" may include phone number and address. Premium: whitepages.com

Whitepages.com
www.whitepages.com
Phone listings (landlines) for people and businesses, including reverse phone number search, neighbor search, and other tools. Premium: whitepages.com

Yellow Pages.com
www.yellowpages.com (for businesses)
www.yellowpages.com/whitepages (for people)

This site, which gets its information from a pay site (Intellius), also provides phone and address listings. It is not associated with Whitepages.com and can provide different or additional information. Premium: Intelius.

Zabasearch
www.zabasearch.com/
This site offers fairly minimal information for free: frequently a full address and phone number. Several links offer more detailed information. Premium: Intellius.

Peoplefinder.com
www.peoplefinder.com
This site also frequently has a full address and phone number. Clicking the "premium details" links at the right will often get you additional information, such as age, relatives, companies worked for, and previous cities of residence (although not street addresses or phone numbers). Premium: Intellius.

Pipl
www.pipl.com/
Full addresses and phone numbers are often available, although you may need to look carefully at the list of "places" to find the address. Former residences, age, relatives, and other information may also be listed. Pipl supports searching by name, username, phone number,

and email. “Sponsored links” take you to various pay-for-service sites but may provide much free info as well.

Spokeo
www.spokeo.com
Free searches will turn up current and prior residence locations, partial phone numbers, and general information about birth date, relatives, and more. For a modest fee, Spokeo provides a one-stop place to search 70+ social websites, including blogging, dating, music and video, location review sites like Yelp, and professional community sites. Useful features include the ability to search by username or email address as well as name, phone number, and physical address.

2. Public Records

These resources gather links to free public records databases, such as real property ownership, licensing agencies, and court and jail records. Some also offer paid links to pay services:

Search Systems publicrecords.searchsystems.net/

Public Records Free Directory publicrecords.onlinesearches.com/ Portico indorgs.virginia.edu/portico

BRB Publications www.brbpub.com/free-public-records

Black Book Online www.blackbookonline.info

3. Genealogy Resources

Genealogy sites collect and publish public records to help people search for their ancestors. Some of these have excellent resources for living people, as well. One particularly useful (and completely free) site is FamilyTreeNow (www.familytreenow.com). Search by name, then narrow to “Living Persons.” (“Death Records” can be helpful too, to determine if your person has passed away.) Click on all results that look like your person; they often have different information.

4. Social Sites

Any number of social networking sites can be useful in locating a missing person. If you are looking for a person with a strong interest in something, try specialty sites such as Café Mom, Dogster, DeviantArt, and the like. MySpace has a large independent music following.

Here are three social sites that may be particularly helpful:

Adoption Search & Reunion
adoption.com/reunion
Registry for birth parents and adoptees wishing to find each other, resources and information on issues facing people searching for birth families or biological children, and forums for help and advice.

Classmates.com - Find High School Friends, Plan Reunions
www.classmates.com/
Includes elementary schools and colleges as well as high schools. You must register to use the website, and some features, like viewing people's locations, reading bulletin board notes, and reviewing yearbooks, require a subscription.

Facebook
www.facebook.com
Hundreds of millions of people are listed on Facebook. Many share location information, friend lists, and other information that can help locate them.

FOR MORE RESEARCH: ONLINE GUIDES

Cyndi's List: Finding People
www.cyndislist.com/finding-people/
Lists many resources for finding people online. Cyndi's List is primarily a genealogy site, but this page lists resources for finding living people.

How to Find Anyone Online: 10 Free resources for finding people
www.lifewire.com/find-anyone-online-3482687
From Lifewire.com: free resources that can help you find people and businesses online.

FOR HELP

San Joaquin County Public Law Library
20 N. Sutter Street
Stockton, CA 95202
(209) 468-9968
https://sjclawlibrary.org
Monday-Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Services Provided: The San Joaquin County Public Law Library provides general information and basic assistance to self-represented litigants on a variety of civil legal issues, including assistance with responding to Probate Notes.

San Joaquin Superior Court Pro Per Clinic
180 E. Weber Ave. Ste 105
Stockton, CA 95202
MON, TUES, THURS, FRI – 8:00 am to 3:30 pm & WED – 8:00 am to 12:00 pm