# Impact Analysis

## Improvements to the Permanency Hearing Report

**Brief Description of Current Function/Process:**

A Permanency Hearing Report (PHR) is statutorily required to be filed with the Family Court and mailed to parties of interest fourteen days prior to each permanency hearing date certain. The PHR provides the court with the information needed for it to make decisions regarding the safety and well-being of the child, the family's progress, the plan for achieving timely permanency for the child, and the reasonable efforts to finalize that plan.

A PHR can be prepared in CONNECTIONS for any child who is abused, neglected, voluntarily placed or completely freed for adoption and who has a Program Choice of Placement or Non-LDSS Custody. A notice must be provided to the required parties and a statement submitted to the court, listing those who received the notice and the report. The current PHR is a word template that has the capacity to draw some information from other parts of CONNECTIONS. The information entered onto the template cannot be aggregated or re-used. The current template displays all questions, including those that do not pertain to the child, making the "on line" version and report long and difficult to read. Review of a PHR must be accomplished "off line," through hard or electronic copies which may result in versioning confusion or mis-match between what is filed with the court and stored in CONNECTIONS. Based on user input, OCFS has integrated the PHR into the CONNECTIONS application, providing the ability to introduce several ease of use features.

**What Remains the Same**?

- All statutory and regulatory requirements associated with date certain timeframes. For details, see 08-OCFS-ADM-01 Changes associated with CONNECTIONS Build 18-9 Health, Education and Permanency Hearing Report Modules.

- Much of the content of the PHR, with the exception of minor wording changes and updates for new statutory requirements (e.g., parents who are incarcerated or in rehab).

- Current models of practice related to contributors to the PHR, including the ability of multiple workers with an assigned role in the stage to contribute to a PHR.

- The ability of any worker with a role in a stage to launch, complete and finalize the PHR.

- The ability to e-mail the PHR to oneself or another person, including the ability in NYC to upload to Legal Tracking System (LTS).

**What is New or Changing**?

General Features:

- New data entry windows within CONNECTIONS will replace the template; the new windows will closely mirror the printed report layout.

- Narratives and other data inputted into the new windows will be available for reuse in subsequent PHRs (new using).

- A new launch option: **Launch PHR - New Using** will enable pre-filling information from a previous PHR that was produced using the new windows.

- When responding to an individual mapped question, caseworkers will be able to retrieve data from a source other than the pre-fill option they selected when launching the PHR. For example, if a caseworker selected the **Launch PHR - New Using** option at PHR launch, he/she may use information from an Approved FASP to respond to a specific PHR question, if the information from that source is more up-to-date or useful.

- It will no longer be necessary to repeatedly enter Court Information, Docket Information and Adoption Checklist data for each PHR. This information will be stored in windows that are not tied to a specific PHR and will be available for updating at any time. The most current information from these windows will be uploaded to each new PHR.

- One or more final PHRs that include the child may be opened for viewing at a time along with an in-process/pending PHR.

<u>Features to streamline the report and make it more relevant</u>:

- The new PHR will only present age- and PPG-appropriate questions.

- The new PHR will only present/display certain questions based on the response to a previous question. For example, the question pertaining to a child's AWOL status will be presented only if the caseworker indicates that the child is AWOL.

- All data brought into the PHR from a pre-fill source will be presented as a statement; eliminating any predecessor questions.

- The current report types – Single (SI) and Multiple (MU) will be replaced with Multiple Child (MC), Individual Child (IC) and Freed Child (FC) to further reduce questions to only those appropriate to the child(ren)/case circumstances.

<u>Ease of Use Tools</u>:
Other features of the new PHR will include the ability to:

- Write sticky notes. The comments entered on sticky notes may be copied/pasted into the PHR proper. This feature will be available on each long narrative section until the PHR is finalized; after which they will disappear.

- Collapse sub-sections on the window to reduce the need for scrolling.

- Toggle between a short or long version of a question, again to reduce scrolling.

- Open a long narrative field in full screen mode with a text editor.

- Print the entire report or just one section.

Review and Finalization:

- The new PHR will be subject to submission edits and can only be marked Final if all required components are completed.
- A Check PHR Detail window will list any missing components on a single window.
- Caseworkers will be able to submit a PHR for review to their supervisor or other CONNECTIONS user, inside or outside their organization. Reviewers will access the actual windows in browse mode; reviewers will use sticky notes to provide comments.
- The local district will have the option to include space for an attorney signature on the Verification Page.

**Implications/Considerations**

Decision points for local districts/voluntary agencies:

- Whether to add space for an additional signature on the Verification Page.
- Determine whether the Submit for Review process will replace current "off line" review procedures. If DSS attorneys will review the draft PHR on-line, determine whether the attorneys will require access to CONNECTIONS and training. OCFS will provide business process analysis support to assist districts make these determinations.

Decision points for caseworkers:

- Data entered onto the new PHR windows will not "write back" to any other CONNECTIONS modules (e.g., Health, Education). To avoid duplicate data entry, caseworkers should update these modules before launching the PHR and then transfer the data into the PHR via pre-fill functions.
- Determine if information that resides outside of the PHR (e.g., Court Information, Docket Information and Adoption Checklist) should be updated.
- The contact summary provides an automated compilation of caseworker contacts, drawn from progress note data. This data may not be modified within the PHR. Caseworkers should update progress notes before launching the PHR.
- Determine the best pre-fill option for the current PHR including any PHR created with the new windows (for the same child).
- Determine, at the question level, which is the best source of data for the response and use that source if it is more current than the pre-fill source selected at PHR launch.
- As with the current template PHR, decide what health information to include or edit out (Reproductive Health, HIV, and Substance Abuse).

**Recommendations**

- Local district/voluntary agency administrators should be alert to OCFS/CONNECTIONS communications and announcements concerning the new PHR functionality **and share that information with their staff.** Upcoming RIST meetings will address the new PHR.

- Local district/voluntary agency administrators should conduct business process reviews of the current PHR review process and determine whether the district/agency will use the new Submit for Review (on-line) process. District/agencies should work with attorneys representing the district evaluate whether they will require system access that they do not currently have and/or whether they will require basic CONNECTIONS training.

- Staff who play a part in the launch, preparation, review or finalization of Permanency Hearing Reports should attend training provided by the Professional Development Program, SUNY. Training for this functionality will be instructor-led, either in a classroom setting or on users' desktops, using iLinc. Tasks required to enable staff to participate in the training include:
    - Staff Development Coordinators/Training Coordinators will need to enter staff in STARS.
    - An iLinc account is required for iLinc courses. (Note: ILinc accounts are automatically created when a staff person is registered for an iLinc class and does not already have an account.)
    - Staff who have not taken an iLinc class before are required to attend an "Introduction to iLinc" course to learn how the on-line classroom works.
    - iLinc courses require download of the iLinc software to your computer and the use of a headset with a microphone.

- Staff should be familiar with the resources available to them to support their use of the new PHR windows: These will include:
    - On-Line Help (windows-based help)
    - How Do I documents
    - User Guide
    - Tip Sheet

  Note: Apart from windows-based help, these resources will be available on the Help/Training link on the main CONNECTIONS window.

- Staff will be able to practice using the new functionality using
    - The Training Database, if the local district/voluntary agency has previously opted to request special log-on IDs.
    - A new web-based tool that will use simulations to guide staff through the new windows.

- Local district/voluntary agency administrators should work with OCFS regional implementation staff to arrange on-site support for their staff in the weeks that follow the release of the new windows. These staff will also be available to provide presentations to administrators/supervisory staff in advance of implementation.