NYPWA 2008 Winter Conference

New York State's Child Welfare Information System

TRANSFORMATION

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New York State's Child Welfare Information System Transformation

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Agenda

• CONNECTIONS Transformation
• Building on the Past
• Usage and Performance
• Addressing the "FORM" in Transformation
CONNECTIONS Profile

- Requirements
- GAP
- CONNECTIONS Profile
- Performance

Time

1996 2007
Desired Child Welfare System Profile

- Time: 2008
- GAP
- Requirements
- CONNECTIONS Performance
Transformation Objectives

- Improve customer satisfaction
- Change customer to **CASEWORKER**
- Create a **SUPPORT TOOL** vs. burden
- **MAXIMIZE TIME** with children/families
- Action is needed **NOW**
- Meet state and federal requirements
  - e.g., AFCARS
New Customer Model for NYS Child Welfare System
CONNECTIONS
Industry Expert Reviews

- Extensive user feedback (Maximus)
- Gartner studies
- RFI input
- Consultant reviews
Transformation Model

- Business Process Team
- Technical Review Team
  - Joint effort creates quarter by quarter incremental change
    - Eliminate / reduce / change / add
    - Simplify
  - 3 year transformation
Transformation

- Proof of Concept
- Incremental Changes
- Business
- Technical

CONNECTIONS
Business Team Objectives

• Improve overall performance of the system from a user perspective
• Improve user navigation with the application through a more intuitive web-based user interface
• Reduce amount of data inputs required by the caseworker through maximizing efficiencies in data capture
• FASP, Progress Notes, Reports improvements
Technical Team Objectives

• Simplify rollout process for system modifications
• Reduce time for data entry
• Provide increased opportunities for use of mobile technologies
• Decrease mouse clicks
Building on the Past

- Maximus Functional Review
- CONNECTIONS Functional Improvement Team (CFIT)
- Build 18 application enhancements
- CONNECTIONS Performance Improvement Project
Current Usage & Performance

• 30,000 distinct Child Welfare Users
• 14,000 distinct users weekly
  (30% increase in past 2 years)
• 750,000 Progress Notes completed monthly
• Help Desk tickets have declined
• Decrease in unscheduled down time
Top 6 Problem Types 2006-2007

- Access
- Citrix
- Error Message
- FASP
- Other
- Technical-Other
Total Tickets By Month 2006-2007

Jan 2006
Feb 2006
Mar 2006
Apr 2006
May 2006
Jun 2006
Jul 2006
Aug 2006
Sep 2006
Oct 2006
Nov 2006
Dec 2006
Jan 2007
Feb 2007
Mar 2007
Apr 2007
May 2007
Jun 2007
Jul 2007
Aug 2007
Sep 2007
Oct 2007
Nov 2007
Dec 2007
Addressing the "FORM" in Transformation
Quarter by Quarter Improvements

• Quarter 1 (March 7, 2008 launch date)
  – Improve Progress Notes (nearly complete)
  – New Spell Check Tool
  – Default view expansion
  – New closing codes
• Quarter 2 (6/2008)
  – Continued FIT improvements
  – Case Summary Report
  – FASP Approval Improvements
  – Progress Notes Improvements

• Quarter 3 - 12 (9/2008 - 12/2010)
  – Decrease mousework
  – "FAST" track to other areas of the application
  – Permanency Hearing Reports
Informing the Transformation

• Current advisory structures
• Continuation of Functional Improvement Team
• Communication strategy to be developed
System Modernization Effort

CONNECTIONS

Transformation

NEW Child Welfare System
Café Table Discussion

• General comments and reactions
• New look and feel
• Communication plan
CONNECTIONS Background & History

Federal Initiatives

The Department of Health and Human Services’ (DHHS’) Administration for Children and Families (ACF) coordinates the administration and financing of programs for vulnerable children and families. During the 1980s, concerns had been raised about the lack of information available on children in foster care and their families. To address these concerns, Congress amended Title IV-E of the Social Security Act in 1986 by adding section 479, which required the Federal government to institute a foster care and adoption data collection system. Federal regulations at 45 CFR 1355.40 set forth the requirements for the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 (OBRA 93) provided enhanced Federal Financial Participation (FFP) at the 75 percent rate (beginning October 1, 1993 and continuing through September 30, 1997) for development of a Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS). These systems were intended to capture and report data and to assist states with the administration and operation of their programs under Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. In implementing this legislation, regulations for SACWIS were promulgated in 45 CFR 1355.50. States were encouraged to go beyond the Federal data collection and reporting requirements and to develop fully functioning SACWIS case management systems. Under 45 CFR 1355.52, enhanced funding was made available for the planning, design, development, and installation of statewide systems that: meet the requirements imposed by regulations promulgated pursuant to section 479(b)(2) of the Social Security Act (AFCARS); to the extent practicable, are capable of interfacing with the state data collection system that collects information relating to child abuse and neglect; to the extent practicable, are capable of interfacing with, and retrieving information from, the state data collection system that collects information relating to the eligibility of individuals under the title IV-A program; and are determined necessary to improve program administration under a state’s plan approved under title IV-B or IV-E of the Social Security Act.

CONNECTIONS History

CONNECTIONS is New York State’s response to Federal legislation requiring that each state monitor and report on foster care and adoption services. New York’s child welfare program is State-supervised and locally-administered. The State elected to pursue the design, development, and implementation of a SACWIS-compliant system that would extend beyond data collection and reporting requirements and would be a tool to assist in more effective and efficient administration and operation of the State’s complex child welfare program.

The CONNECTIONS project was initiated in 1994 under the direction of the New York State Department of Social Services (DSS). DSS conducted a competitive procurement process securing contracted resources to assist with building the infrastructure and application to support the State’s SACWIS initiative. A multi-vendor approach was used to design, develop, and implement CONNECTIONS.

DSS coordinated interaction between and among these vendors and the State staff assigned to the project. From project initiation, State and local staff worked closely with these contracted resources to plan, design, develop, and implement CONNECTIONS.

Initially, the CONNECTIONS application was scheduled to be implemented in five phases, called “releases.”

- Release 1, implemented in December 1996, provides users with staff, office, and unit infrastructure and security administration.
• Release 2, implemented in June 1997, provides users with an automated intake process to record and support investigation of allegations of child abuse and maltreatment.

• Release 3, implemented in August 1997, provides users with support for Foster and Adoptive Home development, related resources, and providers of services.

• Release 4 was intended to provide the primary automated case management, service authorizations, placements, payment, and reporting features of CONNECTIONS. Design and development of Release 4 was completed and a field test was undertaken. However, as a result of difficulties with the new release and user reported problems with previous releases, Local Districts requested the implementation of Release 4 functionality be suspended.

The final aspect of the State’s plan was to include management and ad hoc reporting capabilities within Release 5. Work on this release was also suspended. In January 1998, the State dissolved DSS and created the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), which assumed responsibility for the CONNECTIONS project.

OCFS, in order to address Local District concerns, embarked on a series of steps to address and more effectively manage the challenges encountered during the CONNECTIONS development. Insights were gained from end users through OCFS-initiated assessment of Release 4. OCFS conducted an operational review of CONNECTIONS to evaluate the production application. This review involved numerous meetings with Local District users, voluntary agency users, and State staff and produced a series of release-specific change items. A Governor’s Panel, comprised of technical, fiscal, and programmatic experts, was created in 1999 to examine the evolution and status of the project. The Panel issued recommendations regarding the future direction of CONNECTIONS. The State immediately initiated actions to address the recommendations made by the Panel, which included fundamental improvements to the CONNECTIONS project structure, process, functionality, and underlying technology. Finally, in an effort to apply lessons learned from other states’ SACWIS initiatives, the State met with representatives from the states of Texas, Colorado and California to discuss key elements of their experience.

As a direct result, the following initiatives were implemented:

• An internal consultant was appointed who reported directly to the Governor’s Office, whose mission was to provide oversight, mediation, and guidance to the CONNECTIONS project.

• An independent “Project Integrator” was hired to support the coordination of the CONNECTIONS project, until such time as it is fully operational.

• An enhanced project management structure was created within OCFS to manage State and contractor staff.

• A complete systems requirements analysis of CONNECTIONS was conducted to include the review of Release 2 and 3 modifications.

• Release 2 and 3 modifications were identified that reflected Local District needs, addressed major time consuming work-arounds to save workers’ time and that established independence from Release 4 functionality.

• OCFS negotiated with Accenture so that modifications to Releases 2 and 3 could be implemented in the most cost-effective manner.

• Management of consultants was improved, and regular communication with the Federal government was reestablished.

Based on recommendations in the Governor’s Panel, and as directed by the Project Integrator, a series of builds, or logical groupings of system fixes and enhancements was developed to implement the
operational needs voiced by field workers. Major areas of improvement included: workload management supports common to all user groups in 2000, complete re-design of the Person Search logic and windows and introduction of new technology using Microsoft Visual Basic (VB) to simplify navigation within the Child Protective Record in 2001, additional common function improvements and introduction of VB to the Foster and Adoptive Home Development Record in 2002. Subsequent builds utilized the new VB technology to develop new functionality for Vacancy Control, a foster home bed search and reservation system to support NYC placement needs, and enhanced data maintenance capabilities in late 2002. A build implemented in 2003 introduced VB Case Management supports (Progress Notes, Risk Assessment Profile, and a redesigned Safety Assessment) to the Child Protective Case Record, and in early 2004 Build 17 was implemented to provide a new security structure for the remaining modules of CONNECTIONS. In early 2005, phased implementation of Case Management was started, and extended statewide to successfully complete in New York City in the fall of 2005.

State staff continue to manage, design, and implement functional and technical improvements to CONNECTIONS. They have successfully met a number of critical project milestones in the areas of application development, implementation planning, and technical infrastructure enhancements. For example, Governor Pataki signed the Permanency bill into law on August 23, 2005. The effective date of the law was December 21, 2005. This legislation streamlines the Family Court process and provides earlier and more frequent reviews of children who have been removed from their home and the family's progress toward reunification or other permanency plan. It also significantly impacts the timeframes for the completion of assessments, service plans and service plan reviews of children removed from their home and impacts the level and specificity of the reports which must be provided to the Family Court for permanency hearings. To accommodate the requirements of the law from a system perspective, the CONNECTIONS project team successfully developed and implemented Build 18.7 on December 16, 2005.

In tandem with OCFS’ efforts to modify CONNECTIONS to comply with the requirements of the Permanency Legislation, OCFS conducted a review of its implementation strategy for future CONNECTIONS Builds. Following the implementation of Build 18, OCFS received considerable feedback from Local Districts and Voluntary Agencies. In response, OCFS initiated a Build 18 Case Management continuous improvement initiative to deliver builds that included improvements identified by stakeholders as essential to supporting child welfare operations. OCFS successfully implemented these builds, Build 18.8 and Build 18.8.5 statewide on July 7, 2006 and on October 13, 2006.

Late in 2005, significant performance issues led OCFS Executive Management to engage Local Department of Social Service (LDSS) commissioners throughout the State in conversations about CONNECTIONS performance. As a result of the feedback OCFS along with the State Office for Technology (OFT) launched an initiative to improve the short- and long-term performance and stability of CONNECTIONS known as the CONNECTIONS Performance Improvement Project (CPIP). The purpose of the project was to develop a collaborative, high-priority action plan for short-term CONNECTIONS performance improvement, as well as to determine a future “to be” state and develop a plan to achieve this state. Several immediate short-term solutions were successfully implemented. The CPIP also resulted in four subprojects, three of which have been completed and have achieved substantial improvements in network performance and stability.

Beginning in the summer of 2006, OCFS also initiated a major re-architecture effort known as the CONNECTIONS Architecture Modernization Project (CAMP). After evaluating the significant application performance issues as well as the current status of the CONNECTION architecture, OCFS-IT Executive staff determined that the CONNECTIONS architecture must be refreshed prior to the release of SACWIS Financial Management functionality to end users. This decision was based on several factors:

- The current architecture cannot sustain the transaction volume anticipated for the Build 19 application without serious risk of system failure.
• The current architecture is based on outdated technologies that are complex and difficult to manage.

• The current technology requires significant system downtime to deploy software modifications.

As part of the CAMP planning effort, in August 2006, OCFS engaged Gartner Inc., an independent technology consultant, to assess the CONNECTIONS technical environment and review the State’s plan to modernize CONNECTIONS. Gartner agreed that the State’s technical architecture was outdated and concurred with its migration strategy to a single web-based platform that is scalable and capable of supporting the ever evolving CONNECTIONS application. These technology enhancements will be undertaken once a final technical platform decision is made. In early 2007, OCFS engaged Gartner again to perform a function point analysis (FPA) that assessed timelines and costs associated with the plan development as opposed to various commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) packages. Gartner confirmed that a custom built solution (as opposed to a COTS product) provided the most optimal solution to OCFS’ needs.

The State also engaged MAXIMUS to perform a field assessment of CONNECTIONS. This review was conducted to answer a series of questions, including: Does the system support New York State Child Welfare case practice? Do people who use the application do so quickly and easily to accomplish their tasks? Is the data maintained in the application accurate and up to date? Does the application support the Local District and Voluntary Agency business process? The following recommendations were made in the Maximus review:

• Modify, don’t abandon, CONNECTIONS.

• Delay implementation of any new functionality and re-train staff on current functionality.

• “Fix” and enhance functionality according to field needs coincident with the re-platform effort.

The study also identified immediate, short- and long-term recommendations. A series of field related enhancements, and system supports for new legislative initiatives were included in a series of builds in 2007 and will continue through mid-2008. A CONNECTIONS Functional Improvement Team (CFIT), comprised of representatives from 14 local districts and 5 voluntary agencies along with OCFS staff, was formed to review key findings and recommendations from the Maximus Field Assessment. For 2008, focus is on the remaining, short-term CFIT recommendations, additional user requests, and system support for mission critical tasks and legislation.

In June 2007, OCFS released a Request for Information (RFI) to solicit input from the supplier community relative to migration approaches for CONNECTIONS. Information provided by vendors and responses to vendor questions were used for informational purposes only.

To assist in determining priorities for the CAMP, two teams have been formed: a business team and a technical team. As a result of work by the CAMP Business and Technical teams, beginning first quarter 2008 and continuing for approximately three years, quarterly enhancements will be made to the application. Ultimately, the successful completion of the CONNECTIONS Architecture Modernization Project will result in a new technical architecture, in a Web-based environment, that fully supports all required SACWIS functionality, including the removal of all FCP components. The migration to a new architecture also allows for the maturity of the CONNECTIONS application to be preserved while incorporating enhanced functionality, such as improved usability and easier navigation available through the use of newer technology.

OCFS has recently engaged Microsoft to develop a Proof-of-Concept (POC) which will include enhanced tools that will integrate with the current framework as well as fast-track functionality for supporting case workers. It is expected the POC will be completed in 2008. Quarterly improvements to the application are scheduled to begin 1Q08.
Q1 2008 Caseworker Initiatives

Focus is on the remaining, short term FIT recommendations, additional user requests and system support for mission critical tasks and legislation.

1. **Responses to Functional Improvement Team requests** (remaining short term items not provided in previous builds)
   - A comment box will be added to the Life Skills Assessment where the user can document information with regard to these assessments.
   - Adding a grammar check to narrative areas and an improved spell check to narrative areas and comment boxes to provide more Word-like functionality in these areas.
   - Service Plan area of the FASP will now include Outcome and Activity blocks that were recently discontinued in the FASP output so that workers have the full picture of what has occurred.

2. **User Requests**
   - VA workers will now be informed that there are reports prior to 1/1/2006 (date of ADM) –These reports will be listed on the CPRS and FSS Case Summary tabs providing a more complete view of the CPS history.
   - New progress note values have been created that will allow the field to summarize their cross reference history. This note type will not be viewable by Voluntary Agency workers in INV stages. These note types can now be entered prior to a 24 Hour Contact which was a user limitation previously.
   - 2 additional progress note types will be created for those districts using higher level edits - Notice & Approval.
   - More appropriate Day Care/Foster Care Investigation closure reasons will be added in accordance with programmatic need.
   - FAD workers will now be informed when a CPS case involving a foster parent is determined.
   - The Permanency Hearing Petitioner information will now be enterable within Connections and included on the outputs.
   - The To-Do list displayed to user will now include all To-Do's coming due within the next 30 days. This view assists the worker in managing the approval of the FASPs coming due.
3. **New legislation\Program Initiatives\Support of Federal Requirements**

- Support for 2007 legislation regarding FBI Fingerprinting and out of state AB/MA checks will be implemented in the Foster/Adoptive Home Record summary.
- B2H - The Home and Community Based Waiver initiative is a waiver program designed to transition individuals who are traditionally institutionalized into a more community based setting.
- AFCARS - Include capturing the necessary, remaining elements for AFCARS compliance in order to improve NY’s submission. The design builds on some existing windows in order to complement the existing workflow and minimizes worker impact. This effort was undertaken at this time due to the delay of B19 functionality in order to preserve future funding.

4. **Bug Fixes**

   Numerous bug fixes in areas such as performance, system errors and access to data are also included in the build.
Enterprise Help Desk
Statistical Information
Samples From Other States
D.C. - Sample Workload
Ohio - Sample Workload

Supervisor, Boss Man

Case Worker, Worker 1
- Appleton, Joann [23097] - Opened 12/27/2002 - Ongoing Services
  5501 Zippecoodlesa St.
  Columbus, OH 43314

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<td>Appleton, Johnny Ray</td>
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Mumford, Mother [67320] - Opened 01/13/2001 - Ongoing Services

Smith, Mother [02376] - Opened 01/03/1999 - Ongoing Services

Case Worker, Worker 2

Case Worker, Worker 3
D.C. - Sample Allegation Entry
Ohio - Sample Allegation Entry

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**Setting**

- Setting Type: Unknown
- Address: 123 E. Main Street, Columbus, Ohio 43214
- Law Enforcement Jurisdiction:

**Allegation Description for Law Enforcement Reporting**

- Date of Abuse/Neglect: 
- Time of Abuse/Neglect: A.M.
- Comments:

Apply | Save | Cancel
D.C. - Sample Contact
Ohio - Sample Contact

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D.C. - Sample Search

![Image of a search interface](image_url)
D.C. - Sample of Navigational Path Used
Café Table Conversation

What are your general comments and reactions?

What do you think about a new look and feel?

What are your ideas for a successful Communication Plan?

Feel free to use the following mailbox for additional comments
CONNECTIONSCommunications@dfa.state.ny.us
Other Transformation Ideas

Feel free to use the following mailbox for additional comments

CONNECTIONSCommunications@dfa.state.ny.us