

## § 8.4

## Skip Tracing

### *Getting Started*

Skip-tracing is the attempt to locate someone who is not at his last known home or business location. A skip can involve:

- *Someone avoiding a criminal charge*
- *Someone avoiding a civil lawsuit*
- *Someone avoiding a financial obligation*
- *A person who is not avoiding detection, but is being sought for informative purposes, such as notification of a death in the family, an inheritance, adoption information, etc.*
- *A witness to an event that is now the focus of a legal action*

#### **Signs of a Skip**

An investigator may suspect the person she seeks is avoiding detection if she encounters:

- *Several dead ends*
- *Addresses of relatives or friends*
- *Several different addresses*

#### **Skip Patterns and Similarities**

There are some patterns that an investigator should be aware of.

*The skip may not be intentional.*

Keep in mind that some skips are unintentional. The individual may simply have moved.

*Is it a financial skip or a criminal skip?*

If the skip is criminal, concentrate on local venues, such as family and friends. A criminal skip will rely on a close circle of support.

If your search is initially unsuccessful, you may need to broaden your criteria.

- *It sometimes helps to look for indications of the skip in the past instead of the present.*
- *Review pleadings and documents filed in court for overlooked sources, including court actions other than the current litigation.*
- *Look for served subpoenas or summons for other addresses. The person who served the summons may have information.*
- *Search for known relatives and acquaintances of the subject.*

**Sources for Skip Tracing**

Following are some starting points for skip tracing.

*Initial Sources (In-office):*

- Information (411)
- Telephone book (including online directories)
- Present and past employers
- Family and friends
- Utility companies (usually confidential)
- Internet sources, including general and location-specific searches

*Field Sources (Out-of-office):*

- Court files to check subpoenas for addresses
- Reverse and Cole Directories  
(These are books that provide an address based on phone numbers, as well as other information.)
- Neighbors
- Post Office forwarding addresses
- Vehicle registration and title
- Marriage records
- Divorce records
- Incorporation records (Secretary of State's office)
- Bankruptcy records
- Co-signers on loans
- Insurance agents
- Cemetery records (check for online availability)
- Reviewing previously gathered information for overlooked sources

