The Intake Checklist, Foster Home Identification, and Foster Care Notifications Windows in CONNECTIONS

Quick Start Guide

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
ROCKEFELLER COLLEGE UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY State University of New York

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The Intake Checklist, Foster Home Identification, and Foster Care Notifications Windows in CONNECTIONS

Introduction

This guide provides an overview of the *Intake Checklist*, *Foster Home Identification*, and *Foster Care Notification* windows in CONNECTIONS. The *Intake Checklist* window will be added to the Child Protective Services (CPS) Intake (INT) stage and will display a series of questions that the Statewide Central Register (SCR) staff must ask callers when recording a report. The worker must record a response to each question before the intake can be assigned. The only exceptions will be Information & Referral and Special Requests.

Once the CPS intake is saved and assigned, some questions and responses will be available for viewing and printing as part of the Intake Report/Individual Report of Involvement—known as the Intake/IRI Report. Investigation (INV) and Family Assessment Response (FAR) workers that do not have the View Reporter Source Business Function will be unable to view comments associated to alternate source contact information. The *Intake Checklist* window will also be used to notify workers/districts of the existence of a report that involves a foster parent. In addition, alerts will be expanded to persons in common in any open Family Services Intake (FSI) stage or Family Services Stage (FSS) not within the same case.

Please be aware that any visible identifying data in this guide is fictitious and used for training purposes only.

16-OCFS-ADM-13: Requirements Related to CPS Reports Involving Foster Parents

The purpose of this Administrative Directive (ADM) is to remind districts and voluntary agencies of existing regulatory and policy requirements relating to reports of suspected child abuse or maltreatment involving certified or approved foster parents.

When a certified or approved foster parent is the subject of a report of suspected child abuse or maltreatment involving a foster child, there are several agencies that have an interest in the report and the safety of the foster child(ren) in the foster home. These agencies include the following:

- the district that is conducting the CPS investigation
- the district with legal custody of the foster child(ren) named in the CPS report
- the district or voluntary agency that certified or approved the foster home

Each agency has its own legal duties and responsibilities to address and support the safety and well-being of the foster child(ren) in the foster home. They must execute those duties and responsibilities as set forth in applicable statutes, regulations, and policies.

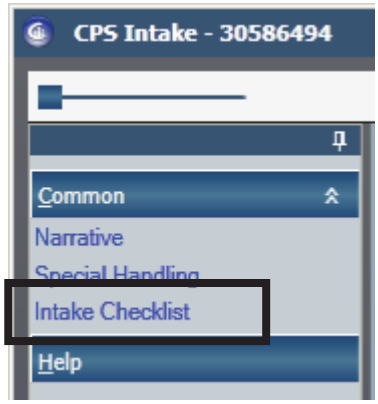
16-OCFS-AMD-13 also addresses other current regulatory and policy requirements that assist in the prevention of abuse or maltreatment of foster children in such placements. The requirements reflected in this ADM are intended to support coordination and cooperation among the districts and voluntary agencies administering foster care and child protective services programs with the goal of enhancing the safety and well-being of foster children placed in certified or approved foster homes.

The Intake Checklist Window

The new *Intake Checklist* window will display a series of questions that Statewide Central Register (SCR) staff must ask callers when they take a report. These questions must be answered for all CPS Intake (INT) stages, with the exception of Information & Referral and Special Requests. The window will be available in an Additional Information (INT ADD) stage, but will not be required. SCR workers will access the *Intake Checklist* window through the **NAVIGATION PANE** of the *CPS Intake* window. Once the INT stage is saved and assigned, the information recorded in the *Intake Checklist* window will be available for all INV and FAR stages for viewing and printing as part of the Review Intake and Intake/IRI reports.

In addition to helping the SCR with the entry of answers to these questions, the *Intake Checklist* window will be used to drive a process to notify workers/districts of the existence of an Intake Report that involves a foster parent. When the response to "Are there any Foster Parents in the home" is "Yes," or when the INT stage has a sub-classification of "Foster Care," notifications will be created upon saving and assigning the INT stage. For more information, refer to "The Foster Care Notifications Window" section on page 7.

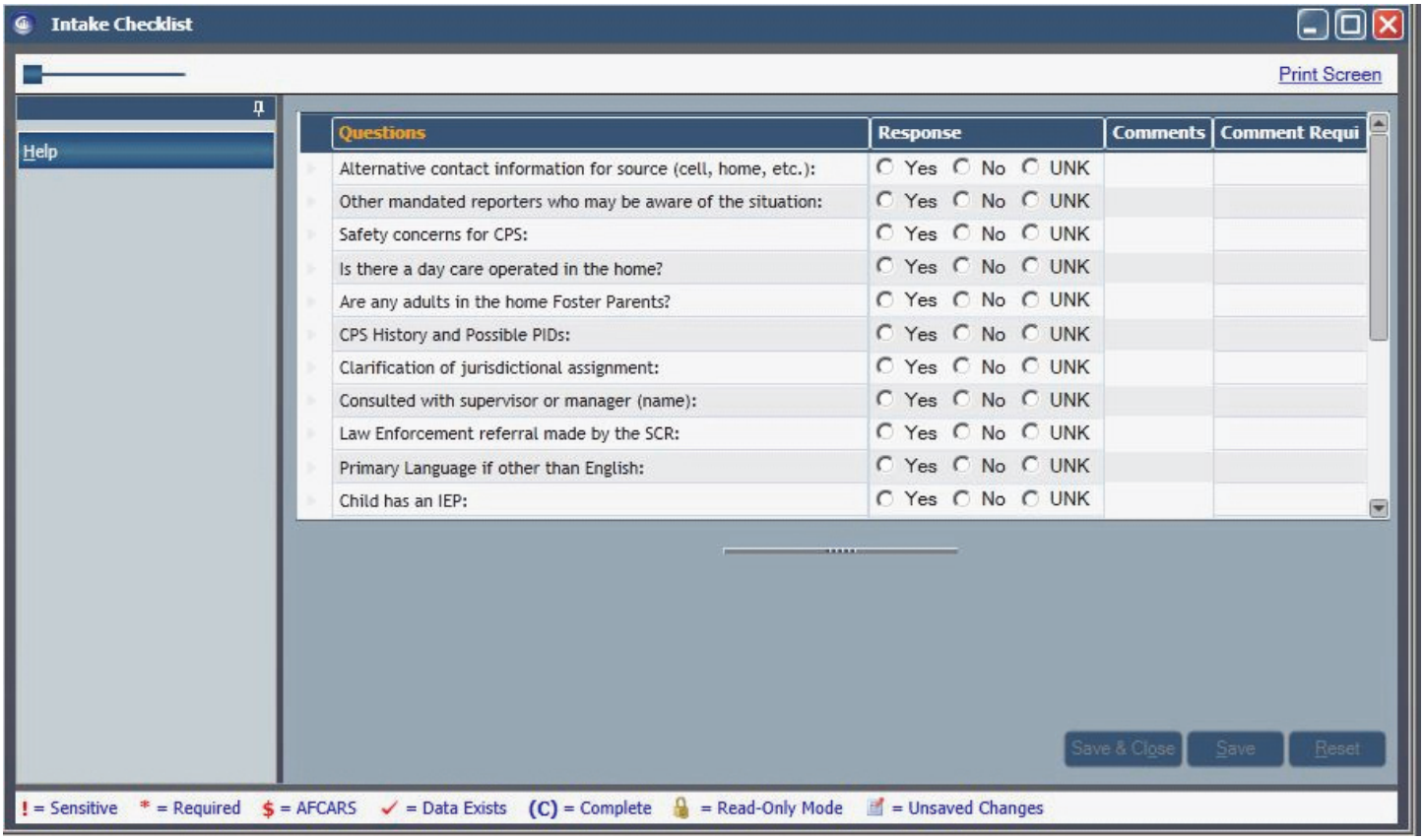
Accessing the Intake Checklist Window from the My Workload Tab



1 On the **My Workload** tab, select the appropriate INV or FAR stage.
*The **Stage Actions** section of the **NAVIGATION PANE** displays.*

2 Click the **Review Intake** link in the **NAVIGATION PANE**.
The CPS Intake window displays.

3 Click the **Intake Checklist** link in the **NAVIGATION PANE**.
The Intake Checklist window displays.



Remember, to view alternate contact information for source, INV and FAR workers need the View Reporter Source Business Function.

Accessing Reports with Intake Checklist Actions and Responses

1 On the **My Workload** tab, select the appropriate INV or FAR stage.
*The **Outputs** section of the **NAVIGATION PANE** displays.*

2 Click the **Intake/IRI Report** link in the **NAVIGATION PANE**.
The following message displays: "The report has been launched. Check Reports tab."

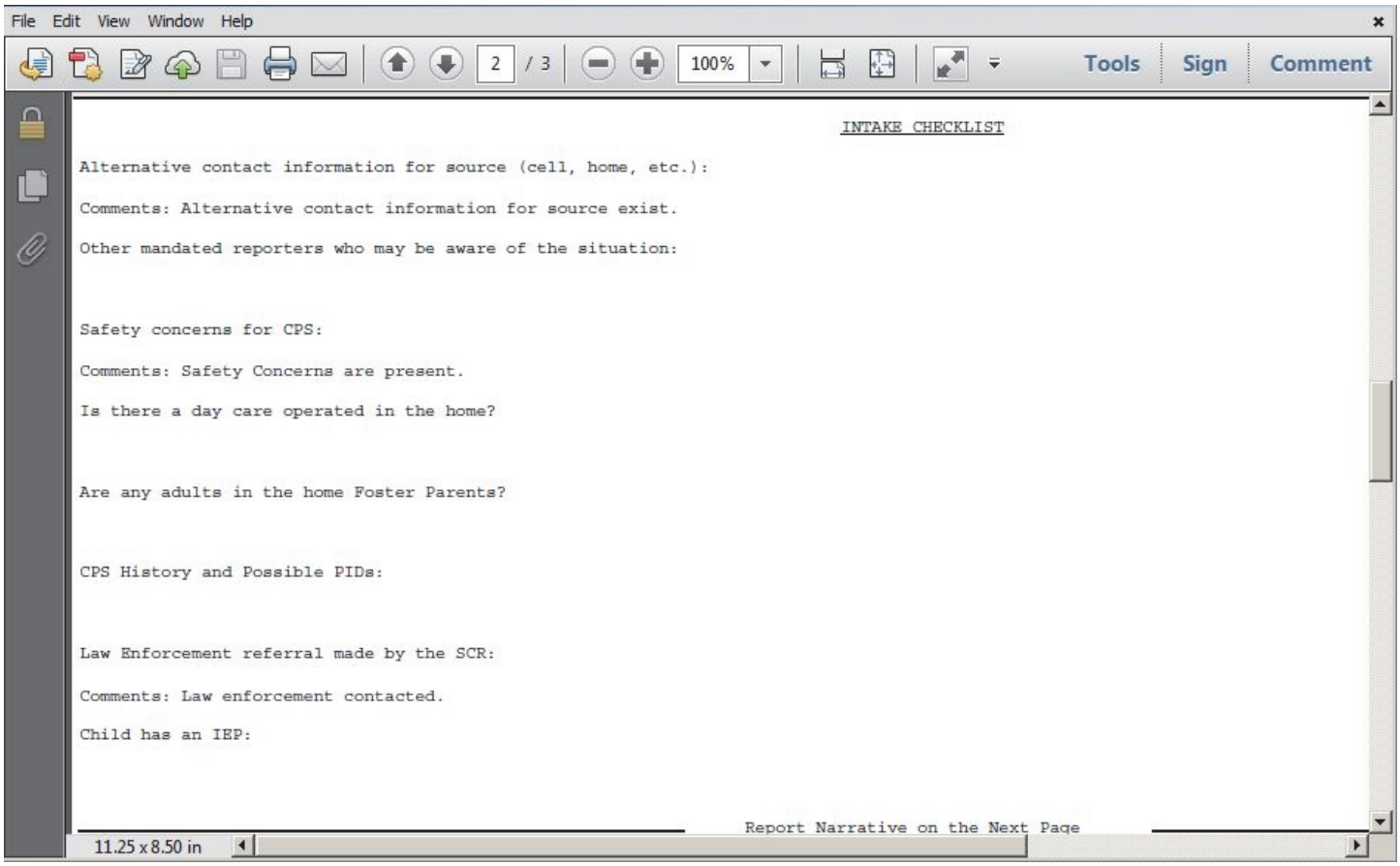
3 Click the **OK** button.

4 Click the **Reports** tab and verify that the report status is "Done." If the status is "Pending," click the **refresh list** link until the status is "Done."

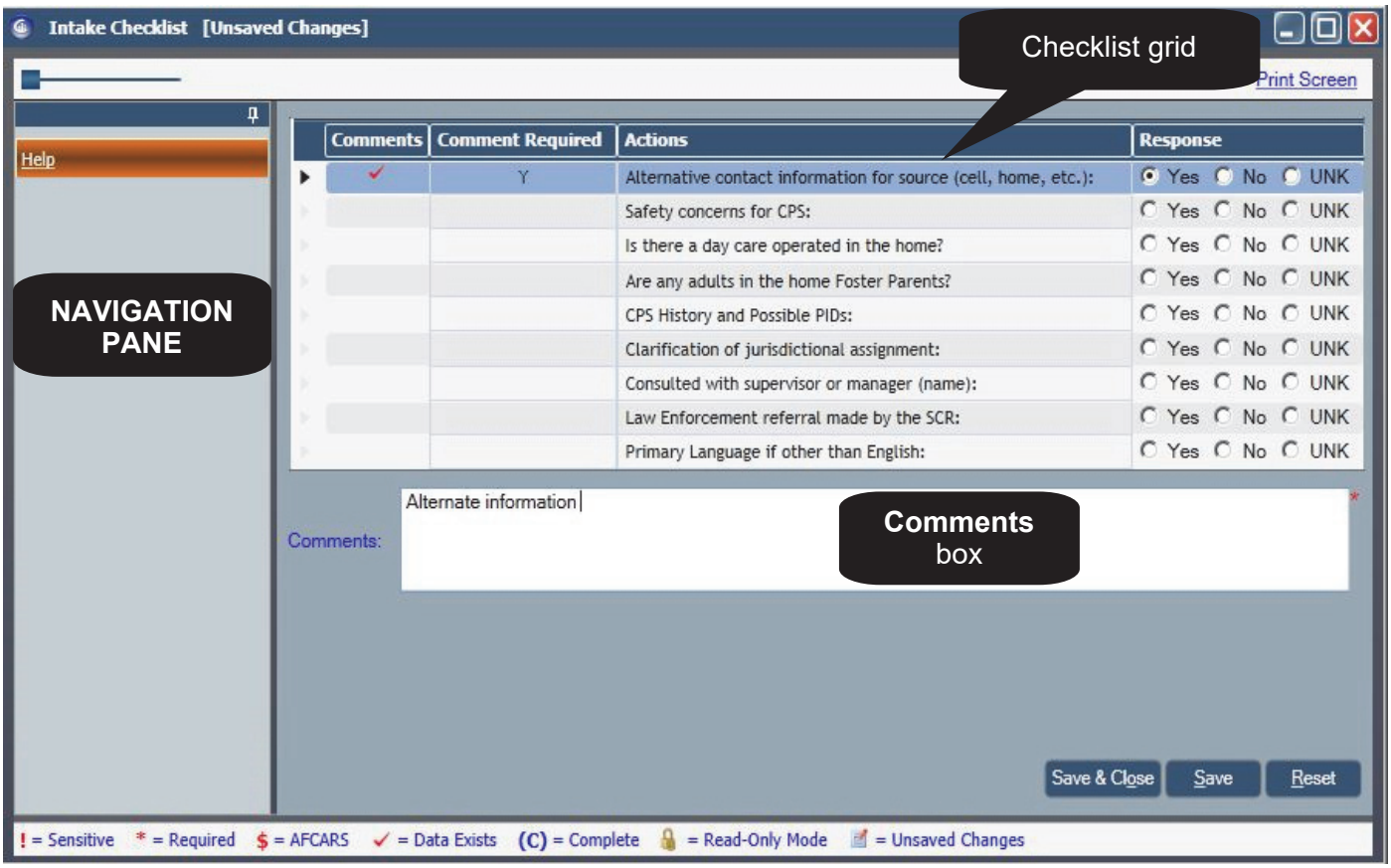
5 Select the Intake - IRI Report from the list.

6 Click the **Open Report** link in the **NAVIGATION PANE.**

7 Scroll down the report to view the **Intake Checklist** section, as seen in the image below.



Exploring the Window



The NAVIGATION PANE Link

The **NAVIGATION PANE** will display the **Help** link.

The Checklist Grid

The checklist grid will display a series of actions for which the SCR worker must select a radio button response of **Yes**, **No**, or **UNK** (Unknown). Some questions will require a comment when the **Yes** radio button is selected. For such questions, a "Y" will display in the **Comment Required** column and a red checkmark will display in the **Comments** column once comments have been saved.

Appendix B lists the questions that display in the checklist grid and whether comments are required or optional for a "Yes" response. It also indicates whether the action is included in the Intake Report.

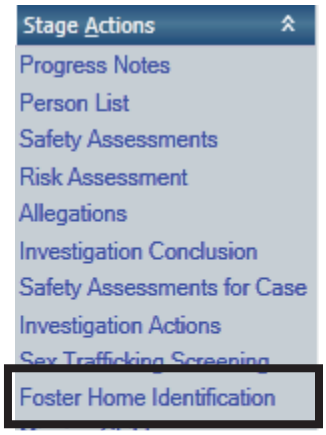
The Comments Field

When the **Yes** radio button is selected, a **Comments** field will display below the grid. The SCR worker will use this field to record comments regarding the associated action.

The Foster Home Identification Window

The new *Foster Home Identification* window will help INV and FAR stage workers with the foster home notification process in CONNECTIONS by allowing them to:

- override the entry on the *Intake Checklist* window that stated there were foster parents in the home;
- indicate that during the INV or FAR stage it was found that there were foster parents in the home;
- link a foster home to the INV or FAR stage for the purposes of sending notifications with regard to the home and any children placed in the home; and
- correct the foster home that was linked during the INT stage.

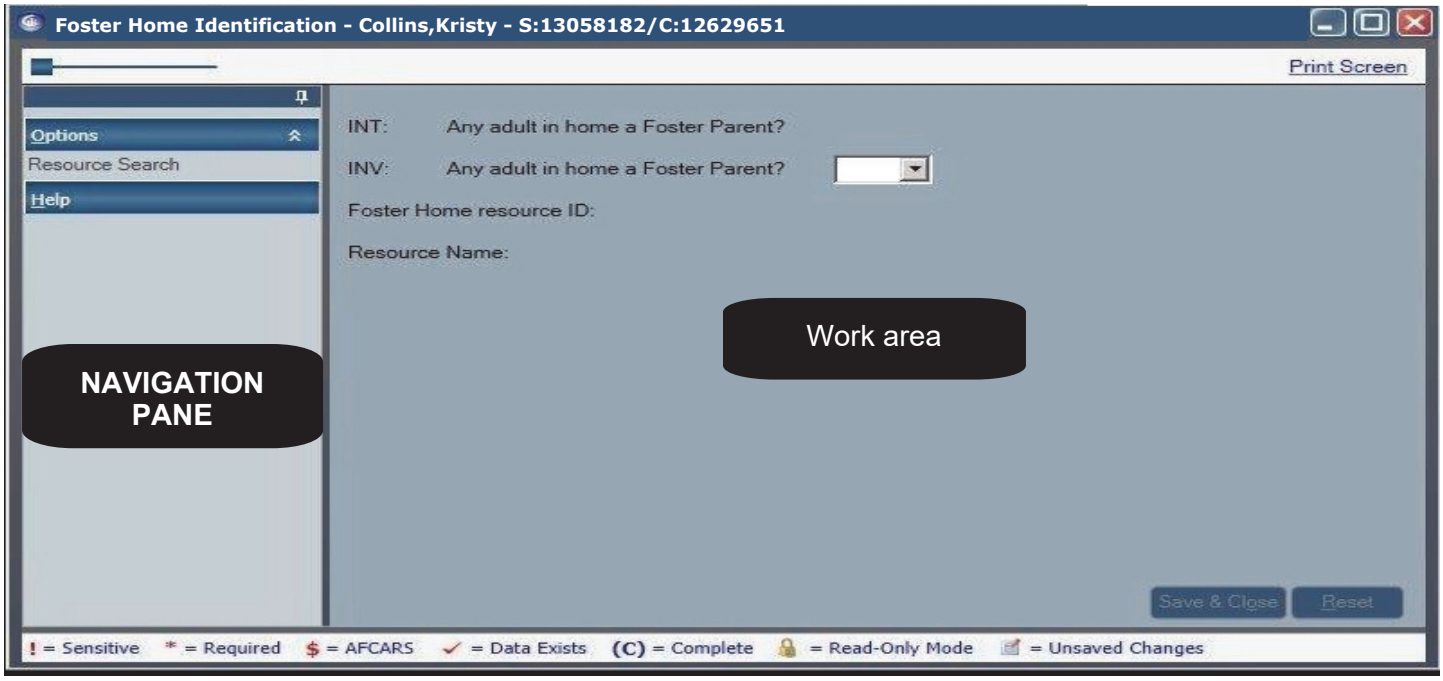


Accessing the Foster Home Identification Window

1 On the **My Workload** tab, select the appropriate INV or FAR stage.
*The **Stage Actions** section of the **NAVIGATION PANE** displays.*

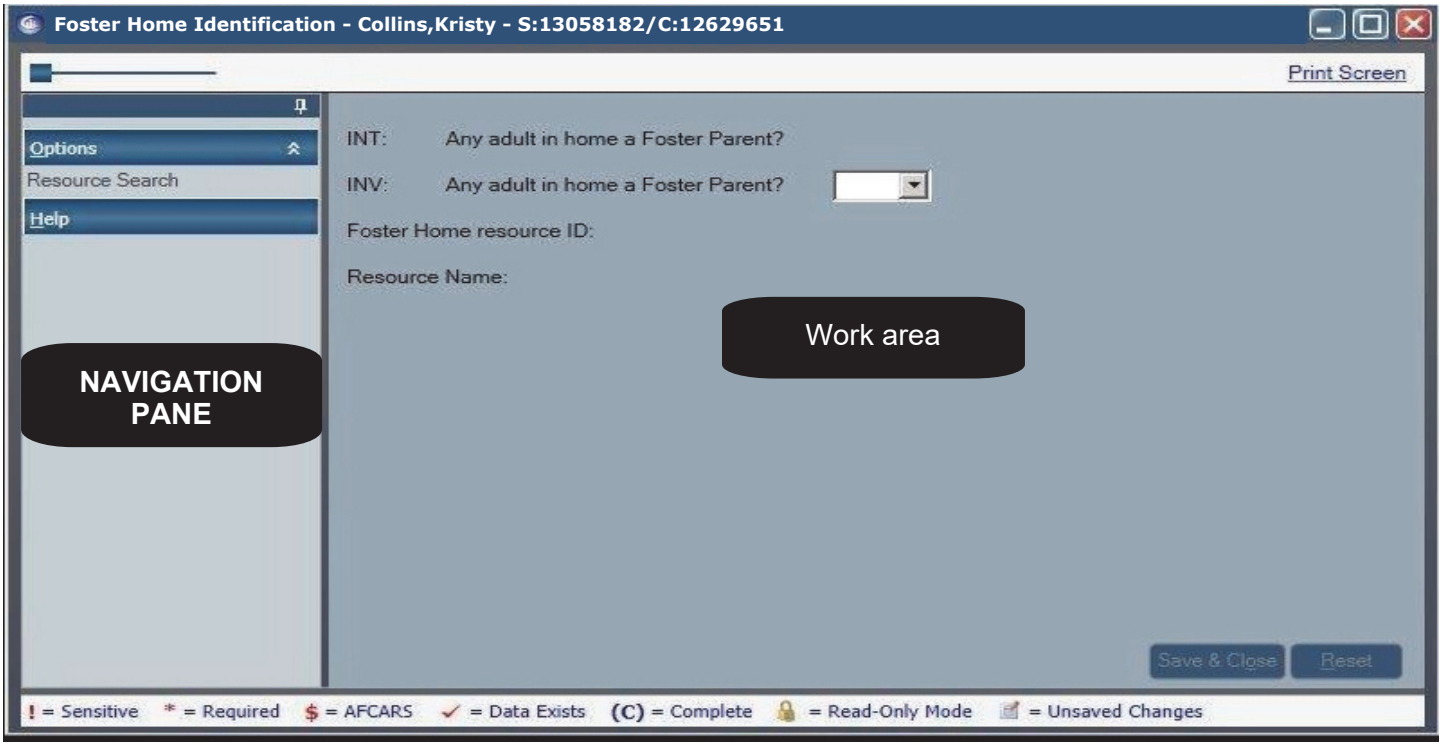
2 Click the **Foster Home Identification** link in the **NAVIGATION PANE**.
*The Foster Home Identification window displays. Note: The **Foster Home Identification** link will be available for Initial and Subsequent INV stages and FAR stages, as well as family investigations and those designated as "Foster Care/Day Care" with a sub-classification of "Foster Care." It will not be available for stages with a sub-classification of "Day Care."*

Exploring the Window



The NAVIGATION PANE Links

In addition to the standard **Help** link, the **NAVIGATION PANE** will display the **Resource Search** link. This link will be enabled if "Yes" displays in the **INT: Any adult in home a Foster Parent?** field. It will also enable if you select "Yes" from the **INV: Any adult in home a Foster Parent?** drop-down menu; however, it is *not* necessary to reaffirm the selection made at Intake in this field. Clicking the **Resource Search** link will allow you to search for and select a foster home for the purpose of generating notifications for the foster home and the child(ren) placed there.



The Work Area

The work area will contain several labels/fields:

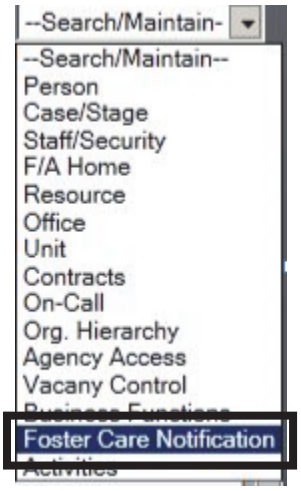
- **INT: Any adult in home a Foster Parent?** This view-only field related to the INT stage will display the response from the *Intake Checklist* window.
- **INV: Any adult in home a Foster Parent?** This field will be used to override the response recorded in the INT stage.

The Foster Care Notifications Window

The *Foster Care Notifications* window allows workers to view information about foster homes that have been identified in an INT, INV, or FAR stage, and children in foster care that are placed in the home of a person that is involved in an INT, INV, or FAR stage.

	OCFS strongly encourages districts and voluntary agencies to designate at least one staff person and a backup to be responsible for checking the *Foster Care Notifications* window **a minimum of once per day** to identify any foster children in a home involved in a report of suspected child abuse or maltreatment.

Accessing the Foster Care Notifications Window



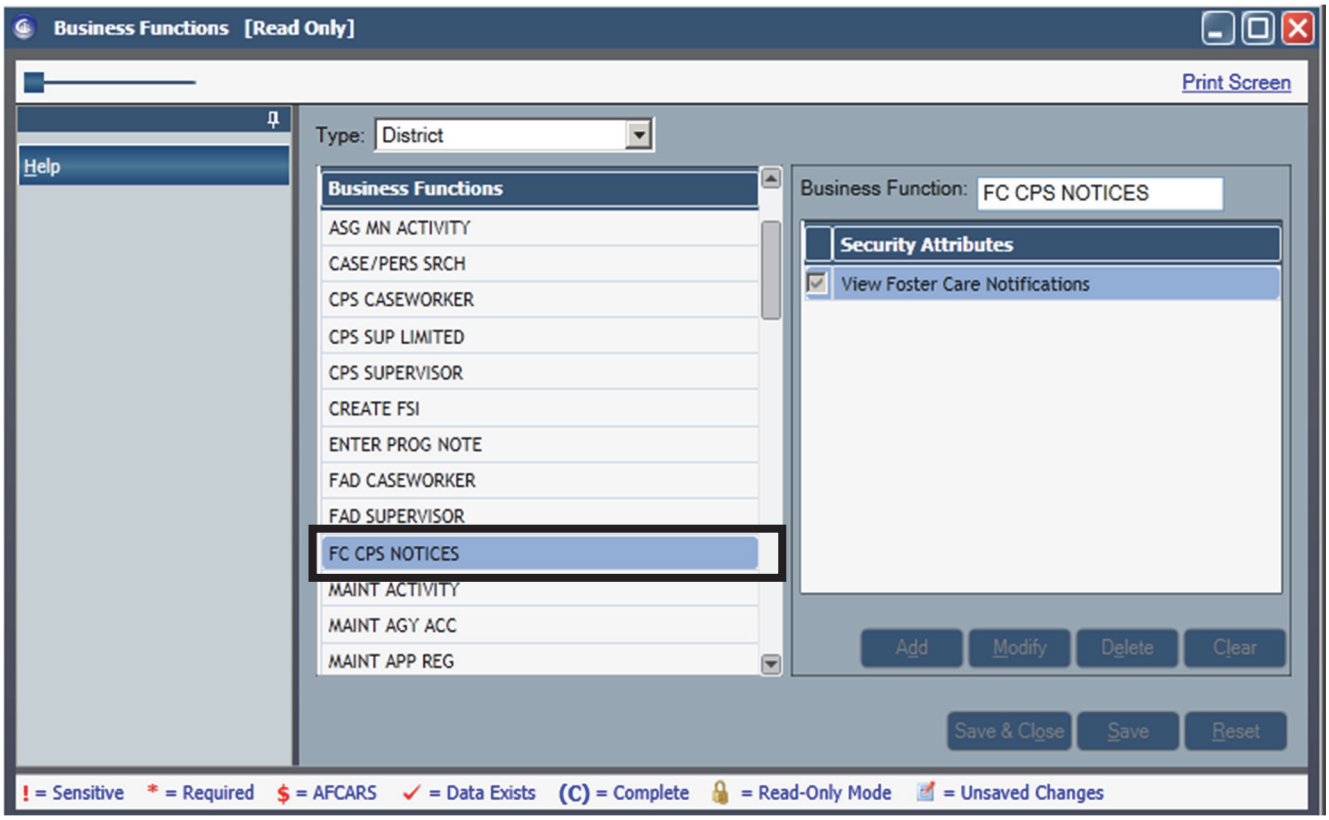
1 Click the drop-down arrow for the **Search/Maintain** menu on the main CONNECTIONS window.

2 Select the **Foster Care Notification** command. (This displays only for workers with the appropriate Business Function.)
The Foster Care Notifications window displays.

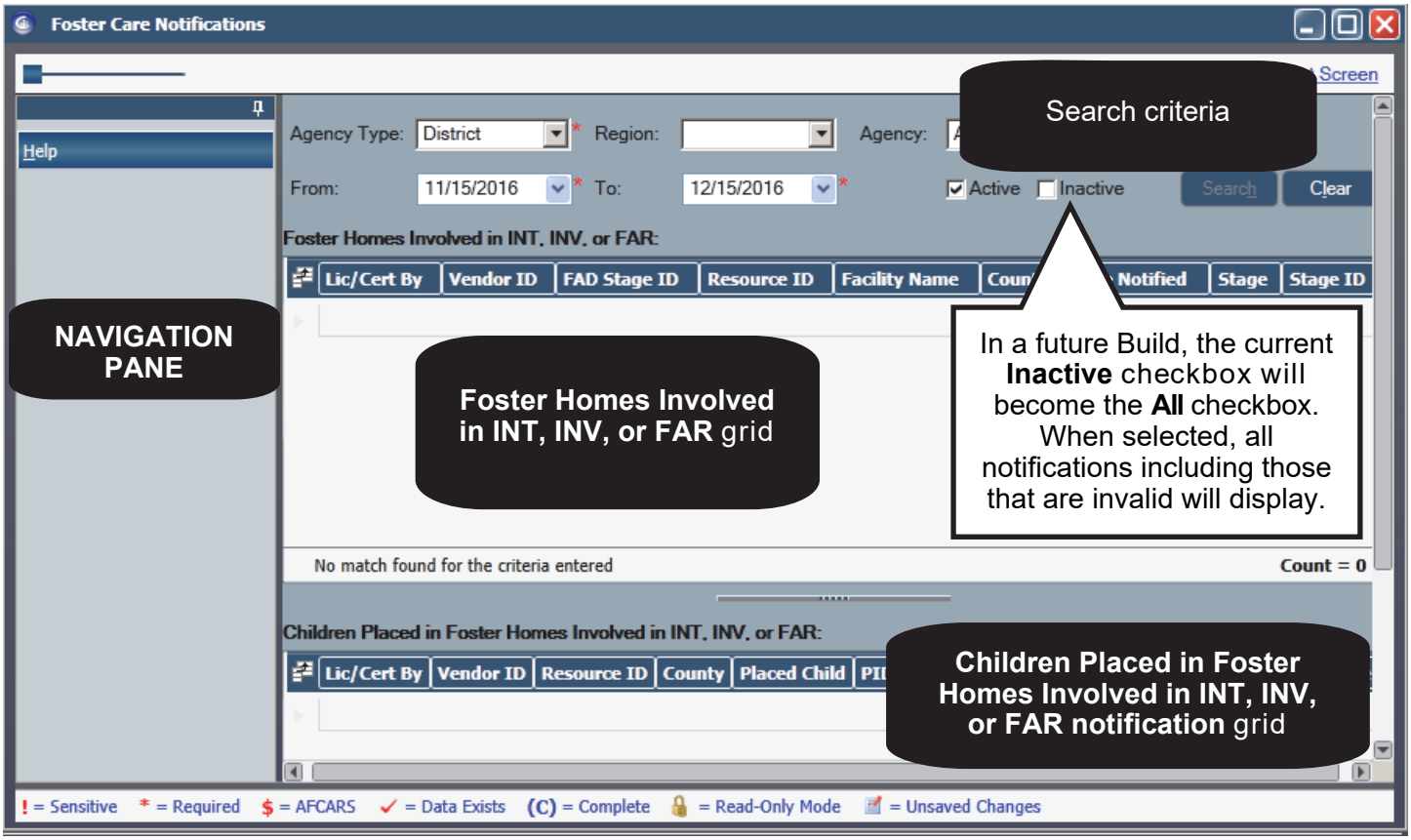
Business Function for the Foster Care Notifications Window

The *Foster Care Notifications* window will be available to state, regional office, district, and voluntary agency workers with the FC CPS NOTICES Business Function.

In addition to the Business Function restriction, workers will be able to access only those homes that are licensed or certified by the agency of the logged on worker and children whose FSS stage county matches that of the county/agency assigned primary responsibility or jurisdictional transactional responsibility for the child. State workers with the appropriate security will have access to all children.



Exploring the Window



The NAVIGATION PANE

The **NAVIGATION PANE** will display the **Help** link.

The Search Criteria Section

Upon opening the window, search criteria fields will display at the top of the window with the **Search** and **Clear** buttons. This section will allow you to search for and locate foster homes identified in INT, INV, and FAR stages, and the foster children placed in those homes. The following search criteria fields will display:

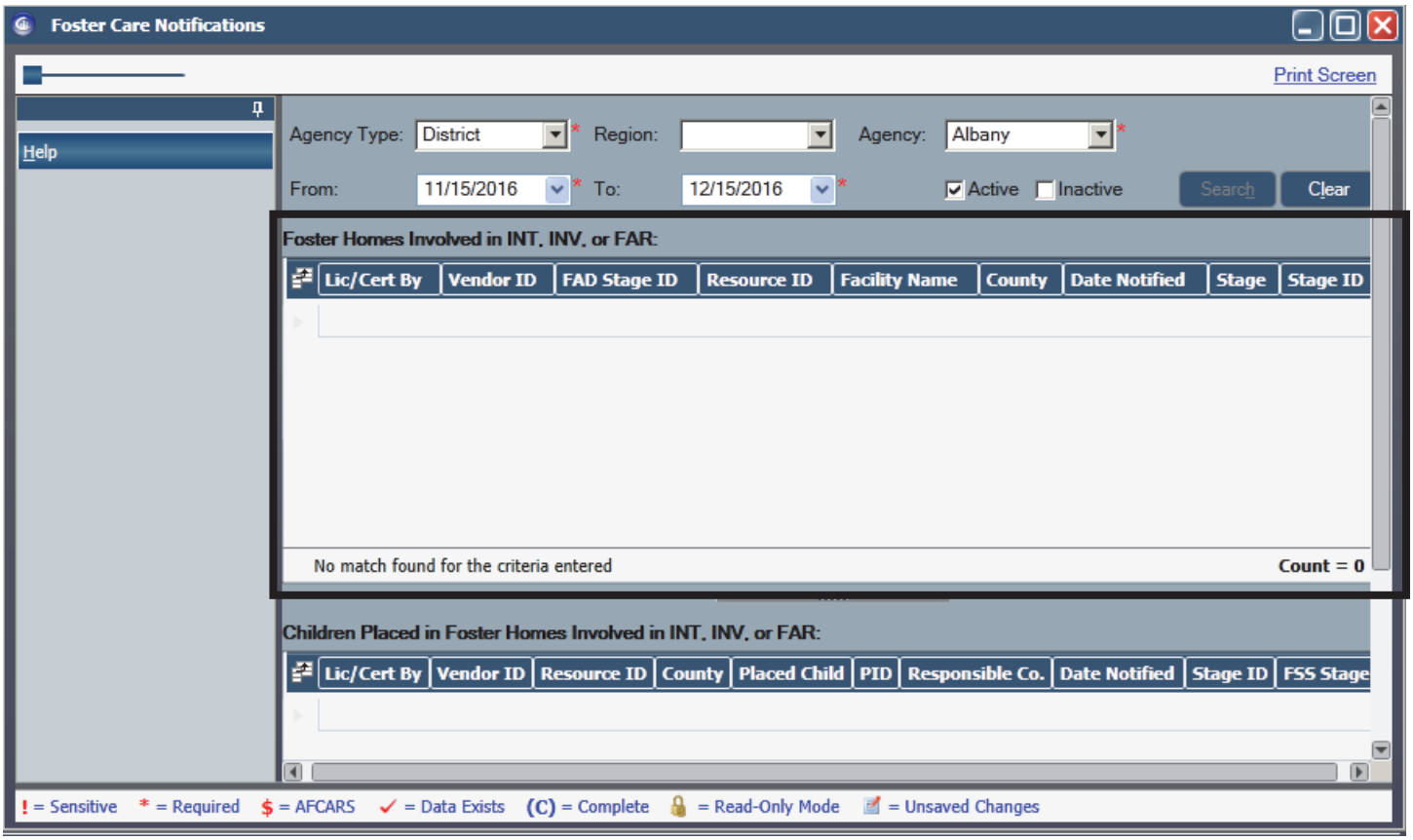
- **Agency Type** - For district and voluntary agency workers, this field defaults to the agency type of the logged on worker and is not modifiable. For state and regional office workers, the field is blank and "Regional Office," "District," or "Vol Agen" must be selected.
- **Region** - When the **Agency Type** field is populated with "District" or "Vol Agen," this field is disabled. When the **Agency Type** field is populated with "Regional Office," this field is enabled and required.
- **Agency** - When the **Agency Type** field is populated with "Regional Office," this field is disabled.
- **From** - This required field defaults to 30 days prior to the current date and is modifiable.
- **To** - This required field defaults to the current date and is modifiable.
- **Active** - This checkbox will be selected by default and display only valid notifications. It will de-select automatically upon clicking the **Inactive** checkbox.
- **Inactive** - Upon selecting this checkbox, all notifications including those that are invalid display. (A notification becomes invalid when an INV or FAR stage worker updates the information to reflect that there are no foster parents in the home, or modifies the resource that was associated with the INT, INV, or FAR stage.)

Foster Homes Involved in INT, INV, or FAR Grid

Upon clicking the **Search** button, foster homes that meet the search criteria entered will display in the **Foster Homes Involved in INT, INV, or FAR** grid.

- For district workers, the homes returned are limited to those certified/approved by their district and those where their district currently has a child placed.
- For voluntary agency workers, the homes returned are limited to those certified/approved by their agency.
- For regional office workers, the homes returned include all those certified/approved by any district in that region; where any districts in that region have a child placed; and homes certified by a voluntary agency where the home is in a county within the regional office boundaries.

When no records are returned for the search criteria entered, the grid will be blank and a message will display.

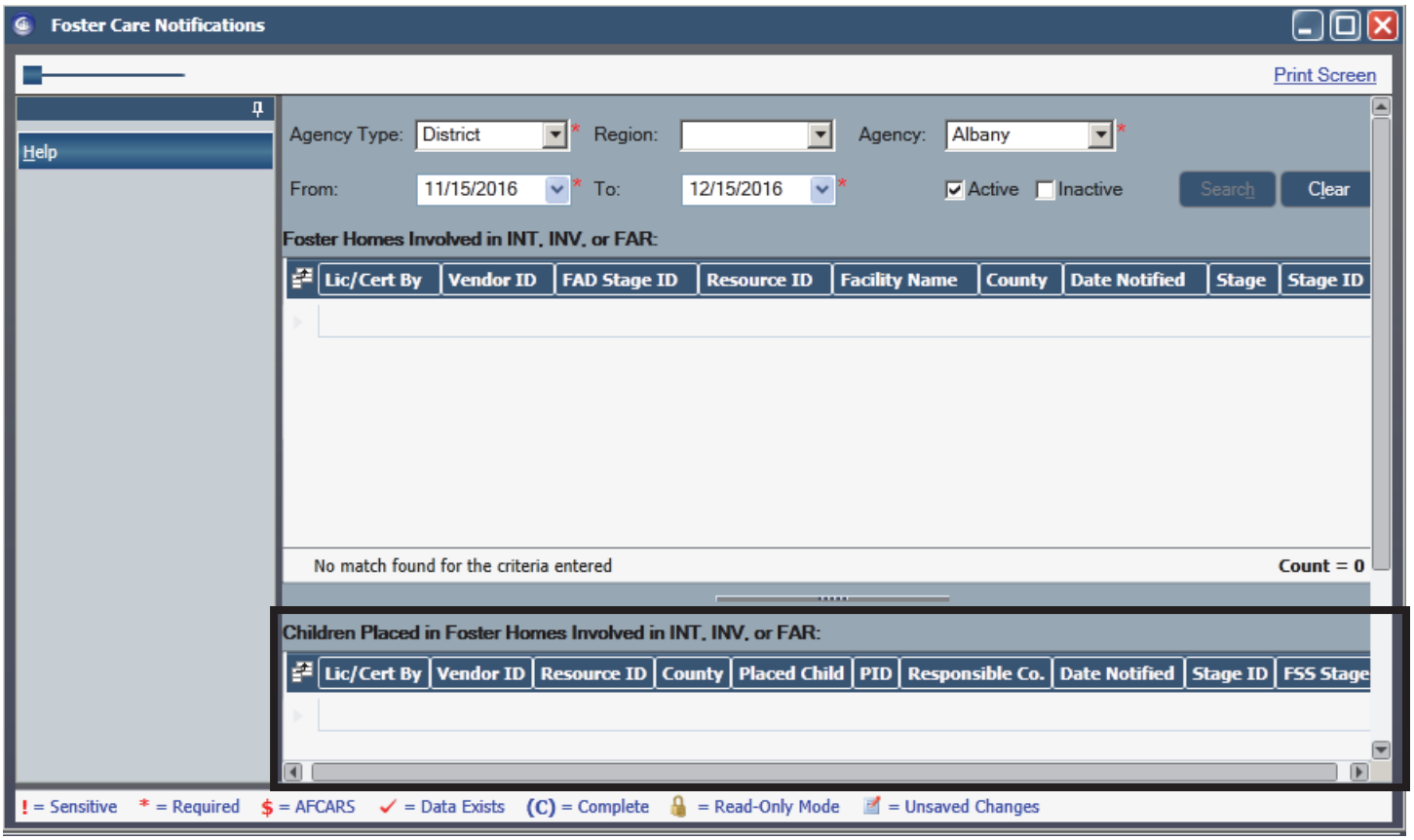


Children Placed in Foster Homes Involved in INT, INV, or FAR Grid

Upon selecting a foster home in the **Foster Homes Involved in INT, INV, or FAR** grid, the **Children Placed in Foster Homes Involved in INT, INV, or FAR** grid will display a list of children placed in the selected home, dependent on agency:

- For district workers, only the children for whom the district is responsible display.
- For voluntary agency workers, only the children placed in homes certified/approved by the agency display.
- For regional office workers, only the children for whom any district in the selected region is responsible display.

When the INT stage response to "Are there any Foster Parents in the home" is "Yes," a notification is generated. If the INV or FAR stage worker overrides that response by selecting "No" in the **INV: Any adult in home a Foster Parent?** field, the notification becomes inactive.



Remember, the *Foster Care Notifications* window should be checked **at least once per day** to identify any foster children in a home involved in a report of suspected child abuse or maltreatment.

Available Resources

Administrative Directive 16 (16-OCFS-ADM-13)

For further information on the requirements relating to CPS reports involving foster parents, refer to 16-OCFS-ADM-13: Requirements Relating to CPS Reports Involving Foster Parents) in Appendix A. You can also search for it from the main page of the OCFS Internet (http://ocfs.ny.gov) and intranet (http://ocfs.state.nyenet) sites.

OCFS Intranet Site: CONNECTIONS Help/Training

Many resources are available for you on the **CONNECTIONS Help/Training** page of the OCFS intranet site (http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect_help/Default.asp). There you will find resources such as How Do I? documents, Job Aids, Tip Sheets, and other Quick Start Guides. These documents and others will provide you with the most up-to-date information on CONNECTIONS.

When you are working in CONNECTIONS, an easy way to access the intranet site is by clicking the **Help/Training** link on the toolbar of the main CONNECTIONS window.

CONNECTIONS Regional Implementation Staff

If you cannot find the answer to your question(s) within the documentation mentioned above, you can contact one of the many statewide CONNECTIONS Regional Implementation Staff members. The current list of members is always available on the OCFS CONNECTIONS Internet site (at http://ocfs.ny.gov/connect/contact.asp) and intranet site (at http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/contact.asp).

Application Help Mailbox

You can directly contact the NYS CONNECTIONS User Support/Triage staff for help with complex application issues. Questions, problems, and concerns can be emailed to:

ocfs.sm.conn_app@ocfs.ny.gov

Human Services - ITS Enterprise Service Desk

The Human Services - ITS Enterprise Service Desk is available to answer basic questions related to your equipment, or to solve problems you are having with CONNECTIONS. If they cannot solve your problem, they will record your information and forward it to others who can. The Enterprise Service Desk is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The telephone number is **1-800-NYS-1323** (1-800-697-1323).

Professional Development Program

Another resource is the CONNECTIONS Training Project of the Professional Development Program (PDP), Rockefeller College, University at Albany. CONNECTIONS trainers can provide you with assistance when you have a question about or are experiencing an issue with any area of CONNECTIONS. For assistance from a CONNECTIONS representative, contact the Professional Development Program at **CONNECTIONS@albany.edu**. Be sure to include your name, contact information, and your question or issue. A CONNECTIONS representative will respond as promptly as possible by email and/or phone.

Appendix A:
16-OCFS-ADM-13

NEW YORK STATE | Office of Children and Family Services

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Governor

52 WASHINGTON STREET
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Sheila J. Poole
Acting Commissioner

Administrative Directive

Transmittal:	16-OCFS-ADM-13
To:	Commissioners of Social Services Executive Directors of Voluntary Authorized Agencies
Issuing Division/Office:	Strategic Planning and Policy Development
Date:	June 17, 2016
Subject:	**Requirements Relating to CPS Reports Involving Foster Parents**
Suggested Distribution:	Directors of Social Services Child Welfare Supervisors Foster Care Supervisors Child Protective Services Supervisors Adoption Supervisors
Contact Person(s):	Any questions concerning this release should be directed to the appropriate regional office, Division of Child Welfare and Community Services: Buffalo Regional Office-Tina Cook (716) 847-3145 Tina.Cook@ocfs.ny.gov Rochester Regional Office-Karen Buck (585) 238-8201 Karen.Buck@ocfs.ny.gov Syracuse Regional Office-Sara Simon (315) 423-1200 Sara.Simon@ocfs.ny.gov Albany Regional Office-Colleen Fischer (518) 486-7078 Colleen.Fischer@ocfs.ny.gov Spring Valley Regional Office-Yolanda Désarmé (845) 708-2498 Yolanda.Desarme@ocfs.ny.gov New York City Regional Office-Ronnie Fuchs (212) 383-1788 Ronni.Fuchs@ocfs.ny.gov Native American Services-Heather LaForme (716) 847-3123 Heather.LaForme@ocfs.ny.gov
Attachments:	None

Filing References

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	NYS Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
07-OCFS-ADM-15 10-OCFS-ADM-09 15-OCFS-ADM-14 15-OCFS-ADM-18		18 NYCRR 405.3(d), 428.6, 430.11, 432.2(b)(3), 441.21 and Part 443	Social Services Law (SSL) §§ 413 and 422(4)(A)(c)	Child Protective Services Program Manual	

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Administrative Directive (ADM) is to remind local departments of social services (LDSSs) and voluntary authorized agencies (VAs) of existing regulatory and policy requirements relating to reports of suspected child abuse or maltreatment involving certified or approved foster parents. The ADM also addresses other current regulatory and policy requirements that assist in the prevention of abuse or maltreatment of foster children in such placements. The requirements reflected in this ADM are intended to support coordination and cooperation among the LDSSs and VAs administering foster care and child protective services (CPS) programs with the goal of enhancing the safety and well-being of foster children placed in certified or approved foster homes.

II. Background

The longstanding standard for the appropriate level of foster care placements, as set forth in Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) regulation, is:

> *The most appropriate level of placement for each child will always be considered to be the least restrictive and most homelike setting in which the child can be maintained safely and receive all services specified in his or her service plan.*[1]

As noted, a vital element in the appropriateness of a foster care placement is safety of the foster child. LDSSs and VAs have an ongoing obligation for the duration of the placement of a foster child, including, but not limited to, where a foster child is placed in a certified or approved foster home, to consider and address the safety of the foster child.[2]

The significance of safety of a foster child in care is reflected by its place as the first right set forth in the "Bill of Rights of Children and Youth in Foster Care" issued by OCFS in 15-OCFS-ADM-18 which states:

> *As a child or youth in foster care in the State of New York, I have the right:*
>
> *1. To live in a safe, nurturing, healthy, and suitable residence, to stay safe and to be free from exploitation, where I am treated with respect and where I have enough food and adequate clothing. I have the right to the least restrictive, most home-like setting where I can safely live and receive services.*

When a certified or approved foster parent is the subject of a report of suspected child abuse or maltreatment involving a foster child, there are several agencies that have an interest in the report and the safety of the foster child(ren) in the foster home. These agencies include: the LDSS that is conducting the CPS investigation, the LDSS with legal custody of the foster child(ren) named in the CPS report, and the LDSS or VA that certified or approved the foster home. In some cases, they all may be the same LDSS. However, often there will be more than one interested agency. In such cases, the

[1] 18 NYCRR 430.11(d)(1).
[2] 18 NYCRR 430.11(c)(2)(vii).

notification, coordination, and cooperation standards addressed in this release are vitally important in meeting the safety needs of the child(ren) in the foster home.

Each agency, whether the LDSS conducting the CPS investigation, the LDSS with legal custody of the foster child, or the LDSS or VA that certified or approved the foster home, has its own legal duties and responsibilities to address and support the safety and well-being of the foster child(ren) in the foster home. Each agency must execute those duties and responsibilities as set forth in applicable statutes, regulations, and policies. This release outlines several of these duties and responsibilities.

III. Program Implications

This ADM addresses several phases of the CPS case involving a report of suspected child abuse or maltreatment involving a foster child placed in a certified or approved foster home. It also addresses ongoing case contact and foster home assessment requirements that may identify health, safety and well-being issues involving foster child(ren) in such placement.

1. Notification of CPS Reports

A. LDSS's CPS Responsibilities

The OCFS *Child Protective Services Program Manual* (CPS Manual) sets forth requirements that an LDSS must follow when it receives a report of suspected child abuse or maltreatment in which a foster child is named. **The CPS Manual reminds the LDSS that the legal requirements for conducting investigations of reports involving a foster child in a foster home are the same as the requirements for any in-home setting involving the birth children of the subject of the report.**[3]

One requirement is that the LDSS must "notify the local social services district having care and custody of the child(ren) and, notify the agency having supervision over the placement if different from the custodial agency".[4] A model notification form letter to the LDSS with legal custody is found in the CPS Manual.[5] This means that the LDSS CPS must provide notification of a report of suspected child abuse or maltreatment involving the foster child placed in a foster home to the LDSS with legal custody of the foster child and, if different, the LDSS or VA that certified or approved the foster home. The LDSS's CPS would be able to identify the applicable LDSS or VA through CONNECTIONS.

The scenario in which the LDSS investigating the report of suspected child abuse or maltreatment is different from the LDSS with legal custody of the foster child is also addressed in the CPS Manual in the requirement that:

> *When a child in foster care has been placed outside the county of the local district having custody of the child, the local district responsible for conducting the investigation must notify the commissioner of the local district having custody of*

[3] CPS Manual Chapter IV, section G.1.b, page 100.
[4] CPS Manual Chapter IV, section G.1.b, page 100.
[5] CPS Manual Chapter XI, section A.5, page 5.

> *the child that the child has been named in a report of abuse or maltreatment.*[6]

B. Notification of the Custodial LDSS by the VA that Certified or Approved the Foster Home

This requirement applies in those cases where the foster home is certified or approved by a VA, and addresses the contractual obligations of such VA with the LDSS with legal custody of the foster child named in the CPS report.

OCFS regulations require that LDSS must use model formats developed by OCFS for LDSS purchase of foster care services contracts.[7] A model format for the purchase of foster care developed by OCFS has been in place for several years. The most recent version was issued through OCFS, 15-OCFS-ADM-14. Included in this required model contract is the following clause applicable to the VA:

> *The Agency agrees to promptly notify the Department of any report of suspected child abuse or maltreatment occurring in the program regarding a child placed by the Department with the Agency, to notify the Department of the actions taken [by] the agency in regard to the report and to confirm that, to the extent authorized by law, the parents of the child who is the alleged victim of such abuse or maltreatment will be notified by the appropriate investigative agency of such report.*

For the purpose of this contract requirement, the "Agency" is the VA and the "Department" is the LDSS.

This requirement would apply to a foster child placed by a VA with a foster parent who is named as the subject of a report of suspected child abuse or maltreatment involving a foster child. The clause would require the VA, upon receipt of such knowledge, to report that information to the custodial LDSS with which the VA has contracted for foster care.

2. Investigation of the CPS Report

A full CPS investigation includes obtaining information not only from the subject of the report, the victim child, family members, and the source of the report, but also from other collateral sources that may include, but are not limited to, social services agencies and other agencies providing services to the family that may have information relevant to the allegations in the report and to the safety of the children in that home.[8] In regard to CPS investigations involving a foster child in a foster home, the CPS Manual includes as a necessary collateral source "the local DSS staff members responsible for the child and home."[9] This standard would also apply to contact with the VA where the VA has assumed case management or case planning responsibilities over the named foster child or the VA certified or approved the foster home.

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[6] CPS Manual Chapter IX, section B, page 3.
[7] 18 NYCRR 405.3(d).
[8] 18 NYCRR 432.2(b)(3)(ii).
[9] CPS Manual Chapter IV, section G.1.b, page 101.

Considering the involvement of the LDSS or VA responsible for the supervision of foster child(ren) in the foster home and/or certification or approval of the foster parent named in the report of suspected child abuse or maltreatment, such LDSS or VA is a necessary collateral source in a CPS investigation involving the foster home.

On the issue of the LDSS's CPS sharing information on the pending or indicated CPS report, section 422(4)(A)(c) of the Social Services Law (SSL) provides that access is available to a "duly authorized agency having the responsibility for the care or supervision of a child who is reported to the central register of abuse and maltreatment." Such authorization would include access by the LDSS with legal custody of the foster child named in the report and the LDSS or VA responsible for supervision of the foster child in such foster home. Accordingly, the LDSS's CPS may inform such LDSS or VA of the allegations. In addition, it is consistent with applicable foster care confidentiality standards for the custodial LDSS and the LDSS or VA certifying or approving agency to share relevant information with the LDSS's CPS agency for the purpose of the CPS investigation.

While the CPS investigation is pending, the custodial LDSS and the certifying LDSS or VA must continue to carry out their statutory, regulatory, and OCFS policy responsibilities. These responsibilities include, but are not limited to: casework contacts; case planning; assessment of the appropriateness of the placement, including safety of the child; and compliance by the foster parent with applicable foster home certification or approval standards.[10]

3. Notification of the Determination of the CPS Report

As stated in the CPS Manual, involving the investigation of out-of-home settings such as foster homes:

> *The primary objective for the conclusion of any investigation of child abuse or maltreatment is protecting the safety of the child named in the report, and any other children in the environment. All necessary steps should be taken to achieve this result.*[11]

Upon completion of the investigation and the determination of the CPS report involving a foster child in a foster home, the CPS Manual provides that the LDSS's CPS is to inform "the local DSS with custody of the child of the results of the investigation."[12]

The individual agencies involved in the case, based on their respective roles and responsibilities, need to determine what, if any, action must be taken in regard to the placement and the certification or approval of the foster home. If the decision is made to remove the foster child(ren) from the foster home, the standards set forth in 18 NYCRR 443.5 must be followed. If the decision is made to decertify or revoke approval of the foster home, the standards set forth in 18 NYCRR 443.11 apply. Based on the facts of the case, an appropriate determination may be to maintain the foster child(ren) in the foster home. In all such cases, the decision and its basis must be sufficiently documented in CONNECTIONS.

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[10] 18 NYCRR 428.6, 441.21 and Part 443.
[11] CPS Manual Chapter IV, section G.3.a, page 105.
[12] CPS Manual Chapter IV, section G.2.a, page 103.

4. Preventive Measures

There are steps that can be taken by the LDSS or VA with case planning and casework responsibilities and by the LDSS or VA that certified or approved the foster home, to identify potential risk and safety issues in regard to the placement of a foster child in a foster home before a CPS reportable event occurs. These steps may also uncover situations that rise to the level of an event that is reportable to the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment. Examples of such steps are as follows:

A. Casework Contacts

Casework contacts with the foster child must be at least monthly and face-to-face. As stated in OCFS regulations, such contacts must "assess the child's current safety and well-being."[13] OCFS regulations require that at least two of the monthly contacts, every 90 days, must be at the foster child's placement location (here, the foster home).[14]

OCFS regulations also require at least monthly casework contacts with the foster child's caretaker, who would be the child's foster parent where the foster child is placed in a foster home. At least one of the monthly contacts with the foster parent must be in the foster home every 90 days. Such contacts must assess the foster parent and the environment in which the foster child is placed. It also affords the foster parent with the opportunity to address issues and concerns regarding the foster child with the LDSS or VA which may impact the foster child's health, safety and well-being.

B. Youth Voice

In 2010, OCFS issued the release entitled *Requirements for Incorporating Youth Voice into the Annual Renewal of Certified or Approved Foster Homes,* 10-OCFS-ADM-09. The ADM states:

> *Recognizing the important role that youth voice provides in improving the child welfare system and outcomes for children and youth in foster care, districts and agencies are now required to incorporate youth voice into the annual renewal process of certified and approved foster homes as part of the process of evaluating the care provided to the youth in the foster home. Information will be gathered from youth on their foster home experience through regular casework contacts with the youth. The requirements set forth in this directive are intended to strengthen the quality and level of the casework contacts established in 18 NYCRR 441.21(c).*

[13] 18 NYCRR 441.21(c)
[14] 18 NYCRR 441.21(c)(2)

The 2010 policy directive (10-OCFS-ADM-09) applies to youth in foster care between the ages of 14 and 21. Required actions include:

> *At a minimum, at least once each year as part of regular casework contacts with a child carried out in accordance with 18 NYCRR 441.21(c), the child's case planner or the child's caseworker must give each youth age 14 and older placed in a certified foster home or with an approved relative foster parent the opportunity to respond to the Youth Voice Questions contained in Attachment A of [10-OCFS-ADM-09].*

In order to assist in securing candor from the foster child, 10-OCFS-ADM-09 states that "foster parents should not be present for these discussions." Information provided by the foster child in these discussions may be used in regard to the foster home recertification or re-approval process and decision, and "any information received from a youth that raises concerns related to the health, safety and well-being of the youth in the home must be reported to the proper authorities within the district or agency for appropriate follow-up and any needed actions."[15]

Finally, the 2010 ADM re-affirms that where a worker has reasonable cause to suspect that the foster child or other children in the foster home have been abused or maltreated, a CPS report must be made in accordance with section 413 of the SSL.

C. Recertification/Re-approval of Foster Homes

OCFS regulations require that at the time of annual renewal of the foster home certification or approval, the LDSS or VA that issued the certification or approval must, among other steps, develop a written evaluation of the care provided to foster children in the home and the working relationship of the foster parent with the agency.[16] This evaluation may identify issues that would require the LDSS or VA to take action to protect the health, safety or well-being of foster child(ren) in that foster home. Issues relating to the lack of cooperation by the foster parent to support the foster child's permanency plan, or to allow agency staff access to the foster child, raise red flags that the LDSS or VA needs to address.

The obligation of the LDSS or VA certifying or approving the foster home to assess the safety of any foster child in such home exists during the entire period of certification or approval. Such LDSS or VA must continually assess the quality and capacity of the foster home. If concerns are identified at any time, the LDSS or VA must assess, review, and take action to address the safety needs of the foster child.

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[15] 10-OCFS-ADM-09, page 5.
[16] 18 NYCRR 443.10(a)(2).

IV. Required Action

LDSSs investigating reports of suspected child abuse or maltreatment involving foster children placed in certified or approved foster homes, LDSSs with legal custody of such children, and LDSSs or VAs that certified or approved the foster home must comply with the respective regulations and OCFS policies referenced above.

V. Systems Implications

Compliance with the standards set forth in this ADM must be sufficiently documented in CONNECTIONS.

VI. Effective Date

This release is effective immediately.

/s/ Thomas R. Brooks

Issued By:
Name: Thomas R. Brooks
Title: Deputy Commissioner
Division/Office: Strategic Planning and Policy Development

Appendix B:
Intake Checklist

Questions	Required/Optional	Included in Output
Alternative contact information for source (cell, home, etc.):	Required if Response – 'Yes'	Yes
Other mandated reporters who may be aware of the situation:	Required if Response – 'Yes'	Yes
Safety concerns for CPS:	Required if Response – 'Yes'	Yes
Is there a day care operated in the home?	Optional if Response – 'Yes'	Yes
Are any adults in the home Foster Parents?	Optional if Response – 'Yes'	Yes
CPS History and Possible PIDs:	Required if Response – 'Yes'	Yes
Clarification of jurisdictional assignment:	Required if Response – 'Yes'	If response = Yes
Consulted with supervisor or manager (name):	Required if Response – 'Yes'	If response = Yes
Law Enforcement referral made by the SCR:	Required if Response – 'Yes'	Yes
Primary Language if other than English:	Required if Response – 'Yes'	If response = Yes
Child has an IEP:	Optional if Response – 'Yes'	Yes
The following questions will be included in output only if a fatality allegation exists.		
Is cause of death known?	Required if Response – 'Yes'	Yes
Is location of body known?	Required if Response – 'Yes'	Yes
Is an autopsy being done?	Required if Response – 'Yes'	Yes
Is the name and address of the medical examiner or coroner known?	Required if Response – 'Yes'	Yes
Has the district attorney been notified? If so, what is Assigned District Attorney's name?	Required if Response – 'Yes'	Yes
Is law enforcement involved? If so, what police agency(precinct) is involved and what is the report number?	Required if Response – 'Yes'	Yes
Has anyone been arrested? If so, whom?	Required if Response – 'Yes'	Yes
Are there any other children? Where are they? What is their condition?	Required if Response – 'Yes'	Yes
Is there any media coverage? (i.e., TV, radio, press, internet)	Required if Response – 'Yes'	Yes