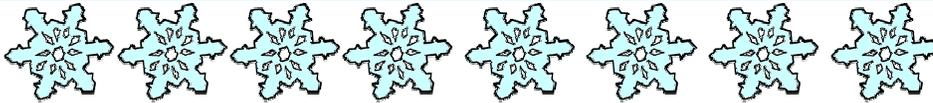


~The **CONNECTIONS WEEKLY**~
December 2 ~ 9, 2005



CONNECTIONS Performance Issues Update...

As one initiative in the ongoing effort address the performance issues that users have been experiencing lately, the Tech Team deployed a Microsoft patch on Wednesday, November 30th, and preliminary reports from users is that system performance has improved. We will continue to monitor the system performance through contact with the users and update you.

In an effort communicate with all partners, a letter, signed by William Travis, Deputy Commissioner of Information Technology, was forwarded to local district Commissioners and voluntary agency Executive Directors earlier this week identifying the steps that OCFS is taking to remediate the recently identified performance issues. The following is the text of the letter:

“Over the past several weeks, the CONNECTIONS application has experienced two significant performance issues: 1) dropped user sessions and 2) latency in the infrastructure. NYS Office of Children and Family Services technical staff has been working with technical staff from the NYS Office for Technology (OFT), Microsoft, Oracle and Citrix to mitigate these two issues. We have successfully resolved the first issue, dropped user sessions, by upgrading specific network components of the system. We continue to work on the latency issue. Most recently, Microsoft technicians identified a potential condition on certain CONNECTIONS servers. Apparently, they have experienced this problem at other sites as well. OCFS and Microsoft will be testing a fix for this condition over the next several days to make certain that it does not have any other negative impacts to the system. An Oracle technician has identified several performance tuning opportunities in the database and OCFS will analyze and test these with OFT. The Citrix consultants are continuing to analyze their environment and have yet to identify any problems, but we continue to look for tuning opportunities in this area, as well. OCFS and our technical partners understand the importance of system performance to the vital work of the State’s child welfare staff and have set the total resolution of these identified issues as *Priority 1*. Please be aware that as technical solutions are identified, they will be tested and implemented and will be communicated to the user community.

Templates for the Permanency Hearing Reports, Notice and Statement to the Court...

As you are aware, OCFS recently announced the availability of templates for the Permanency Hearing Reports, Notice and Statement to the Court. While these templates remain available on the OCFS internet website we ask that users refrain from using the templates at this time as we are working to remediate a few

recently identified issues. We will notify you when they are available for your use. We thank you for your understanding.

Additional Information About The Permanency Bill...

Please be advised of the following:

- that another important item on the OCFS internet website is the newly posted “Permanency Bill Frequently Asked Questions and Answers document”
- that the Build 18.7 Highlights Document is available on the CONNECTIONS intranet website on the Implementation page. This document describes at a high level the changes to the CONNECTIONS application to implement relevant portions of Chapter 3 of the Laws of 2005 (the Permanency Bill). It is important that staff begin to familiarize themselves with these changes.
- OCFS has developed, and will soon be sharing, two new Surrender Agreements (Judicial and Extra-judicial) and a new model Voluntary Placement Agreement (all available in both English and Spanish) to make these documents compliant with Chapter 3;
- OCFS is developing new regulations to further implement Chapter 3 to be filed on an emergency basis; and
- OCFS is revising the Model Contract.

We ask that you share this information with the Voluntary Agencies that you partner with.

CONNECTIONS Training Schedule... January through March 2006

The SUNY Training Strategies Group continues to offer hands-on computer training to enhance individual knowledge and skills using CONNECTIONS and the OCFS Data Warehouse.

The statewide schedule for January through March 2006 has been posted in the Statewide Training Automated Registration System (STARS). The link to the STARS website is <http://stars.bsc-cdhs.org>. To access schedule and registration information, follow the links based on whether you are from a voluntary agency or local district. Once you are at the schedule inquiry page, to search for CONNECTIONS training schedules, use the drop down menus to choose SUNY TSG (CONNECTIONS) for “Provider” and Systems CONNECTIONS for “Course Content”; then enter the date and region parameters that fit your request.

Pre-registration for all courses is required. Please use STARS for your registration needs. If you have technical problems with STARS, or need STARS training, please contact STARS Technical Support at 1-800-413-3210.

The full training announcement is posted on the CONNECTIONS intranet website on the Training Info & Schedule page.

****Please note that local districts and voluntary agencies should follow their agencies protocol/policy when registering for any training.**

CONNECTIONS Build 18.6...

CONNECTIONS Build 18.6 was successfully implemented on the evening of Tuesday, November 29th. Just a reminder that the Build Release Notes are posted on the CONNECTIONS intranet on the Implementation and News For Users pages.

CONNECTIONS Build 18.7 ...

Permanency Bill

As you are aware, CONNECTIONS Build 18.7 is scheduled to be implemented the weekend of Friday, December 9th. The Build Highlights document, that identifies the impact of this bill on the CONNECTIONS Application, were communicated to local district and voluntary agency CONNECTIONS Implementation Coordinators, Security and Back-up Security Coordinators, Directors of Service and Resource Users on Tuesday, November 22nd. The Build 18.7 Highlights are posted on the CONNECTIONS intranet site on the Implementation and News For Users pages.

When CONNECTIONS Will Be Unavailable...

- ***Friday, 12/2/05*** from 5:00AM – 7:00AM
- ***Wednesday, 12/7/05*** from 5:00AM – 7:00AM
- ***Friday, 12/9/05*** from 5:00AM - 7:00AM