

# MEMO

**Date:** August 22, 2002

**To:** Directors of Services and Implementation Coordinators

**From:** Zack Zambri, Project Director

**Re.:** CONNECTIONS Project Update

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The topics below underscore the progress of several notable achievements realized by the CONNECTIONS Project during the months of April through July 2002.

- ❑ Case Management
- ❑ Financial Management
- ❑ Data Warehouse
- ❑ Management Committee
- ❑ Technical Upgrade and Equipment
- ❑ Changes to Current Functionality
- ❑ Training, Communication and Implementation Support

The following narratives provide a detailed summary of the aforementioned project topics.

## **Case Management**

A plan to logically divide the Case Management functionality into two sub-phases has been developed. At the completion of the requirements work done by the Case Management Workgroup, the entire body of work for Phase 1 was reviewed. Given the amount of work and the level of support required to complete and implement Phase 1, a decision was made to divide this Phase into two discreet deliverables that will be identified in implementation as Phase 1A and Phase 1B.

Phase 1A will impact CPS workers. The improved Safety Assessment, Risk Assessment Profile and the Contacts and Progress Notes modules from new development will be added to the CPRS template in production. Phase 1B will impact all workers who complete the Uniform Case Record, and includes the Family Services Intake, Family Services Stage, UCR Assessment and Service Plan, Service Plan Review, Key Dates and Child Case Record.

One prime focus over the ensuing months has been to work on the UCR and the associated modules. The rules that govern the launching, completion, and approval of the UCR Assessment and Service plan are finalized. The primary goal driving the development of the rules governing the launch and completion of the UCR is to allow

work to continue, and not impede users from entering information in the UCR in a timely manner. The rules also provide for the efficiency of carrying specific information forward from one UCR to the next for modification as appropriate. Examples are Family Background, Safety Assessment, Visitation Plan, and Service Plan.

Members of the Case Management Workgroup had also expressed concern about the amount of information proposed to be collected in the Initial UCR. A series of scales that assess family, parent/caretaker and child functioning was added to the Assessment portion of all UCRs, in the new development. The additional questions were viewed as particularly problematic for CPS workers who must complete the Initial UCR on an "indicated and open" report within a very tight time frame. We have been working closely with OCFs Policy and DDPS staff to pare back the requirements for the Initial UCR assessment. The Initial UCR assessment components are now notably smaller than the corresponding components in the Comprehensive and Reassessment UCRs yet, still provide for the ability to collect vital information during the initial evaluation of a family.

Instead of thirty-seven assessment scales, in the Initial UCR there are thirteen scales. CPS workers will be required to complete the Risk Assessment Profile (RAP) in the Investigation Stage and that RAP will come forward into the Initial UCR where workers can accept it as is or, modify it to reflect any changes in case circumstances. (For indicated and open CPS reports, workers will also have an additional seven days from the date the determination is approved by the supervisor to complete the Initial UCR.) In non-CPS cases, workers will complete a subset of risk assessment questions and the thirteen designated assessment scales in the Initial UCR. "Insufficient information" will also be an available response on the Initial scales.

## **Financial Management**

### **Eligibility Worksheet**

During the second quarter of this year the Eligibility Worksheet has remained a focus project. Improvements to the original Eligibility Worksheet have been made and a revised version of the worksheet and user guide has been distributed. The revised version includes numerous improvements, among them are better navigational abilities throughout the worksheet as well as the addition of a summary sheet. The worksheet has also been changed to calculate the eligibility for Title XX services to families under 200% of poverty.

### **Financial Management Workgroup**

The Financial Management Workgroup met for three days, from April 8th through April 10th. The group consisted of members from the finance offices of local Social Service Districts and Voluntary Agencies, as well as NYSOCFS staff. The purpose of this meeting was to review the SSPS Phase II-A User Requirements documents (that were developed by members of the in-house workgroup) and determine if the Requirements would meet user needs. Based on discussion emanating from the Financial Management Workgroup, changes were made to the Requirements documents and consensus generated the ability to move forward with the proposed changes.

The workgroup is currently focusing on the User Requirements documents for SSPS Phase II-B. These documents will be presented to both Districts and Voluntary Agencies in a similar process as was used for SSPS Phase II-A. Currently work is focusing on the development of testing plans and implementation strategies for SSPS Phase II-A.

## **Data Warehouse**

### **Citrix Server Implementation**

Effective April 15, 2002 access to the OCFS Data Warehouse moved from a client based environment to a Citrix server environment. As a result, users no longer need the Cognos software on their individual PC, or need to wait for the software to be pushed to their PC in order to access the OCFS Data Warehouse. The Cognos software will reside on four Citrix servers that have been designated for use with the OCFS Data Warehouse.

As a result of implementing access to the Data Warehouse via the Citrix server environment the training documents, Step-by-Step Guide and Class Manual were updated accordingly. The training database was rebuilt and tested, including the updating of Oracle tables, catalogs, cubes and reports.

### **Data Warehouse Training**

The planning for SUNY Training Strategies Group sponsored training, for calendar quarters two and three, has been completed. Discussions have begun on the curriculum development for a one day, advanced topics class, tentatively scheduled to begin during the final quarter of 2002. Response to the current training announcement has been very positive.

### **Enhancements/New Development**

In response to the Children and Family Services Review (CFSR), three new Cognos Impromptu reports, related to CPS recurrence were developed and are available to users. These reports provide statistical and child specific information on children who meet the federal definition of repeat maltreatment.

Build 15 data enhancements were incorporated into the Data Warehouse data tables, thus enabling OCFS to report on the federally defined race and ethnicity categories in the NCANDS file submission. Data mart design was completed to support CFSR Program Improvement Plan (PIP) reports. Discussions have begun to explore ways to facilitate saving locally defined report templates, perhaps in a web environment.

The Allegation cube, which is an extremely large comprehensive data set, has been recreated in production as five single year cubes capable of counting allegations, reports and children. This means that the cubes now open more quickly. A CCRS Services Master catalog is in development, which would allow the extraction of data for any child receiving services, including preventive services.

### **CIN/PID**

CIN/PID went into production in April 2002 for the Data Warehouse pilot sites. Since April, all counties have had their data loaded into the tables and can use this application once users are registered.

### **Management Committee**

The CONNECTIONS Management Committee met on June 26<sup>th</sup>. The agenda included an update on current, as well as future CONNECTIONS Project activities, including information regarding the implementation of Build 15. Discussion also involved activities surrounding the implementation of Build 15.1, which is scheduled for release in September 2002.

The Committee was updated on plans for completion of the remaining 25% PC replacement project, which involves both Districts and Voluntary Agencies. The implementation of this Project milestone is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2002. A planned upgrade to the Citrix servers, which will take place in the fall of 2002, was discussed. This upgrade will augment the overall network so that it gains additional stability in the event that a Citrix session is interrupted by a network outage.

Other notable items included discussion surrounding the Accenture contract expiration, the first week of June, the extension of the contract with MAXIMUS and the CONNECTIONS Annual APDU (Advanced Planning Document Update) that was delivered to the federal government at the end of June 2002. Dialogue also included an update regarding the proposed phased approach to Case Management.

A presentation on the proposed Case Management Phase 1B Automated UCR was delivered. This instrument is a tabbed interface that contains tools for Structured Decision Making. An update regarding Financial Management, as well as various team statuses were also presented.

### **Technical Upgrade and Equipment**

#### **Voluntary Agencies Network Integration Study (NIS) Project**

The Office for Technology and the DFA-IT Customer Support Services staff collaborated to successfully complete the Voluntary Agencies Network Integration Study Pilot Project. As a result of this effort a selection of offerings, and their associated costs, have been developed and presented to Executive Directors and IT Directors at regional forums that began in June 2002.

The main objective of the NIS Project is to allow Voluntary Agency staff the ability to access the CONNECTIONS Application from their own (agency) PC. To support this a number of changes will take place within the existing infrastructures. The objective will then be to effect these changes with a minimal amount of service interruption for all users. Standards will be set for the integration of networks, with each agency's network being individually analyzed, and proposed solutions developed that will best meet the needs of both the Agency and the NYSOCFS.

#### **CONNECTIONS Desktop PC Replacement Project**

This project began in May of 2001 and continued through July 2002. The seventy-five percent PC replacement is complete in all Districts and Voluntary Agencies. CONNECTIONS Communication, Training and Implementation Teams provided support for the overall installation preparation of replacement PCs in order to ensure a smooth transition to the new environment.

Approval has now been received from the Federal Department of Health and Human Services, for the replacement of the remaining twenty-five percent of CONNECTIONS baseline desktop computers. Distribution of the remaining twenty-five percent is currently slated to begin in October 2002. This implementation plan will follow the same route as the implementation of the previous seventy-five percent.

### **New Citrix ICA Client ~ Citrix XP Update**

Currently project staff is working on an upgrade to Citrix functionality. This upgrade will result in improvements to the current Citrix servers that support the CONNECTIONS Application. Citrix XP has expanded features that will improve the delivery of the CONNECTIONS Application. An identified benefit of this upgrade is that the impact of network outages on the user will be minimized. Citrix XP is currently targeted for implementation in the fall of 2002.

## **Changes to Current Functionality**

### **Build 15 Developments**

Build 15 was successfully implemented in May 2002. Highlights of the Build included, additional person and resource search improvements, enhanced capabilities for person and case data maintenance, ease of use improvements in navigation and workload management areas, and collection of race and ethnicity data that was modified to meet the new federal standards. The Build also incorporated several new features to support the FAD workflow process that will streamline home development and maintenance, as well as provide a comprehensive case and home study record.

### **Build 15.1 Developments**

Build 15.1 is slated for implementation in early September 2002. This Build includes the introduction and implementation of two items, Vacancy Control and Local Data Maintenance. Both of these items represent significant functionality with both training and implementation impacts.

Vacancy Control will allow Districts and Voluntary Agencies the ability to maintain bed level vacancies and characteristics for the facilities that they authorize, thus providing real time access to vacant bed information for children in need of placement. This functionality will also combine existing CONNECTIONS licensing information with Vacancy Control data to provide placement search logic that will enable Districts and Agencies to search for bed level vacancies that meet the needs of children for whom placement is required.

Local Data Maintenance will provide additional data maintenance capabilities for both Foster and Adoptive (FAD) Home Stages and CPS Investigation Stages with the

implementation of the Local Data Maintenance window. This functionality will provide the ability to maintain demographics in closed cases, as well as the ability to correct mistakes made recording investigation information once the investigation is closed.

### **Training, Communication and Implementation Support**

The Training, Implementation and Change Management workgroup held their third meeting for this year on July 10, 2002. Participants included representatives from Local Districts and Voluntary Agencies, as well as CONNECTIONS Project staff. Agenda topics included a project update that described the modifications relative to Build 15.1, an update on the PC rollout, a status report regarding the implementation of Case Management, and an update regarding the Monroe County DSS evaluation of the AlphaSmart device. The agenda also included a review of the various Build 15 field supports, as well as an update regarding Build 15.1 items, an update on the various CONNECTIONS Project team's work products, discussion focusing on structured decision making, a review of Safety Assessment, Risk Assessment Profile and Progress Notes and, a discussion of the proposed stages of implementation for Phase 1A, Phase 1B and Phase 2.

Workgroup members were very positive in their response to the discussion of the Build 15 field supports. The members felt that the various supports used to augment the implementation of Build 15 met the needs of the users. Workgroup participants also expressed positive support for the proposed phased approach for Case Management, as well as the field support plan for the rollout of Case Management.

Members also discussed the proposed on-line CONNECTIONS Case Management Staffing and Equipment Survey. Participants provided feedback and verification of the survey design as a tool to gather necessary information to plan for equipment and training needs to support the implementation of the Case Management and Financial Management portions of the CONNECTIONS system.

This group continues to provide valuable input regarding the future direction of the Project with regard to all three teams, Communication, Implementation, and Training.

### **Training**

During this quarter five training courses were delivered by the SUNY Training Strategies Team to three hundred and thirty one participants from both Local Districts and Voluntary Agencies. These courses were:

- Building Blocks of CONNECTIONS
- Child Protective Services (CPS) Investigation
- Basic Foster and Adoptive Home Development (FAD)
- Advanced Foster and Adoptive Home Development (FAD) for Experienced Workers
- Data Warehouse

In addition to the aforementioned on-going training, a variety of training supports were developed and delivered to Voluntary Agencies and Districts to facilitate the implementation of CONNECTIONS Build 15. Instructor led training was provided to almost nine-hundred FAD workers statewide. An overview video, to introduce users to the key features of the Build, was distributed to each Local District and Voluntary Agency. Separate job aids were developed for both FAD and CPS line workers. These job aids could be used in conjunction with the Build 15 Preview Application that was made available locally for all Local Districts and Voluntary Agencies. The Preview Application allowed line staff to review Build 15 system changes in the context of their own case data.

Finally it should be noted that CONNECTIONS Online Help was updated to reflect the modifications that were implemented in Build 15.

### **CPS-R/CONNECTIONS Pilot**

A pilot program, offering a CPS Investigation course for upstate CORE/CPS-R trainees (in cooperation with the Center for Development of Human Services~Buffalo), was initiated on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. The goal of the pilot was to increase the integration of CONNECTIONS and programmatic training for new CPS workers. In the pilot program the delivery of the CONNECTIONS CPS training was coordinated with the delivery of the CPS-R class that workers complete after core training. Results of the evaluation were very positive with regard to the benefits of integrating the scheduling of these two courses.

Additional activities for this quarter included an adaptation of the CPS Investigation course for NYCACS workers and development and delivery of training to the new NYS Enterprise Help Desk staff. Technical support was provided both on-site and via telephone, regarding system related questions.

A number of materials are currently being developed to support the implementation of Build 15.1, including job aids for CPS Local Data Maintenance, FAD Local Data Maintenance and Vacancy Control. In addition, planning for lab-based training covering all major Build 15.1 modifications is in process. The CPS, FAD and Local Data Maintenance Step by Step Guides are currently being revised to include Build 15 and Build 15.1 changes to CONNECTIONS functionality. Revisions to include system enhancements in the Data Warehouse Step by Step Guide are also in process.

### **Communication**

Over the last quarter, the Communication Team continued to participate in a range of activities across the CONNECTIONS Project. One primary task of the team over the last few months has revolved around support for the implementation of Build 15. Throughout the past few months, ongoing communications were developed to keep users informed about changes in the CONNECTIONS Application relative to modifications in this Build.

In mid~July the Communication Team hosted a booth at the NYPWA Summer Conference that highlighted current and future activities of the CONNECTIONS Project. A range of both training and informational materials were made available to conference participants, including, information about the future direction of the Project, information on CONNECTIONS technical upgrades and materials regarding the specific modifications within Build 15. In addition, CONNECTIONS staff provided three demonstrations. The first demo involved the phased implementation of the Case Management piece of CONNECTIONS, the second involved the PC Replacement Project ~ the Remaining 25% and, the third focused on the Monroe County DSS Evaluation of the AlphaSmart device. All of the information presented was well received by the audience at the conference.

Currently the team is also coordinating the exchange of information necessary to initiate the rollout of the replacement CONNECTIONS PCs ~ the remaining 25%.

### **CONNECTIONS Intranet Web Site Update**

The CONNECTIONS Intranet site was utilized in a somewhat different way this past quarter. With the implementation of Build 15 a number of FAD issues were identified. The Intranet site became the conduit to expedite any of the identified FAD issues, and resolutions, directly to the users. This was accomplished via a new web page that was created and updated as information became available. Field response to this approach was very positive. The Intranet website has been utilized to make the presentations, developed for the NYPWA Summer Conference, available to all CONNECTIONS users.

### **Implementation Support**

In preparation for the release of CONNECTIONS Build 15, Implementation staff conducted regional on-site meetings to assist Local Districts and Voluntary Agencies with regard to the impending modifications in the Foster/Adoptive Home functions in CONNECTIONS, as well as other notable modifications to CPS functionality. Following Build 15, Implementation staff conducted follow-up activities to assist both Local Districts and Voluntary Agencies as they began using the new and modified CONNECTIONS functionality.