



- **A Day in the Life: Regional Implementation Specialists** ([pages 1-3](#))
- **New Foster Care Training Now Available** ([page 4](#))
- **November Computer Training** ([page 4](#))
- **Casework Contact Deadline Approaching: Document Your Work Now!** ([page 5](#))
- **Check Out Past CONNECTIONS Clues** ([page 5](#))

**CONNECTIONS INTRANET:**

<http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect>

**CONNECTIONS INTERNET:**

<http://ocfs.ny.gov/connect>

## A Day in the Life: Regional Implementation Specialists

**CONNECTIONS Implementation Specialists serve CONNECTIONS users across New York State as a regional “go-to” person for any application related issues.**

CONNECTIONS Implementation Specialists serve as an invaluable resource for CONNECTIONS users. They spend their days traveling to and from their assigned districts and agencies, answering questions, researching issues, and providing support in many different ways as CONNECTIONS experts for local districts and agency staffs.

A fuller list of their responsibilities is outlined in the table to the right. But rather than just see a list, we thought it might be helpful for CONNECTIONS users to get a sense of a sample “day in the life” of two implementation specialists to more fully appreciate the vibrancy of their work and its importance to the field at large.

On the following two pages, Implementation Specialists **Brian Burns** and **Olin Sterrett**, from Region III and Region V, respectively, convey their own narratives of “days in their lives.”

Regional Implementation Specialists are eager to assist staff with CONNECTIONS-related issues. A complete list of specialist contact information by region is available at the following links: ([Intranet](#) / [Internet](#) )

### What do CONNECTIONS Implementation Specialists do?

The following are just some of the responsibilities of this important staff.

- Field ongoing CONNECTIONS and IT-related questions
- Support NYS OCFS in implementation projects like conducting security reviews, creating written help guides, etc.
- Work with districts/agencies to establish sound on-call, online systems
- Install hardware and troubleshoot software issues
- Remind users how to take screenshots when they are experiencing issues
- Report latency and connectivity issues
- Orient new users to CONNECTIONS
- Run Regional CONNECTIONS related meetings
- Update Regional Office colleagues on district and agency issues/practices
- Find out who has the answers to other system issues (ASAP, Justice Center, etc.)

...Article Continued on Page 2...

# Brian Burns, Syracuse Regional Office



## A timeline of a basic day in my life...

- ⇒ I begin my day by checking my email and calendar from home to determine whether issues or schedule changes have arisen overnight. I check the weather forecast, especially if I am traveling along Interstate 81 in Winter. (Central New Yorkers love their 'Lake Effect'). I also like to be aware of what the rest of the Syracuse Implementation Team is doing in case I have to pinch hit for them. They are my primary resource when I have one of those so-called 'senior moments,' so I like to feel I have their backs as they have mine.
- ⇒ I travel to the site to arrive on or before 10 AM. OCFs Region III has a large geographic range—one-way travel can vary between 30 minutes and 2.5 hours in the 7 counties I support. **I like to arrange my travel so I can spend at least six hours on-site.**
- ⇒ When I arrive on-site, I check in with the CONNECTIONS Implementation Coordinator, LAN Administrator, Unit Supervisor and/or Director of Services to ascertain if there are any ongoing connectivity or application issues, new users, or areas of special concern that need to be addressed.
- ⇒ I may walk around the unit to visit with new users, caseworkers from whom I have received recent emails and phone calls, and to let people know what desk I will be using that day. I like to be visible so that workers will come get me or email me when questions or concerns arise. **I feel my job is to make their job just a little easier.**
- ⇒ Unless I have a group presentation scheduled, I then settle into my spot and check email for issues that may have arisen elsewhere. **I place a great deal of importance on responding to questions and inquiries in a timely manner.** Even when I am in the field at a particular district or agency, I spend a lot of my day researching CONNECTIONS issues remotely.
- ⇒ When I am not researching a problem that has arisen or responding to a worker attempting to complete a task at their desk, I spend some of my time reviewing and preparing various Data Warehouse reports to be sent to Directors of Service and Unit Supervisors in a user-friendly manner. **It's all about e-supervision, you know. You have to keep those Casework Contacts to 95% or better and AFCARS information up to date.**
- ⇒ I also use this time to work on 'special tasks' as requested by the agencies I support, the Syracuse Regional Office Director and her staff, or the good folks in Rensselaer hosted by the Office of Children and Family Services. Current projects include the CONNECTIONS Security Reviews, the Citrix upgrade, specialized Cognos reports, the Non-Reimbursable project, and the upcoming FAR build.
- ⇒ Toward the end of the day, I finish my notes on what I've accomplished today and plan for tomorrow. I email a 'head's up' to my contacts at the agency I intend to visit the next day, letting them know that, yes, I really do plan to be there, and what approximate time I should arrive.
- ⇒ I leave the site around 4:30 after checking in with the Implementation Coordinator or their assigned designee. **I like to provide them with an update on what I have learned and/or observed during my visit and what can be expected on the CONNECTIONS horizon.**
- ⇒ Upon my arrival home, I will, more often than not, check my email for new surprises. Then, and only then, I can have that libation that I may so richly deserve—stirred, not shaken.

...Article Continued on Page 3...



## Olin Sterrett, Spring Valley Regional Office

### *An afternoon in the life of an Implementation Specialist...*

It's Friday afternoon and I am sitting at the desk assigned by the district director of services. The staff knows I'm here as this is my regular Friday afternoon session.

A colleague approaches. She asks if she can ask a question about CONNECTIONS. Yes! Of course, I am "Olin, the Support Guy!" The kind colleague tells me she has received a weird error message when logging onto the application. I race to her desk and I am greeted by an esoteric SQL error. I show her how to capture a screen shot (in case she was actually hunting for that skill) and open my portfolio's address book to send an email to CAMP.

I mutter under my breath, "Drat. I was hoping it was something I could help address."

### *On a broader note...*

I generally schedule my assignments and visits in advance, i.e., standing appointments. This includes all appointments: on-site support and special meetings. This allows me to establish a high level of camaraderie with district and agency staff, and such good will is paramount. **Scheduled visits allow workers to be aware I am in the office - the resource is available - laying the ground work to ask any question, either IT or CONNECTIONS related.** In addition, maintaining prescheduled site-visits and times also affords the opportunity to test previously asked questions in the training database and PSEUDO.

Oftentimes, the users at a specific district summarize how the week transpired; I offer technical assistance to ameliorate any issues identified by suggesting innovative tips and eliciting feedback. I ensure any further research and follow up is completed in a timely fashion.

**Questions run the gamut of subject matter: Permanency Hearing Reports, data warehouse, adoption, NYTD and AFCARS** to name a few. I assist teammates with questions they may have. I update my Tracker, which documents the work I've completed, and research OCFS related databases and applications.

Traveling to the next appointment (I try to schedule two, sometimes three in a day), I may receive a call from a user requesting an answer. Is it urgent? Does it require research or a site visit? I assess the situation and respond to the user, often multitasking between districts.

**While all this is transpiring, I know I am acting as a liaison between NY State and the districts and agencies that comprise our child welfare system.**

We're here to  
help!  
Contact your  
Regional  
Implementation  
Specialists with  
any  
CONNECTIONS  
issues! A list of  
contacts by  
region is available  
at the following  
links:  
( [Intranet](#) /  
[Internet](#) )

## New Foster Care Training Now Available

A new Foster Care Training Bulletin announces three training opportunities for foster care workers through the SUNY Professional Development Program.

These trainings include:

- One-Day Foster Care Classroom Training: Routinely offered in NYC and available upstate by request, this course offers a full day of classroom training that discusses education, health services, and Permanency Hearing Reports (PHR's) in CONNECTIONS.

Certain aspects of the one-day course are available as separate component classes taught through online learning systems. **Two courses** are now available:

- Self-Paced via TrainingSpace: Recording Education in CONNECTIONS
- Instructor Led via LearnLinc: Working with Permanency Hearing Reports in CONNECTIONS.

For more information, see the full course bulletin available on the CONNECTIONS website at the following links:

( [Intranet](#) / [Internet](#) )



## November Computer Training Courses Now Available

New **computer training** courses are available for the month of November in both instructor-led classrooms and via distance-learning options like Training Space and iLinc.

Featured in classroom training in November is the new course: *Word 2010 Level 2: Working with Complex Documents*. In addition, classroom training will feature *Visio 2010: Getting Started—Diagrams, Flowcharts, and Organization Charts*.

Online courses feature *NYS eMail: 90 Day*

*Email Retention* (applicable to HSEN email accounts only) and *Excel 2010: Charts and Graphics*

The full list of courses is available at the following links.

**November Classroom Training**  
([Intranet](#) / [Internet](#) )

**November Distance Learning**  
([Intranet](#) / [Internet](#) )

## Casework Contacts Deadline Approaching: Document your Work!



**The last day for data entry for Casework Contacts for the 2012-2013 fiscal year will be COB December 2, 2013.**

To comply with federal casework guidelines, case work contact should be at 90% for the 2012-2013 federal fiscal year, which ended on September 30th, 2013. You have until COB December 2nd to retroactively document casework contacts made between October 1,

2012 and September 30th of this year.

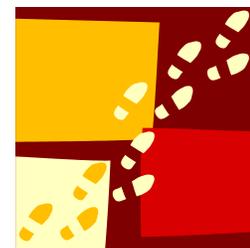
For the current federal fiscal year which began on October 1, 2013 and runs through September 30, 2014, federal casework guidelines escalate contact rates to 95%. We are already well into the second month of fiscal year 2013-2014, so start tracking your casework contacts now in an effort meet the 95% guideline.

## Check Out Past CONNECTIONS Clues!

Past CONNECTIONS Clues are available on the CONNECTIONS Website at:

[CONNECTIONS Clues](#) (Intranet)

[CONNECTIONS Clues](#) (Internet)



Office of Children & Family Services  
Gladys Carrión, Esq., Commissioner