



New York State
Office of
Children & Family
Services

www.ocfs.state.ny.us

David A. Paterson
Governor

Gladys Carrión, Esq.
Commissioner

Capital View Office Park
52 Washington Street
Rensselaer, NY 12144

April 29, 2009

Dear Commissioner:

As you are aware, the federal Child and Family Services Act of 2006 mandates specific casework contact requirements for children in foster care. In passing the Act, Congress noted that in Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) a strong correlation was found between frequent caseworker visits with foster children and positive outcomes for these children, such as timely permanency and other indicators of child well being. When the percentage of foster children visited each month does not meet the federal standard (and this standard increases annually until 90% is reached in 2011), the state (and the district) is penalized with a resulting loss of Title IV-B funds.

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) is assisting social service districts and voluntary agencies improve their tracking of visits with foster children to meet the requirements of the Federal Act by addressing casework contact related practice and documentation standards, provide to data warehouse users a report run twice monthly listing children without a completed casework contact, assess training and technical assistance needs and respond to those needs and by offering social service districts and voluntary agencies the opportunity to participate in a technology upgrade project.

The project will provide laptops to caseworkers responsible for completing field visits to children in foster care. OCFS has learned in its three years of conducting Child Protective related Portable Information Technology Demonstration Projects that there has been productivity increases for the volume of progress note entries, as well as an increase in the number of safety assessments completed within seven days. It is believed the use of mobile technology for casework contacts will realize very similar productivity benefits for a caseworker's ability to make timely casework contacts with foster children and the timely entry of progress notes documenting such contacts.

During the coming months, OCFS regional office staff will be reviewing case records and meeting with key staff from your district to develop a plan of action and assist you to achieve successful casework contact outcomes, as those are measured by federal and state standards.

Finally, OCFS staff will work with you to develop and/or update training curriculum and materials as well as other resources to aid workers and reinforce the importance of completing and documenting casework contacts.



An Equal Opportunity Employer

OCFS has determined that XXXX County Department of Social Services will be allocated YY laptops. This allocation provides one laptop for every twelve (recommended caseload standard) children placed directly in district foster boarding homes. The allocation is based on June 2008 data.

Local districts that wish to participate in this project should respond to this letter in accordance with the instructions that are contained in Attachment 1. In reviewing the attachment please note:

1. The laptop PCs that are deployed through this project will replace desktops one-for-one. OCFS will arrange with local district staff to pick up the desktops when the laptops are delivered; and
2. The laptops will also contain built-in wireless cards that will enable connections to the state network wherever a Wireless LAN (WLAN or WiFi) is available. OCFS recommends that participating local districts procure cellular broadband access (e.g., Verizon, AT&T or Sprint data networks) broadband wireless cards and services to enable wireless access where a WLAN is not available. Experience in the Portable Demonstration projects indicate that the potential for the laptops to assist caseworkers is significantly affected by whether broadband cellular service is available.

Local districts that wish to participate should respond no later than June 1, 2009 to:

William E. Travis, Jr., Deputy Commissioner,
OCFS Division of Information Technology
Ten Eyck Building
52 Washington Street
Rensselaer, NY 12144

Attachment 1 specifies the required contents of letters requesting participation, and the criteria OCFS will use to evaluate local district responses. Local district staff should review this material carefully before drafting a response to this letter.

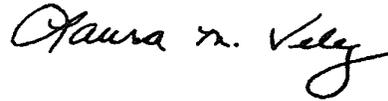
General questions concerning the project may be addressed to Jack Nabozny, Operations and Implementation, Jack.Nabozny@ocfs.state.ny.us. Questions concerning the technology or installation may be addressed to Dave Kislowksi, Dave.Kislowksi@ocfs.state.ny.us.

We look forward to the opportunity to work with your local district on this important initiative to meet federal and state requirements for making and documenting casework contacts for children placed in foster care.

Sincerely,



William E. Travis, Jr.
Deputy Commissioner
Information Technology



Laura Velez
Deputy Commissioner
Child Welfare and Community Services

cc: William Gettman
Jack Nabozny
Dave Kislowski
Regional Directors