

# THE CONNECTIONS WEEKLY

## February 8 - 15, 2008



*Happy Valentines Day!*



### ***Need Help With CONNECTIONS - The Folks Who Man the CONNECTIONS APP\_HELP Mailbox Are Available...***

In the beginning of June '07 we announced the "birth" of the Application Help Mailbox or the "APP HELP" mailbox, as it is affectionately known! Until recently, this service was primarily available for local district staff to use - ***but now we invite voluntary agency staff to use this service as well!***

#### **Just a Bit of APP HELP Mailbox History**

This service became available for local districts in June 2007 - at that time, the mailbox was introduced as a new service for local district 'Resource Users' (and other key individuals at the local district) who were experiencing issues with the CONNECTIONS application, be they system issues or just questions about how to perform a task within the application. Since June the "mailbox" has taken on a few other roles as well, and has helped many local district CONNECTIONS system users immediately solve issues that they were experiencing within the application. Through the mailbox, staff contact the (OCFS/IT) CONNECTIONS User Support/Triage unit **directly**.

#### **How Do I Contact the Mailbox?**

And now, voluntary agencies can also avail themselves of this type of application help! Staff from both agencies and districts can access the mailbox by filling in the form titled: *CONNECTIONS Application Help Request* (posted to the CONNECTIONS intranet on the CONNECTIONS Forms page) and emailing the completed form to the following address: [ocfs.sm.conn\\_app@ocfs.state.ny.us](mailto:ocfs.sm.conn_app@ocfs.state.ny.us).

A few points about the address: please note that there is one underscore in the address, and the underscore has to be typed into the address in order for the email to be directed to the correct mailbox, and... if you are emailing 'out of our network' we ask that you tack on the following piece to the address: [@dfa.state.ny.us](mailto:@dfa.state.ny.us) or, [@nysemail.state.ny.us](mailto:@nysemail.state.ny.us).

We want to take this time to THANK YOU for sharing the success of this resource with us! Between your use and our ability to answer your issues, for the month of January we successfully answered 99% of the issues that we partnered with you to solve! So we encourage those of you who have not yet taken advantage of this tool, to contact us, and we applaud those of you who have contacted us and look forward to working with you to resolve any future issues!

### **A Few “Words of Note”**

To best provide prompt service it is critical that you limit the number of specified users who will have permission to access the mailbox. The staff who are designated by your agency to access this mailbox should be Resource Users, or other individuals who provide on-going assistance to staff in completing work in the CONNECTIONS application.

Please note that questions related to your agency’s equipment, access to CONNECTIONS, connectivity issues, and any Citrix or Webstar problems should continue to be referred to the OFT NYS Enterprise Help Desk.

So there you have it! Please spread the word...

### ***New York State’s Child Welfare System Transformation...***

#### ***The NYPWA Workshop Handout is Available***

For your reference, the handout that was distributed to NYPWA conference attendees who partnered with us during the OCFS workshop is now available on the CONNECTIONS intranet website, on the home page. Some of the discussion points that are included in the handout are:

- CONNECTIONS Transformation Objectives
- The New Customer Model for the NYS Child Welfare System
- The Transformation Model
- Current System Usage and Performance
- Addressing the “Form” in Transformation

Take a look into the future - be a part of the transformation!

### ***Data Warehouse News You Can Use...***

#### ***NEW Casework Contact “Summary” Reports***

The OCFS Data Warehouse Team is pleased to announce new Casework Contact “Summary” reports. There is a “Summary” report for tracked child contacts and a “Summary” report for biological parent contacts. Each contains two sections - one focusing on the overall number of individuals (either tracked children or biological parents) contacted and the other focusing on the overall number of contacts attempted or made. Please be patient; these reports may take several minutes to run. Documentation for these reports is available at <http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/datawarehouse/dwreports.asp>.

Data Warehouse users can access the Casework Contact “Summary” reports by following these steps:

1. From **Cognos 8**, click on the **OCFS Data Warehouse** tab, if it is not already open. [For help accessing Cognos 8 or the OCFS Data Warehouse tab, view the Quick Reference Guide at <http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/datawarehouse/dwstep.asp>.]
2. Click on **Casework Contact Reports**
3. Click on the link for the folder that displays. [Contract agency staff will see a "Voluntary Agencies" folder, LDSS staff will see a "Local Districts and Regional Offices" folder, and State staff will see both folders.]
4. Click on the link for the "Summary" report that you want to run:
  - Local Districts
    - Case Manager: Tracked Child Contacts Summary
    - Case Manager: Biological Parent Contacts Summary
  - Contract Agencies
    - Tracked Child Contacts Summary (VA)
    - Biological Parent Contacts Summary (VA)
5. Complete the report prompts to run the report for any completed month.

Requests for access and other correspondence regarding the OCFS Data Warehouse should be directed to [data.warehouse@ocfs.state.ny.us](mailto:data.warehouse@ocfs.state.ny.us).

### ***Records Retention Run...***

*(Please note that this piece is pertinent to local districts only.)*

The next Records Retention Purge Program is scheduled to begin **Tuesday evening, February 19, 2008**. This program will purge cases/stages listed in the **November 2007** "To Be Expunged" reports. Please note that if you have not already reviewed and made the necessary demographic changes, via Local Data Maintenance, to the cases/stages identified in the November 2007 "To Be Expunged" report you have until close of business on *Monday, February 18th* to do so.

- **Information About the "Expunged Report" (which will begin to be available on *Wednesday, February 20th*)**

Beginning *Wednesday morning, February 20th* those persons designated as Records Retention Report recipients in each local district will be able to access the "Expunged Report". This report identifies records that were expunged during the *February 2008* run of the Records Retention Purge Program and should be used by local districts to locate and destroy all records related to these cases/stages.

The "Expunged Report" has a retention period of 120 days and can be accessed via the Report Icon on the CONNECTIONS toolbar. Please note that cases/stages listed on the "Expunged Report" have been electronically erased from the CONNECTIONS system and once the purge process is completed there is no way to recover the case/stage or person information.

- **Information About the "To Be Expunged" Report (approximate availability will be *February 25th or 26th*)**

The "To Be Expunged"\*\*\* report will also be available to designated Records Retention Report recipients. This report identifies records that are scheduled to be expunged in the *next* Records Retention run (scheduled in 90 days). Local Data Maintenance

functionality allows staff with the appropriate Business Functions to make data corrections in cases that impact the retention period for indicated reports. *We would advise you to begin to work with the current "To Be Expunged" report as soon as it is received.*

### ***The Portable Information Technology Pilot Program - Report to the Governor and Legislature - January 2008...***

*(Please note that this piece was included in the Weekly dated 2/1/08)*

The interim report (a full report on the demonstration phase of the project will be available during the first week of March 2008), that highlights the success of the pilot program, is available for all to read on the CONNECTIONS intranet website. For your reference, the report is posted to both the CONNECTIONS home page (under the dated heading of January 28, 2008) and the Remote Access page (under the heading, Portable Information Technology Demonstration Project).

A bit of background on the pilot project - the NYS Legislature added funding to the 2006-07 Budget for OCFS to pilot the use of portable technology by child protective caseworkers. Based on positive pilot results, the Legislature funded OCFS to proceed with a demonstration phase of the project in the 2007-08 Budget. During the demonstration phase of the project OCFS included an additional 23 local departments of social services into the project and, based on first year findings, focused primarily on the use of laptop and tablet PCs. The inclusion of the additional local departments of social services enabled OCFS to test the technology in a wide range of organizational, technical, and geographic environments.

General highlights of the report include:

- A report of modest productivity gains achieved during the very early stages of the project
- The positive impact of the deployment of the portable devices have had on staff morale

It should be noted that a letter highlighting the content of the report was forwarded to local district Commissioners on Thursday, January 31<sup>st</sup>.

### ***A NEW Tip Sheet from the Professional Development Program (PDP), Rockefeller College, University at Albany ... Using CONNECTIONS Online Help...***

*(Please note that this piece was included in the Weekly dated 2/1/08)*

Hot off the presses...a **NEW** tip sheet detailing the use of **Online Help** in the CONNECTIONS application! There may be times when you are working in CONNECTIONS when you will need assistance completing a task, or when you may not be sure what to record in a certain field...it is then that you can turn to the **Online Help** in the CONNECTIONS application. **Online Help** is designed to provide you with the information you need to complete your work within the application. **Online Help** provides topic overviews, window descriptions, field definitions, and step-by-step instructions for common tasks, as well as descriptions of OCFS policies and best casework practice. In

order to “help you to use the **Online Help**” feature, PDP has developed the tip sheet titled: Using CONNECTIONS Online Help. The tip sheet is a quick reference guide to the **Online Help** system that includes info on how to access the **Online Help** system, descriptions and images of the **Online Help** windows, info about the Index/Search tabs, how to use the Glossary included in **Online Help**, info about the navigational features and info describing the Search Function in CONNECTIONS **Online Help**. For your reference, the tip sheet is posted to the *Step-by-Step/Job Aids/Tips* page of the CONNECTIONS intranet. To access the tip sheet just click on the *Job Aids/Tip Sheets* button in the upper right-hand box on the page.

### ***Another NEW Tip Sheet...the Records Retention Tip Sheet...***

***(Please note that this piece was included in the Weekly dated 2/1/08)***

Is the Records Retention process confusing to you? Do you scratch your head and just say “I’ll get back to this another time.” Well, if you do, we have a solution...the **NEW Records Retention Tip Sheet!!!** The tip sheet contains EVERYTHING that you EVER wanted, or needed, to know about Records Retention and more! The tip sheet answers questions like:

- Why do we do Records Retention?
- What is the *To-Be Expunged Report*?
- What actions do I have to take after I receive the *To-Be Expunged Report*?
- What is the *Expungement Report*?
- What actions do I have to take after I receive the *Expungement Report*?
- What reports will I see on my ‘Report List’?

This handy dandy little document was drafted, developed, produced and vetted through the collaborative efforts of several members of the Implementation, Triage, Security and Application Development teams! Thanks to the efforts of all of those fine folks!!!! For your reference, the *Records Retention Tip Sheet* is posted to the CONNECTIONS intranet on both the *Home* and the *Step-by-Step/Job Aids/Tips* pages. To access the tip sheet from the *Step-by-Step/Job Aids/Tips* page, just click on the *Job Aids/Tip Sheets* button in the upper right-hand box on the page.

### ***A Note About the Foster and Adoptive Home History Detail Window...***

***(Please note that this piece was included in the Weekly dated 2/1/08)***

CONNECTIONS staff recently became aware that between January 3, 2008 and January 23, 2008 the Foster and Adoptive Home History detail window was not being displayed correctly in CONNECTIONS. This issue had no impact on placement or payment processing and was remedied on January 23, 2008. Any local districts or voluntary agencies that ran reports utilizing Home History information during this timeframe should regenerate the reports to make certain you have the correct data. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

### ***New Postings to the CONNECTIONS Intranet...***

The following document(s) were recently posted to the CONNECTIONS intranet website:

- *The CONNECTIONS Weekly for the week of January 25, 2008*

- *NYS Child Welfare System Transformation (handout from the NYPWA workshop)*
- *Year 1 - Portable Information Technology Pilot Program Report to the Governor and Legislature (December 2006)*

### ***Weekly System Maintenance...***

Due to regularly scheduled system maintenance, the CONNECTIONS application will not be available on...

- ***Wednesday, 2/13/08*** from 5:00 AM - 7:00 AM
- ***Friday, 2/15/08*** from 5:00 AM - 7:00 AM
- ***Wednesday 2/20/08*** from 5:00 AM - 7:00 AM