

## ***New York State Children and Family Services***

### **CONNECTIONS Case Management**

*Issues Brief 10/17/2003*

**Subject:** Entry of WMS Number Into CONNECTIONS

**Date:** October 27, 2003

**Intended Audience:** OCFS Directors of Services and/or CPS Coordinators

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**Summary:** The WMS Case number cross-referenced to the CONNECTIONS case number will be the initial match criteria for the Build 18 conversion of WMS services cases to CONNECTIONS. This paper discusses whether Local Social Service Districts should require the entry of the WMS Number on the Investigation Conclusion Window for Child Protective Services cases that are opened for ongoing services.

#### **Background:**

CONNECTIONS will process ongoing services cases (e.g., preventive services, foster care) with the implementation of Build 18. WMS services cases will be opened from CONNECTIONS with the implementation of Build 18. The WSEWK2 and WSUWK2 screens that complete the WMS application will be supported in WMS; only the Application Registration (App Reg) and person demographics will be initiated from CONNECTIONS.

An automated batch conversion of WMS Services case, address and person data into CONNECTIONS is being developed in order to reduce the need for child welfare staff to re-enter existing data as well as to promote consistency between the legacy system and CONNECTIONS. The success of the conversion program relies heavily on the existence of a case number cross-reference between the respective systems. In the event no such cross-reference exists a new CONNECTIONS case will be created. This could lead to multiple CONNECTIONS cases for the same family, which will in turn create more work for staff to clean up (merge) the WMS converted case with its corresponding CPS CONNECTIONS case.

To support the case conversion strategy, a field called "WMS Case #" was added to the CPS Investigation Conclusion Window in CONNECTIONS Build 15.2, released in the spring of 2003. This field can only be populated when the investigation is being closed with an "open for services" closure reason. CONNECTIONS will validate that the WMS number entered by the worker reflects an active Services case for that district, however, no additional validation for case matching is supported. This number is carried forward to subsequent CPS investigation stages for that case, and is modifiable. For subsequent CPS investigations, the WMS # does not appear until the Primary or Secondary worker does an investigation conclusion. In addition, if more than one subsequent investigation is

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open, the number is carried forward sequentially (in stage number order) so that if a later investigation is closed first, the WMS # will be blank.

When Local Data Maintenance functionality is enhanced with the implementation of Build 16 in December 2003, it will be possible to enter the WMS Number into CPS investigations that were closed without the WMS number being entered. Through this function, a correction to the WMS number in CONNECTIONS can also be made.

A local district may request that the WMS Number field be required, in which case it will be required for all new CPS investigations (for which that district has primary responsibility) when the closure reason is open for services. Otherwise, completion of this field is an optional function. The use of the Investigation Conclusion to record WMS numbers will discontinue when Build 18 is implemented at which time an automated interface between WMS and CONNECTIONS will be supported.

#### **Benefits and Costs:**

Entry of the WMS Number in CONNECTIONS is the primary matching criteria that the conversion program will use to match WMS to CONNECTIONS cases, and the persons associated with them, thereby reducing the amount of manual data entry and/or case consolidation/merge that staff will need to perform when Build 18 is implemented. To assist local districts to prepare for the conversion of these cases, the CONNECTIONS Project will furnish “clean-up” reports that emulate the conversion and focus attention on data that will need correction to assist with appropriate matches. Clean-up reports will only include cases (and associated persons) that contain a cross-reference (WMS case #). Establishing these cross-references through closed CPS investigations will enable local districts to get a “jump start” on case matching and clean-up activities and to spread this work over both time and a larger number of staff.

There are no costs associated with the entry of WMS case number into CONNECTIONS; however, there are a number of considerations.

- Districts should examine, and as needed, revise procedures that pertain to WMS case opening so that child protective staff has access to the WMS case number by the time the investigation is being closed.
- A second consideration, as noted above, is that a WMS number that is entered into CONNECTIONS will be validated only to the extent that it is an active WMS Services case in the district. Hence, not all entry errors will be detected.
- Lastly, this approach involves entering the WMS case number into cases where the “linked” WMS case may close by the time Build 18 is implemented.

#### **Alternatives:**

1. Enter the CONNECTIONS case number into WMS.

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It is currently possible to record CONNECTIONS case numbers, prefaced with the letter "C," in the "Related Case Number" fields in WMS. Approximately 18,000 (of 100,000) child welfare WMS cases contain this cross-reference. There are two drawbacks to this approach. First, there is no system check to determine that the CONNECTIONS Case # recorded in WMS is valid. Second, there is no trigger to remind staff or edit to require staff to update the CONNECTIONS case number information in WMS in the event that a new CONNECTIONS case is established, thereby maintaining the link with an outdated case. In addition, these cases will be considered by the Conversion program only if there is no matching WMS # in a CONNECTIONS case.

2. Use new LDM functionality.

Local Districts may wish to wait until sometime before Build 18 implementation to establish the case linkages, using Local Data Maintenance (LDM) in CONNECTIONS to enter the WMS Numbers into Investigation Conclusions on only those cases that are actually going to convert. This method might result in reducing some level of worker effort in the recording of WMS numbers in CONNECTIONS. The drawback of this approach is that all clean-up activities will need to be concentrated into a relatively smaller time period, negating the opportunity to use ongoing clean-up reports to correct data as well as verify that corrective actions had the intended results.

#### **Recommendation:**

The CONNECTIONS Project Team recommends that local districts request that the WMS number field on the Investigation Conclusion window be made a required field and that the district implement procedures that provide this number to the appropriate staff consistent with the timely completion of investigations.

The project is also recommending that, upon the implementation of Build 16 in December 2003, local districts implement procedures to use Local Data Maintenance in CONNECTIONS to record the WMS number of all active services cases that existed prior to the decision to require the WMS number in the Investigation Conclusion.

Directors of Services or CPS Coordinators who wish to make this request should complete the attached form and forward to their CONNECTIONS Regional Field Support contact (see list below). The project team will make the required update on the nearest weekend to the requested date. (The form must be received by Noon on the Thursday prior to that weekend).

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Region</u></b>	<b><u>Phone Number</u></b>
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**Request to Require Entry of the WMS Case number in CONNECTIONS  
Investigation Conclusion.**

**District:**

**Requestor:**  
**Name:**

**Title:**

**Telephone Number:**

**Effective date of change (when do you want the edit to be effective):**

**Signature:**

**Date:**