

Skip Tracing What Is It and How It Is Used by David Almeida

Skip tracing is a term that is used when talking about locating a person. The person on whom a skip trace is placed may have "skipped out" on an obligation; skip tracing is a means of gathering information and using it to determine where the individual now is.

A private investigator who is brought on to conduct a skip trace will ask for as much information as possible about the person who is missing. Some information will be about his or her name, his or her date of birth and age, a social security number if it is available, and last known addresses. Other information will be details that the searcher may deem important.

Information is collected from the person who has called the private investigator about skip tracing. Then that information is researched – a process that may suggest others who the private investigator may want to talk to about finding the individual.

While continuing to research possible witnesses, the private investigator will perform an extensive background check on the missing individual. With this background check, a private investigator can determine:

- whether or not the individual has used other social security numbers;
- whether or not the person who is the subject of a skip trace has changed his or her name or is using an alias;
- whether or not the person may have been declared dead;
- whether or not the individual has acquired property or otherwise moved assets;
- whether or not the subject of the skip trace has taken a new job;
- whether or not the individual may have new roommates or may be staying with others; and
- possible vehicle registrations, among other things.

This information, combined with leads from interviews can help to give the private investigator a better sense of whom he should be speaking with in order to locate the individual.

But what circumstances exist that may call for skip tracing? There are a number of them.

One reason is that creditors may be trying to locate an individual who has defaulted on making loan payments but who cannot be located – perhaps because he or she has moved. Similarly, a skip trace may be performed when a creditor suspects that someone has stolen the identities of a number of its debtors.

Those who skip out on making child support or alimony payments may also be the target of a skip trace to determine their whereabouts. Likewise, skip tracing may be used when a business has been defrauded in order to identify where a former employee guilty of embezzlement had gone after relocating in an attempt to find lost assets.

In each of these cases, skip tracing can be used to find individuals who seem to have disappeared – including those who have taken a number of steps to ensure that they won't be easily found. A skip trace is far more than a simple search for someone; it's a process best left to a professional such as a private investigator who has experience sorting through evidence and personal data; someone with the tools and experience needed to locate someone who has skipped.

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