



July 15, 2010

**New York State  
Office of  
Children &  
Family  
Services**

**David A. Paterson**  
*Governor*

**Gladys Carrión, Esq.**  
*Commissioner*

**Capital View Office Park**

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Dear Commissioner/VA Executive Director:

I would like to take this opportunity to update you on recent and planned activities related to the transformation of the CONNECTIONS system. The goal of the transformation is to provide an improved valuable tool for our caseworkers and child care workers when they are documenting their work with children and families. The transformation is based on feedback from the field and it will offer improved, faster navigation within the CONNECTIONS application while reducing the level of effort required for training.

I am very pleased to report that we have made significant progress over the past several months, to both the hardware infrastructure and the CONNECTIONS software. The hardware infrastructure has been updated with new servers and the most current operating software and database. At the same time, the application development staff has been working quarterly on over 400 improvements to the caseworker/child care worker experience. For example, a time saving direct access shortcut to progress notes was implemented in addition to a streamlined FASP error correction and output enhancement process. CONNECTIONS now contains a prioritized To-Do list and has provided voluntary agencies access to CPS information. What this means to your staff is that their access to the CONNECTIONS application should be easier and the system should perform more reliably.

Recent improvements to the report delivery system of the application include a change to a new software product called SharePoint. The two reports that have been moved to this platform include:

- The Open Caseload Inquiry (OCI) Report, and
- The Multiple Person Report (MPR).

Other activities that highlight significant changes leading to a more stable and user friendly system include:

- The Casework Contact improvement effort has been strengthened by a 3 tier strategy including:
  - 1,643 Laptops and Desktops were distributed to caseworkers responsible for field visits to children in foster care.
  - Best practices have been learned from a review of all regions.
  - A new Progress Notes/Casework Contacts Computer Based Training (CBT) has been developed and is available through training coordinators.
- The use of Portable Information Technology to support CPS caseworker's ability to be mobile continues with the current year plan to include thirty local districts, nine of which will be participating for the first time.
- We have deployed an improved version of a time saving tool (Dragon Naturally Speaking) that allows caseworkers to dictate progress notes and other information directly into CONNECTIONS system.



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Shortly, a geographic information system will be made available to the field. This will provide "Caseload Mapping" capability. The benefits of this new tool will allow our caseworkers to more efficiently and safely map their routes to their destination within the CONNECTIONS software.

In addition, field visits were made with local district and agency line caseworkers and supervisors to demonstrate and engage in discussions about the transformed application prototype. We will begin regionally based meetings involving local district and voluntary agency personnel in the coming months that will introduce various aspects of the "new" application. We will also identify tasks for districts and agencies to begin in order to prepare for the application changes.

There will be several readiness tasks that your staff will need to partner with OCFS to complete over the next several months. We are in the process of beginning these tasks now, with the first being the registration of staff for trainings that will detail changes to the application. These trainings will be conducted through two distinct modalities - web-based and iLinc modes. Using iLinc and web-based training allows flexibility for the caseworker to take the training at their own pace within the structure of their own environment. These training modalities may not be familiar to staff. In the coming weeks, there will be instructions and other training details on the CONNECTIONS website at: <http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/training/>.

There is still much work to be done for us to implement the transformed CONNECTIONS in 2010. We are committed to assisting you and your staff with this process.

We sincerely thank you for your past patience and your future partnership while we work collaboratively to design and create a reliable, robust CONNECTIONS system for our child welfare staff.

Sincerely,



Gladys Carrión, Esq.  
Commissioner

cc: William Gettman, Executive Deputy Commissioner  
Laura M. Velez, Deputy Commissioner CWCS  
William Travis, Deputy Commissioner, IT