NYS Office of Children and Family Services
on the **road** to
transforming the Child Welfare Information System

..CONNECTIONS NEWS..
for the week of September 19 - 26, 2008

Developing a more caseworker centric system
_____

CONNECTIONS Intranet site: http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/
_____

_____

"Info to Know" for Caseworkers

UPDATED *Information on the Q3-08 Quarterly Improvement Plan (CONNECTIONS Build 18.10)*

Please note that sections of this piece have been updated since last week and are identified as such.

On October 10, 2008, OCFS will implement the third Quarterly Improvement Plan of this year, Q3-08. Q3-08 will include important enhancements to the CONNECTIONS

application that support programmatic changes, as well as several system improvements. Two of the major programmatic changes included in Q3-08 are:

❖ a redesigned Safety Assessment tool, which is the result of extensive work with a statewide team of users who partnered with the National Resource Center for Child Protective Services; and

❖ improved wording of risk factors in the Risk Assessment Profile to clarify the circumstances that contribute to risk of future abuse/maltreatment.

These enhancements were presented in the August 27th teleconference entitled: <u>Changes to Safety and Risk Assessment to Reduce Repeat Maltreatment</u>.

Q3-08 also includes system support for districts participating in the Family Assessment Response initiative. The other enhancements included in Q3-08 are recommendations from the Child Welfare System Transformation Business Team. These recommended enhancements are based on a collaborative effort on the part of OCFS, local district and voluntary agency casework and supervisory staff.

Other System Enhancements

- Progress Note font choice. There will now be a choice, in Print Preview mode, of displaying and printing Progress Notes in the current default (8pt) or larger (12pt) fonts
- The Unit Approver will now be allowed to locally maintain To Do's
- In Progress notes, once a family participant has been selected, "Focus" will be system pre-filled. This supports compliance with required casework contacts for children in foster care. If a family member is a participant but is not to be considered the 'focus', the caseworker can deselect the checkmark in the "Focus" checkbox for that individual family participant

FAD Changes

- Criminal History Record Checks
  - Add Fingerprint Results value of Mandatory Disqualifier to comply with federal Adam Walsh Child Protection Act of 2006 (will be in place for use beginning 10/1/08)
- Revised Fingerprint Outputs to conform to the Mandatory Disqualifier changes
  - Notice (English and Spanish)
  - Denial/Revocation letter (English and Spanish)

Family Assessment Response Initiative

The Q3-08 Build will contain system support for the Family Assessment Response initiative. This is a non-adversarial approach to the traditional investigative response in select CPS report scenarios. No determination of the SCR report is made. Chapter 452 of the Laws of 2007 authorized LDSSs, other than in New York City, to apply to the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to use a family assessment and services approach for a subset of families that are reported to the SCR for child maltreatment. Six applications were received and approved. The participating counties are: Westchester, Orange, Onondaga, Tompkins, Chautauqua and Erie.

CONNECTIONS' system support allows participating districts to identify CPS Investigations for Family Assessment Response and open a Family Services Intake

(FSI) and Services Stage (FAM) to document case activity. The FAM stage includes the following: progress notes, safety assessment, preventive risk assessment and education. Participating districts have their own Job Aid to assist them. Non-participating districts and voluntary agencies will receive an Informational Memorandum with further information about this initiative.

Preview
The Preview environment will be available two weeks prior to the implementation of Q3-08 - beginning roughly September 26th. Preview is a 'sandbox' (like a demo environment) where you can see and work with the Q3-08 enhancements that will be implemented on October 10th. The Preview environment uses a 'snapshot', a point in time picture, of the production (a 'point in time' picture), so you will see your actual stages when you log-in to Preview but any changes that you make in Preview to your stages/cases will not be reflected in Production, as Preview and Production are two separate environments, so that when you leave the Preview environment and log-in to CONNECTIONS, any changes that you made will not be seen in the application.

Preview Requests
Requests to try the Preview environment can be made by either the Director of Services or the Implementation Coordinator of your agency. Remember to list the name and NT IDs of those individuals that you designate in and e-mail to: Donna.Cramer@ocfs.state.ny.us.

UPDATE - Q3-08 Highlights Document
The *Q3-08 Highlights* document presents a high-level overview of programmatic and application modifications and enhancements. It is one in a series of tools that define and describe in detail the system changes and enhancements that will be included in this *Quarterly Improvement Plan*. The Highlights were e-mailed to key staff (CONNECTIONS Implementation, Security, Back-up Security Coordinators, Resource Users, Directors of Programs/Services, and other key staff) in local districts and voluntary agencies on Tuesday, September 16th. The *Q3-08 Highlights* have also been posted to the CONNECTIONS intranet site: http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/imp/build18/build%2018.10%20Q3_08_Highlights_FINAL_9_15_08%20-v3.pdf

UPDATE - Q3-08 Quarterly Improvement Plan Impact Analysis - *Safety Assessment, Risk Assessment Profile, FAD and Other System Changes*
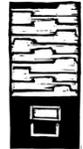The Q3-08 Quarterly Improvement Plan Impact Analysis - *Safety Assessment, Risk Assessment Profile, FAD and Other System Changes* will be emailed to local district and voluntary agency CONNECTIONS Implementation, Security and Back-up Security Coordinators, Directors of Service, Resource Users and other key staff on Tuesday, September 23rd. The Impact Analysis will also be posted to the CONNECTIONS Intranet website on both the Home and Implementation pages.

This document is intended for local management staff to provide an overview of the key elements in the upcoming Quarterly Improvement Plan, and outlines the anticipated impacts on local practice and procedure, with suggested actions the local district or voluntary agency might want to consider in implementing these improvements.

Additional Q3-08 Tools

Here is a list of other tools to aid in implementing the Q3-08 system improvements which will be described in future editions of CONNECTIONS NEWS.

- An update to online HELP
- An Impact Analysis document
- A Job Aid
- A CBT refresher on Risk and Safety Assessments
- An updated Safety/Risk Field Guide
- Informational Letter about the Family Assessment Response Initiative

COMPLETED - The Records Retention Purge Program

**Please note: ONLY local districts have to ability to perform this function.

The Records Retention Purge Program ran as scheduled and has completed the run. This program purged cases/stages listed in the **June 6, 2008** "To Be Expunged" report.

The current "To Be Expunged" report is available to designated Records Retention Report recipients. This report identifies records that are scheduled to be expunged in the *next* Records Retention run (scheduled in 90 days). We advise you to begin to work with the current "To Be Expunged" report as soon as it is received, because staff with appropriate business functions can make data corrections in cases that could impact the retention period for indicated reports (i.e., via the Local Data Maintenance function).

If you have questions about the Records Retention Program, or CPS Local Data Maintenance, please refer to the *CONNECTIONS System Build 15/15.1 CPS: Data Maintenance Job Aid* (dated 7/30/02). The Job Aid can be accessed through the CONNECTIONS intranet website:
http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/jobaides/FINAL%20REV_CPS_DATA_MAINT_Job_%20Aid.pdf, or via the following path: (CONNECTIONS intranet website > Step-by-Step/Job Aids/Tips > Archive Page > Build 15 > CONNECTIONS System Build 15/15.1 CPS: Data Maintenance Job Aid (dated 7/30/02).

There is also a Records Retention Tip Sheet that is posted to the CONNECTIONS intranet site on the Step-by-Step/Job Aids/Tips page: http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/jobaides/Tip%20sheets/Records%20Retention%20Tip%20Sheet_V3_08_08.pdf

AFCARS Info - Data on AFCARS and Casework Contacts for Children in Care - End of September Deadline

Please note that this piece was included in the last edition of the CONNECTIONS NEWS.

Timeframes for reporting AFCARS data to the federal government are coming due! In order to meet these timeframes, data will be extracted from the CONNECTIONS system at the end of September. It is critical that local district and voluntary agency staff update the AFCARS information for children in care *by September 30*[th,] so that the federal report contains accurate information.

The AFCARS submission is based on a served population. Information needs to be accurate for children in care on the last day of the period, or served during the 6-month period that began 4/1/08.

Correct and up-to-date entry of AFCARS information is a federal legal requirement, emphasizes the diligent support that local district and voluntary agencies provide to children and families within New York State, and deters the penalties for non-compliance.

AFCARS information includes the following:
AFCARS information from Placement Information Tab and Removal Information Tab
Diagnosis on Clinical Appointment window
For CCR cases-AFCARS Adoption Information window accessed from the Adoption Finalization window

More help on navigation for entering AFCARS can be found in the AFCARS job aid entitled: CONNECTIONS System Build 18.9.6 Job Aid Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) Functionality for Foster Care Workers, Caseworkers, Case Planners and Case Managers:
http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/jobaides/JA%20AFCARS%20Job%20Aid%20v1%200%203_3_08.pdf

The following reports are also available to identify which children do not currently have diagnosis information recorded in the Clinical Appointment tab that meets the qualifications of AFCARS information.
http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/datawarehouse/dwreports.asp

For more information related to these activities please contact your CONNECTIONS Regional Implementation Specialist.

 NEW Info from the OCFS Data Warehouse - Upgraded to Internet Explorer 7 Read This!

If your agency was just upgraded to Internet Explorer 7 you may need to make minor changes to log-in to the Data Warehouse. A new document to help troubleshoot when using Internet Explorer 7 has been posted to the OCFS Data Warehouse page of the CONNECTIONS Intranet. The document is entitled, *Internet Explorer 7 Troubleshooting for OCFS Data Warehouse Users* and can be directly accessed by clicking on the following link:
http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/datawarehouse/IE7%20Troubleshooting%20for%20OCFS%20DW%20Users.pdf

REVISED Did You Know… on Visitation Plans

Please note that this piece was included in the last edition of the CONNECTIONS NEWS.

Caseworkers report issues when updating Visitation Plans brought forward from the previous FASP. 'Did You Know' that it is not necessary to create a new Visitation Plan in CONNECTIONS in order to change the plan brought forward from the previous FASP? For example, if the visitations are increasing from bi-weekly to weekly, the change can be made in the active Visitation Plan. To do this, access the visiting plan tab (from the Visiting Plan node in the FASP) and highlight the appropriate row on the grid. The information from that plan will populate the data values. You can make the necessary changes and save the updated plan. This will result in the updated plan going forward. It is important to avoid creating a duplicate plan, because creating a new plan and having both plans "active" implies that both plans are occurring and will result in multiple plans displaying on your FASP print out.

Note: You can use the visitation plan that is in the current FASP or if the current FASP has been approved and you want to change the visiting plan, you will need to launch the next FASP due, if available for launch, or launch a Plan Amendment if the next FASP is not yet available.

General "Info to Know"

General Information System Message (GIS)
#08-009 – PINS Permanency Hearings (CCRS Legal) not posting to BICS
Date: 9/15/08

Please note: This piece pertains to local districts only.

The purpose of this message is to advise local districts of an issue regarding PINS permanency hearings (CCRS legal activities) not updating BICS appropriately causing PINS children's payments to be incorrectly flagged as Non-Reimbursable.

Programming staff are working to resolve this issue. Districts are advised that they should review all PINS children to see if they are appearing on the NR report. If PINS children are being flagged as NR for legal reasons, please contact OCFS-IT Operations staff to review the legal history.
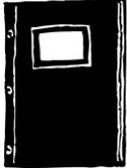
If CCRS legal entries are complete and appropriate, districts will be advised to perform an accounts adjustment for the payments inappropriately flagged as NR.

Districts can access the Services Payment Processing Sun-System Manual (chapter 7) for instructions on performing accounts adjustments.
http://otda.state.nyenet/bfdm/finance/docs/Service_Manual.pdf

Questions regarding this message should be directed to OCFS-IT Customer Support at 1-800-342-3727. GIS messages are available in the Public Folders:
All Public Folders/dfa.state.ny.us/OCFS/TSU/ ***Services systems Reference Documents/ GIS (system change notices)

 The Report Icon in CONNECTIONS and the Management Report Update Form

---

**Please note: This piece pertains to local districts only.

The Management Report Update form is the document that you should use to request to receive reports within the CONNECTIONS application. It should be noted that the request should come from the Director of Services (or designee). Please note that these reports are different than the ones that are generated from the OCFS Data Warehouse. The following are the reports that can be requested:

Monthly OCI Reports:

- OCI Monthly Management Report
- OCI Monthly Management Summary Report

Records Retention Reports

- To Be Expunged Report
- Expungement Report

o Summary of Characteristics
o WMS Discrepancy Report

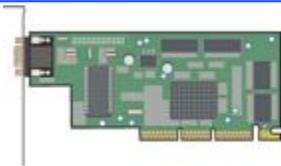The Management Report Update form can be found on the CONNECTIONS Intranet on the Forms page:

http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/forms/Management%20Report%20Request%20Form4.pdf

NEW *Postings to the CONNECTIONS Intranet*

The following document(s) were recently posted to the CONNECTIONS intranet website:

- The CONNECTIONS NEWS
- Q3-08 Improvement Plan – Highlights and Implementation Information (CONNECTIONS Build 18.10)
- http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/imp/build18/build%2018.10%20Q3_08_Highlights_FINAL_9_15_08%20-v3.pdf
- Internet Explorer 7 Troubleshooting for OCFS Data Warehouse Users document http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/datawarehouse/IE7%20Troubleshooting%20for%20OCFS%20DW%20Users.pdf

Weekly System Maintenance

Due to regularly scheduled system maintenance, the CONNECTIONS application will not be available on…

- **Wednesday, 9/24/08** from 5:00 AM – 7:00 AM
- **Friday, 9/26/08** from 5:00 AM – 7:00 AM

**Office of
Children & Family
Services**
Gladys Carrión, Esq.
Commissioner