



..CONNECTIONS NEWS..

for the week of September 12 - 19, 2008

Developing a more caseworker centric system

CONNECTIONS Intranet site: <http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/>

FEATURED IN THIS EDITION

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"Info to Know" for Caseworkers



UPDATED Information on the Q3-08 Quarterly Improvement Plan (CONNECTIONS Build 18.10)

On October 10, 2008, OCFS will implement the third Quarterly Improvement Plan of this year, Q3-08. Q3-08 will include important enhancements to the CONNECTIONS application that support programmatic changes, as well as several system improvements. Two of the major programmatic changes included in Q3-08 are:

- ❖ a redesigned Safety Assessment tool, which is the result of extensive work with a statewide team of users who partnered with the National Resource Center for Child Protective Services; and
- ❖ improved wording of risk factors in the Risk Assessment Profile to clarify the circumstances that contribute to risk of future abuse/maltreatment.

These enhancements were presented in the August 27th teleconference entitled: Changes to Safety and Risk Assessment to Reduce Repeat Maltreatment.

Q3-08 also includes system support for districts participating in the Family Assessment Response initiative. The other enhancements included in Q3-08 are recommendations from the Child Welfare System Transformation Business Team. These recommended enhancements are based on a collaborative effort on the part of OCFS, local district and voluntary agency casework and supervisory staff.

Other System Enhancements

- Progress Note font choice. There will now be a choice, in Print Preview mode, of displaying and printing Progress Notes in the current default (8pt) or larger (12pt) fonts
- The Unit Approver will now be allowed to locally maintain To Do's
- In Progress notes, once a family participant has been selected, "Focus" will be system pre-filled. This supports compliance with required casework contacts for children in foster care. If a family member is a participant but is not to be considered the 'focus', the caseworker can deselect the checkmark in the "Focus" checkbox for that individual family participant.

FAD Changes

- Criminal History Record Checks
 - Add Fingerprint Results value of Mandatory Disqualifier to comply with Federal Adam Walsh Child Protection Act of 2006 (will be in place for use beginning 10/1/08)
- Revised Fingerprint Outputs to conform to the Mandatory Disqualifier changes
 - Notice (English and Spanish)
 - Denial/Revocation letter (English and Spanish)

Family Assessment Response Initiative

The Q3-08 Build will contain system support for the Family Assessment Response initiative. This is a non-adversarial approach to the traditional investigative response in select CPS report scenarios. No determination of the SCR report is made. Chapter 452 of the Laws of 2007 authorized LDSSs, other than in New York City, to apply to the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to use a family assessment and services approach for a subset of families that are reported to the SCR for child maltreatment. Six applications were received and approved. The participating counties are: Westchester, Orange, Onondaga, Tompkins, Chautauqua and Erie.

CONNECTIONS system support allows participating districts to identify CPS Investigations for Family Assessment Response and open a Family Services Intake (FSI) and Services Stage (FAM) to document case activity. The FAM stage includes the following: progress notes, safety assessment, preventive risk assessment and education. Participating districts have their own Job Aid to assist them. Non-participating districts and voluntary agencies will receive an Informational Memorandum with further information about this initiative.

Preview

The Preview environment will be available two weeks prior to the implementation of Q3-08 - about September 26th. Preview is a 'sandbox' (like a demo environment) where you can see and work with the Q3-08 enhancements that will be implemented on October 10th. Preview takes a 'snapshot', a point in time picture, of the production environment, so you will see your actual stages when you log-in to Preview but any changes that you make in Preview to your stages/cases will not be reflected in Production, as Preview and Production are two separate environments, so that when you leave the Preview environment and log-in to CONNECTIONS, those changes that you made will not be seen in the application.

Preview Requests

Requests for Preview can be made by either the Director of Services or the Implementation Coordinator of your agency, listing the name and NT IDs of those individuals who you designate. E-mail Preview requests to: Donna.Cramer@ocfs.state.ny.us.

Q3-08 Highlights Document

The *Q3-08 Highlights* document presents a high-level overview of programmatic and application changes, modifications and enhancements. It is one in a series of tools that define, describe and detail the system changes and enhancements that will be included in this *Quarterly Improvement Plan*. The Highlights will be available on Monday, September 15th. They will be e-mailed to key staff (CONNECTIONS Implementation, Security, Back-up Security Coordinators, Resource Users, Directors of Programs/Services, and other keys staff) in local districts and voluntary agencies. The Q3-08 Highlights will also be posted to the CONNECTIONS intranet site.

Additional Q3-08 Tools

Other Q3-08 tools to aid in the implementation of these system improvements that will be presented and detailed in future CONNECTIONS NEWS are:

- An update to online HELP
- An Impact Analysis document
- A Job Aid
- A CBT refresher on Risk and Safety Assessments
- An updated Safety/Risk Field Guide
- Informational Letter about the Family Assessment Response Initiative



The Records Retention Purge Program

*****Please note: ONLY local districts have to ability to perform this function.***

The Records Retention Purge Program began to run as scheduled, on ***Monday evening, September 8, 2008***. This program purges cases/stages listed in the **June 6, 2008** "To Be Expunged" reports.

Beginning ***Tuesday morning, September 9th*** those persons designated as Records Retention Report recipients in each local district were able to access the "Expunged

Report". This report identifies records that were expunged during the previous night's running 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.

The "To Be Expunged" (approximate availability will be *September 15th or 16th*) report will also be available to designated Records Retention Report recipients at the conclusion of this cycle of the purge process. This report identifies records that are scheduled to be expunged in the *next* Records Retention run (scheduled in 90 days).

If you have questions about the Records Retention Program or CPS Local Data Maintenance, please refer to the CONNECTIONS System Build 15/15.1 CPS: Data Maintenance Job Aid (dated 7/30/02). The Job Aid can be accessed through the CONNECTIONS intranet website (CONNECTIONS intranet website > Step-by-Step/Job Aids/Tips > Archive Page > Build 15 > CONNECTIONS System Build 15/15.1 CPS: Data Maintenance Job Aid (dated 7/30/02). There is also a Records Retention Tip Sheet that is posted to the CONNECTIONS intranet site on the Step-by-Step/Job Aids/Tips page. The address for the CONNECTIONS intranet website is: <http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/>.



AFCARS Info - Data on AFCARS and Casework Contacts for Children in Care - End of September Deadline

Timeframes for reporting AFCARS data to the federal government are coming due! In order to meet these timeframes, data will be extracted from the CONNECTIONS system at the end of September. So that the federal report reflects the most accurate information, it is critical that local district and voluntary agency staff update the AFCARS information for children in care, **by September 30th**.

The AFCARS submission is based on a served population. Information needs to be accurate for children in care on the last day of the period or served during the 6 month period that began 4/1/08.

Correct and up-to-date entry of AFCARS information will illustrate and emphasize the diligent support that local district and voluntary agencies provide to children and families within New York State; thus providing the federal government with required information and avoid penalties.

AFCARS information includes the following:

AFCARS information from Placement Information Tab and Removal Information Tab

Diagnosis on Clinical Appointment window

For CCR cases-AFCARS Adoption Information window accessed from the Adoption Finalization window

More help on navigation for entering AFCARS can be found in the AFCARS job aid posted to the CONNECTIONS intranet site.

<http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/jobaides/JA%20AFCARS%20Job%20Aid%20v1%200%203%2008.pdf>

The following reports are also available to identify which children do not currently have diagnosis information recorded in the Clinical Appointment tab that meets the qualifications of AFCARS information.

<http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/datawarehouse/dwreports.asp>

For more information related to these activities please contact your CONNECTIONS Regional Implementation Specialist.



REVISED Did You Know... on Visitation Plans

Caseworkers report issues when updating Visitation Plans brought forward from the previous FASP. ‘Did You Know’ that it is not necessary to create a new Visitation Plan in CONNECTIONS in order to change the plan brought forward from the previous FASP? For example, if the visitations are increasing from bi-weekly to weekly, the change can be made in the active Visitation Plan. To do this, access the visiting plan tab (from the Visiting Plan node in the FASP) and highlight the appropriate row on the grid. The information from that plan will populate the data values. You can make the necessary changes and save the updated plan. This will result in the updated plan going forward. It is important to avoid creating a duplicate plan, because creating a new plan and having both plans “active” implies that both plans are occurring and will result in multiple plans displaying on your FASP print out.

Note: You can use the visitation plan that is in the current FASP or if the current FASP has been approved and you want to change the visiting plan, you will need to launch the next FASP due, if available for launch, or launch a Plan Amendment if the next FASP is not yet available.

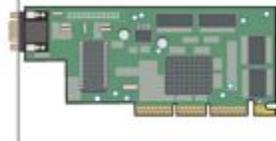
General “Info to Know”



New Postings to the CONNECTIONS Intranet

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

- The CONNECTIONS NEWS



Weekly System Maintenance

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

- [Wednesday, 9/17/08](#) from 5:00 AM - 7:00 AM
- [Friday, 9/19/08](#) from 5:00 AM - 7:00 AM



Office of
Children & Family
Services

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