

Overview of CONNECTIONS Case Management

Build 18 (Case Management) will almost triple the number of CONNECTIONS users in New York State. Over 10,000 new users, including all district/agency Foster Care, Preventive and Adoption staff, will become CONNECTIONS users. Build 18 will automate the Uniform Case Record (UCR)/Case Management System by incorporating these functions into CONNECTIONS. This Build will also affect the relationship between Local Districts and Voluntary Agencies. It calls for the re-engineering of work processes to take advantage of system benefits and efficiencies, and to accommodate the demands of cooperative work within a single family case record.

New Functionality

Family Services Intake (FSI)

With the implementation of Build 18, all Intakes for Services must be recorded in a standard format within CONNECTIONS. A Family Services Intake stage (FSI) will be opened for this purpose. The Intake stage, which is the only route to a Family Services Stage (FSS), may be opened in one of two ways: either by a CPS worker from within an Investigation stage, or from the CONNECTIONS Toolbar by any worker whose Business Function Profile (BFP) contains the CREATE FSI Business Function. The Family Services Intake will be opened automatically whenever a CPS worker records an Investigation Conclusion with a Closure Reason of "Open for Services."

If opened from within an Investigation stage, demographic data from the CPS Investigation will pre-fill the Intake and the CPS worker will be listed as the source of the intake. The CPS worker will need only to record a brief narrative, update the demographics if appropriate, and record the decision to open a Family Services Stage. If the case is being opened by a non-CPS worker, completion of a screening tool for emergency and/or ongoing service needs, called the Behavioral Concerns and Family Issues (BCFI), and the documentation of any interventions taken will be required. This is only required for CWS stage types. (See page 2.)

There is no approval process for Intakes, although cases maybe submitted to a supervisor for "review," if desired. Intakes may be initiated by either a Local District or a Voluntary Agency worker, but only a Local District worker can progress an Intake to the Family Services Stage. Voluntary Agencies that prepare Intakes on behalf of Local Districts will submit those Intakes to the district for acceptance and progression to a Family Services Stage.

Family Services Stage (FSS)

The addition of the Family Services Stage (FSS) provides the umbrella for documentation of work on services cases. In Build 18, the Family Services Stage consists of six sections or tabs:

- Stage Composition
- Family Assessment and Service Plan
- Service Plan Review
- Progress Notes
- Key Dates
- Case Summary

Additional tabs that relate to Placement Activities, Service Authorizations, etc., will be added in Build 19.

There is a new concept of “Stage Type” within the Family Services Stage that drives the requirements for documentation. There are five major stage types:

- CWS** Child Welfare Services (foster care, child protective, preventive, and adoption services)
- OTI** Out of Town Inquiry
- COI** Court Ordered Investigation
- ICPC** Interstate Compact
- ADVPO** Advocates Preventive Only cases (NYC)

All CWS type stages must be fully documented, including online completion of the revised UCR Family Assessment and Service Plan (FASP). All FSS tabs are enabled for this stage type. OTI, COI, ICPC, and ADVPO type stages use only the Stage Composition and Progress Notes tabs; the other FSS tabs are disabled.

Family Services Stage Roles

In CONNECTIONS, work in a family services case will be documented in real-time within a single electronic family case record. This is a major change to current practice. All workers assigned to the case will have access to and work within this case record. As a result, all workers with a role in the case will be able to view other workers’ work, including but not limited to case Progress Notes. The enhanced sharing of information will support increased coordination of services and more informed decision-making, resulting in better outcomes for families. Preparing staff to work cooperatively within a shared case record will be a major focus of implementation efforts.

There can be only one *open* Family Services Stage (FSS) for a family per jurisdiction (local district). Multiple workers, including workers from other districts or voluntary agencies, may be assigned to this stage. Every worker is assigned to one of the following four roles, which govern what they do and their ability to enter data in various system components:

- Case Manager** Every FSS has a single Case Manager, who *must* be LDSS staff. The Case Manager provides oversight of the case and must approve the Family Assessment and Service Plan (FASP). When the Case Manager also acts as the Case Planner, the Case Manager’s supervisor must approve the FASP.
- Case Planner** The Case Planner, who may be either LDSS or VA staff, is responsible for the coordination of work with a family. The Case Planner is also the author of the FASP and is responsible for the entirety of its contents and the timeliness of its submission for approval. This means the Case Planner must coordinate all documented work done in the CONNECTIONS case management system by other workers who contribute to the FASP, and either accept it as contributed by the worker(s) or revise it accordingly. The Case Planner sends the FASP to the Case Manager for approval. An “added” approval by the Case Manager’s supervisor may be completed after approval by the Case Manager.

CPS Worker/Monitor	The CPS Worker/Monitor <i>must</i> be LDSS staff and may complete the CPS Risk and Safety Assessments. The system supports, but does not require, review of the FASP by a CPS Worker/Monitor. The Case Planner needs to alert the CPS Worker/Monitor in circumstances where s/he needs to complete work in, or review, the FASP.
Case Worker	Case Workers may be either LDSS or VA staff. These workers may be associated with a specific child(ren) in the FSS and can complete specific work within the FASP, such as the Child Scales and Foster Care Issues regarding the child(ren) to whom they are associated. There may be multiple Case Workers assigned to the FSS.

Stage Composition

Stage Composition is the “Home” tab of the Family Services Stage. When the Family Services Stage is opened, this tab will display. Demographic data (name, address, phone, date of birth, ethnicity, race, person identifiers [PID, CIN, etc.]) for all persons named in the stage is readily available for view and may be updated by anyone with a role in the stage. Persons are added to the stage or end-dated here and historical stage composition can be viewed. It is very important that workers accurately maintain persons on this tab to ensure accurate AFCARS and NCANDS data and to avoid creation of duplicate persons/cases within CONNECTIONS.

The Family Relationship Matrix (FRM), which specifies the relationship of each person to every other person in the stage, is accessible from the Stage Composition tab and must be completed prior to the launch of the FASP. (See below.) The designation of Primary and Secondary Parent/Caretakers, which is necessary for completion of the Risk Assessment Profile and FASP Parent/Caretaker scales, is also done here.

In the Child Case Record (CCR), the worker will use the Stage Composition tab to record Finalization of Adoption and to view Family of Origin information.

Tracked Child Detail

Important information regarding all tracked children in the stage will be recorded and displayed in Tracked Child Detail on the Family Assessment and Service Plan tab. Anyone with a role in the stage can record or update PPG and Program Choice, and associate a worker with a child from here. In addition, certain placement information from CCRS (Agency, Placement Date, and Facility ID, Address and Type) will be brought forward and displayed. The historical record of all PPGs and Program Choices is also available.

Family Assessment and Service Plan (FASP)

The CONNECTIONS case management system will replace the UCR Assessment and Service Plan (which is currently completed in template or paper form) with a revised and renamed Family Assessment and Service Plan (FASP). The FASP is designed to support unique individual assessments and a family- and outcome-focused, strength-based service planning and delivery process. Workers will continue to assess and plan with families for children’s safety, permanency and well-being, but the format and content of that documentation is changed. The FASP supports a fuller, more accurate assessment and an increased emphasis on including the family’s perspective.

Content	Structured decision-making tools (i.e., the revised Safety
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Assessment and the Risk Assessment Profile) are employed in all CPS cases to support improved safety, service delivery and casework decisions. The FASP includes new Strengths, Needs and Risk scales that reflect the expectation that caseworkers assess family and child strengths as well as needs to guide the assessment. Workers will be required to document their assessment of all tracked children individually. Primary and Secondary Parent/Caretakers will also be assessed individually.

A Foster Care Issues component must be completed for each child placed in foster care. This incorporates and revises UCR template sections for Appropriateness of Placement, Permanency Planning, Concurrent Planning, and Visiting Plan (and Review). The Foster Care Issues questions support the rapid achievement of permanency and reflect the standards of practice required by the federal Child and Family Services Review. A Life Skills Assessment is required for all children in foster care, aged 14 and over. The FASP asks workers, as part of the Assessment Analysis, to state specifically the improvements/changes that need to be made, instead of merely stating the "problem." This list of needed improvements will be carried forward into the service plan tab to guide service planning. The Service Plan has an enhanced outcome and strengths-based focus to support development of a services plan with the family. Workers are asked to identify the family/individual strengths to be used to achieve specific outcomes and to evaluate the level of outcome achievement with each FASP. In addition, documentation of needed services/service status by individual must be completed as part of the Service Plan, if the local district has opted to require this. Important efficiencies are provided by the system. CONNECTIONS will customize the FASP according to FASP type (Initial, Comprehensive, Reassessment) and the Program Choice, PPG, and age of tracked children in the stage; as a result, the FASP will present only the relevant/required components for completion. Information from prior work will come forward and pre-fill selected FASP components. The original needs/concerns that prompted opening of the services case will be documented in the Initial FASP and will automatically display in all subsequent FASPs for worker information. The Safety Assessment (SA) in CPS FASPs will be pre-filled from the last approved SA for the worker's review and modification, as appropriate. Placement information will be brought forward from CCRS (Agency, Placement Date, and Facility ID, Address, and Type) and displayed on the Tracked Child Detail tab. The system also provides for copying of appropriate entries to the records of other children in the stage to avoid redundant data entry. A CONNECTIONS Alert will cue Case Planners and Case Managers when a FASP is coming due or overdue.

**System
Efficiencies**

Process

All workers assigned to the Family Service Stage (FSS) will document their work within a single, shared FASP. Workers will enter their contribution to specified FASP components in draft format. The Case Planner will then compile the draft entries of all workers into a single narrative and modify as appropriate. This "Case Planner Summary" constitutes the official FASP document. Multiple workers may also work within a single Plan Amendment to document several

status changes.

Unlike the UCR templates, which can be opened and worked in at any time, there are system rules governing who can launch (open and start work in) a new FASP and when they can do so.

- A worker must be assigned to the Family Services Stage in order to launch the FASP. Any assigned worker, not just the Case Planner or Case Manager, can launch the FASP.
- The system limits how far in advance of its due date a FASP may be launched. This supports documentation of current case status within the FASP. The Initial FASP may be started upon opening of the Family Services Stage. The Comprehensive FASP may not be started more than 30 days before its due date. A Reassessment FASP may not be started more than 60 days before its due date.
- A FASP may not be launched until a Primary Caretaker has been identified, the Family Relationship Matrix is completed, and there is a PPG and Program Choice recorded for all tracked children.
- Only one FASP in the stage can be in the process of being developed and approved at a time. Launching a new FASP drops an uncompleted FASP into “template” form. Workers will then have 60 days to complete work within the template format, at which point the template will be frozen. System efficiencies are not available within the template and data from the template does not carry forward to the next FASP. Previously due FASPs that were never launched will be marked as “Missed” upon the launch of a new FASP/PA and will not be able to be completed, even in template format.
- Plan Amendments can only be created if there is an approved FASP (except in Child Case Records). They may not be launched if a FASP is in process or is available to be launched (time is within the FASP launch window) or if a FASP is in pending approval status. In these instances the status change questions are available to be added directly in the FASP and are to be recorded there.
- A late FASP may not be launched if it is more than 365 days overdue, even if the next FASP has not been launched.

Progress Notes

All progress notes will be recorded in CONNECTIONS. Everyone’s progress notes will be viewable by all workers assigned to the stage, but each worker “maintains” his or her own notes. Required completion of accompanying fields, such as date, type of contact, participants, etc., will enable searching, sorting and filtering for specific notes or groups of notes. Progress notes may be entered as either “draft” or “final” by anyone with a role in the stage or access to the workload of such a staff person. Draft notes will freeze 15 calendar days after entry. Any supervisory review and approval of notes, therefore,

needs to take place within this 15-day period. Addenda to notes can be entered at any time; the system will mark the author and date of entry of the addendum and attach it to the note being amended. Entry of notes by clerical/support/on-call staff is supported through the ENTER PROG NOTE Business Function.

Service Plan Review (SPR)

Service Plan Review (SPR) information will be recorded via a separate tab outside of the FASP. CONNECTIONS provides online support for scheduling and notification of SPR conferences. Workers will record the scheduling details in CONNECTIONS and generate system alerts to all assigned workers and notification letters to family members and other invitees. The system will retain meeting and participant information for efficiency in scheduling future SPR conferences. Because the SPR tab is located outside of the FASP, it may be accessed whenever needed. Clerical workers may be given security access to schedule conferences and record SPR information. The CONNECTIONS case management system also provides support for the documentation of SPR conferences. Selected SPR meeting data (date scheduled, date held, invitees/role, invitee notification date, attendance indicator for all invitees, reason for not attending) entered on this tab will be carried forward by the system into the associated FASP Report. Workers may also record narrative comments regarding family input, meeting outcomes, and third party reviewer comments on the SPR tab. This information is *not* brought forward to the FASP. Service Plan Reviews are required for all foster care placement cases. They continue to be strongly encouraged for *all* cases.

Key Dates

The Key Dates tab is a “view only” window of permanency-related information from CCRS. It cannot be updated in CONNECTIONS and is only as accurate as the information that has been recorded in CCRS.

The following information is displayed:

- Children in Placement
- ASFA Day 1
- Due Date for Next Permanency Petition Filing
- Due Date for Next Permanency Hearing
- Deadline Date for TPR Filing Decision

Case Summary

The Case Summary tab provides a quick “index” of all the stages, open or closed, in a case. It mirrors the currently available FCP window in CONNECTIONS (pre-Build 18) that includes a listing of all stages and workers, but does not navigate the worker to other stages. The Case Manager or Case Planner initiates the stage closing process from this tab.

Child Case Record (CCR)

The system will automatically create a Child Case Record when the Case Manager records that the child is completely freed for adoption. All children who have been freed, including those who might not be placed in an adoptive setting, will have a separate, single-person, system-generated case. The FASP in this case record will be customized to the situation and specific needs of a freed child.

Interfaces

WMS

Upon the implementation of Build 18, WMS Child Welfare Services cases will be initiated through the CONNECTIONS case management system. The two systems will be kept “in sync” through an ongoing interface. The WMS hierarchy, in which Non-Services data takes precedence, will be maintained and users will be notified of the need to resolve any discrepancies between CONNECTIONS and WMS data. Note that WMS cases that are active at the point Build 18 is implemented will automatically convert into CONNECTIONS cases. After WMS case initiation, the balance of activities to open WMS must be completed and services will continue to be authorized in that system until Build 19.

CCRS

Until the implementation of Build 19, when the CONNECTIONS case management system becomes the system of record, workers still need to register the case, record the assessment and service plan (Plan Type, Service Needs and Status, Program Choice, PPG, Worker Function, Case Status) and record placement (movement), legal and adoption activities in CCRS. Since PPGs have been revised in the CONNECTIONS case management system, a mapping guide will be provided to assist workers (See Appendix). Workers will continue to receive cues from CCRS for entry of assessment and service plan data.

Appendix: CONNECTIONS / Permanency Planning Goals Mapping Guide

Permanency Planning Goals (PPGs) will be changed in CONNECTIONS to conform to AFCARS goals. Since workers will need to record PPGs in both CCRS and the CONNECTIONS case management system until the implementation of Build 19 (when CONNECTIONS becomes the system of record), this mapping guide is provided to assist workers.

Current CCRS PPG	New CONNECTIONS PPG
01 Discharge to Parents	1a – Return to Parent [Parent]
	1b – Return to Parent [Non-Parent Caregiver]
04 Discharge to Adoption	2a – Placement for Adoption [Upon filing Petition to Terminate Parental Rights]
	2b – Placement for Adoption [Upon Voluntary Surrender]
02 Discharge to Primary Resource Person	3a – Referral for Legal Guardianship/Custody [Relative]
	3b – Referral for Legal Guardianship/Custody [Non-Relative]
12 Discharge to Relative	4 – Placement with a fit and willing Relative [Non-Guardianship/Non-Custodian]
03 Discharge to Independent Living	5a – Place in another planned living arrangement [Discharge to Independent Living] <i>Note: May use only if the social services district has documented a compelling reason why goals 1-4 would not be in the child's best interest.</i>
10 Independent Living Unaccompanied Refugee Only	5b – Place in another planned living arrangement [Independent Living – Unaccompanied Refugee Only] <i>Note: May use only if the social services district has documented a compelling reason why goals 1-4 would not be in the child's best interest.</i>
05 Discharge to Adult Residential Care	5c – Place in another planned living arrangement [Discharge to Adult Residential Care] <i>Note: May use only if the social services district has documented a compelling reason why goals 1-4 would not be in the child's best interest.</i>
06 Prevent Placement	6 – Prevent Placement
07 Prevent Return to Placement	7 – Prevent Return to Placement
11 Protect Child	8 – Protect Child