Impact Analysis

New Activities Window
(CCRS Transfer to CONNECTIONS)

Brief Description of Current Function/Process:

The Child Care Review Services (CCRS) is an automated system that has been used to track children in receipt of child welfare services and to document various foster care, adoption and preventive services (optional) activities. It is New York's "system of record" for tracking placement, movements, legal, adoption, and level of difficulty purposes. CCRS data is the primary source of OCFS' reporting to the federally-required Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS); plays a significant role in payment and claims processing; and is widely used for program planning and the monitoring of program and practice improvement initiatives. Therefore, the timely, complete and accurate recording of data in CCRS is of the utmost importance.

The system's technical platform and code base is outdated. Moreover, CCRS sits apart from CONNECTIONS, resulting in the need for child welfare staff to relate to two very different computer systems. The goal of modernizing the system and integrating it into CONNECTIONS is to provide users with a more intuitive and less "coding-dependent" interface that is conveniently accessible.

What Remains the Same?

- All statutory and regulatory requirements associated with the entry and maintenance of child welfare information systems data.

- Much of the logic that governs the entry of activities and modifiers.

- The consequences of incomplete, untimely or inaccurate data entry, including disruption of payment to service providers and/or disruption to reimbursement.

- The ability of a local district to assign primary responsibility to a voluntary agency for data entry (currently only NYC ACS).

- Most activity codes and modifiers (except as noted in the next section).

What is New or Changing?

- **Access**--The new Activities window will be accessible from the Search/Maintain menu on the main CONNECTIONS window. The Activities window will support searching for a child via CIN, WMS Case # or Stage ID (depending on the user's security, see below). Upon selection of a child in the search return grid, three tabs will display:

o Person Detail tab will display detailed person information on the selected child;
o Track Detail tab will allow users to view/maintain track and placement information; and
o Activities tab will allow users to view/maintain movement, legal, fiscal, adoption, and other information.

- **Security/Business Functions/Access**—

   Because this functionality has important fiscal, legal, and regulatory implications, a new set of four Business Functions have been created to manage security for the Activities Window. These Business Functions are:

   - Assign Maintain Activity (ASG MN ACTIVITY within CONNECTIONS)
   - Maintain Activity (MAINT ACTIVITY within CONNECTIONS)
   - View Activity (VIEW ACTIVITY within CONNECTIONS)
   - Maintain Case Initiation Date (MAINTAIN CID within CONNECTIONS)

   o **Every local district and voluntary agencies that currently contract with the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) in New York City to provide foster care services must apply to New York State to receive the Assign Maintain Activity Business Function. A communication with an application and instructions was issued in early September.** Initially voluntary agencies that do not contract with ACS will not be granted any of the three 'Maintain' Business Functions. It is assumed that districts and agencies will identify a small, select number of people to receive the Assign Maintain Activities Business Function. No district or agency will be able to assign staff to do data maintenance within the Activities Window without the Assign Maintain Activities Business Function.
   o Those individual(s) granted the Assign Maintain Activity Business Function can then assign staff within their own district/agency needing to enter or maintain data with the Activities Window the Maintain Activity.
   o Staff who will need to view the Activities Window for cases in which they may not have a direct role (e.g., supervisor, administrator, etc.) will need to be granted the View Activity Business Function.
   o The Maintain Case Initiation Date Business Function will be available only to district staff and will be needed to enter or maintain case initiation dates.

- **View/Maintain Activities**--As now, staff will only be able to view/maintain Activities data for a child in an FSS stage that belongs to their district or for whom their district/agency has been assigned primary responsibility by the district that "owns" the FSS (i.e., has case management responsibility).

- **Access via Role in Stage--**Staff who do not have either one of the business functions but have a current assigned role in an FSS may search for and **view** information on the Activities window for the child(ren) in that stage. (They may not modify the data.)

- **Voluntary Agency Ability to View/Maintain Activities (contracting with ACS)** -- Voluntary agencies that contract with the Administration for Children's Services(ACS) in New York City to provide foster care services must request the new Business Function *Assign Maintain Activity*. Those individual(s) granted the Assign Maintain Activity Business Function can then assign the *Maintain Activity* Business Function to staff within their agency needing to enter or maintain data within the Activities Window. Also, staff in those agencies with the *View Activities* Business Function (e.g., supervisors, administrators, etc.) will be able to view the Activities Window, even when they do not have a role in that Stage.

- **Voluntary Agency Ability to View/Maintain Activities (Upstate)--**Until now Voluntary Agencies that do not contract with ACS have not had direct access to the CCRS system. With the incorporation of CCRS functions into the Activities Window within CONNECTIONS, voluntary agency workers with a role in the stage will be able to view the Activities Window.
  - Initially, voluntary agencies that do not contract with ACS will not be granted the *Assign Maintain Activity* Business Function and therefore will not be allowed to enter or update data in the Activities Window. At a later date, if a district wishes to have voluntary agencies with which it contracts enter or update Activities Window data, a process will be in place for the affected voluntaries to request the *Assign Maintain Activity* Business Function.

- **Recording Staff PID--**CONNECTIONS will record and display the PID of any staff person that enters a transaction on the Activities window.

- **Activities Window Look and Feel--**The Activities window will be structured in the same way as other updated CONNECTIONS windows, with a Navigation Pane (left), grids and use of dropdown menus for data entry.

- **Menu Codes Displayed in Words--**Activity and Modifier dropdown menus will display codes and their English language de-codes.

- **Elimination of Unused Codes--**Various unused codes have been eliminated. Codes that pertain to NYC's Close to Home program have been added.

- **Timing for Data Entry/Search--**Currently, CCRS tracking and activity entry is available as soon as the WMS Case Number has been established, even if it has not yet been

sent to CONNECTIONS. After the Activities window is implemented, when a new FSS has been created and the WMS Case Number has not yet been updated to CONNECTIONS (since the nightly batch has not yet run) and the child does not have a pre-existing validated CIN in CONNECTIONS, the child will not be returned on the Activities Window search until after the batch has been run--generally the next business day.

- **Activity Report/Outputs**--The Activity Report and Activity Person Information outputs will be generated from links on the Navigation Pane and accessed via the REPORTS tab.

- **Hard Copy Report Conversion**--Reports that are currently printed centrally and mailed to offices across the State will now be created in PDF format and accessed via the CONNECTIONS Report List. The involved offices must designate a user to access these reports. A communication has already been distributed requesting that districts and agencies provide Person Identification Numbers (PIDs) for the staff whom they want to receive these reports going forward.

- **Family Relationship Matrix**--The Family Relationship Matrix, if completed and saved, will be available to view on the Activities window.

- **GIS Messages**--Information concerning changes to functions formerly performed in CCRS will no longer be communicated via General Information System (GIS) messages but rather through CONNECTIONS Communications, such as the *Technical Bulletin* or *News for Users*. User support will be provided via the Customer Care Center or the App_HELP mailbox (ocfs.sm.conn_app@ocfs.ny.gov).

Implications/Considerations

- **Security/Business Functions**—Administrators from all Local districts and from voluntary agencies that contract with ACS will need to decide to whom to assign the **Assign Maintain Activity** business function, as well as who will need the **View Activity** and/or **Maintain Activity** business functions (BF) as well as the **Update CID** BF (district staff only). Staff with a role in an FSS will not be able to maintain Activities data without the necessary maintain Business Function and specialists who currently maintain this data in CCRS will need the **Maintain Activity** BF going forward. Districts/agencies that do not wish casework staff to maintain Activities data should not assign the **Maintain Activities** BF to them. These decisions should be carefully assessed.

- **New Data Element**—When entering the activity codes for each foster boarding home placement or transfer, the worker will also need to indicate whether the placement is with a relative or non-relative home.

- **CONNECTIONS Access**--It will be necessary to provide current CCRS data entry staff who do not currently have CONNECTIONS accounts access to CONNECTIONS.

- **Report Recipients**--Districts, agencies and other offices will need to designate a person to receive reports previously distributed manually. An email requesting this information has been distributed to all districts and voluntary agencies providing foster care.

Recommendations

- **NR Monitoring**--As with any change to work activities, staff may require time to adjust. Given the role that proper and timely data entry plays in payment and claiming, administrators should carefully monitor that adjustment by keeping in close contact with affected staff as well as reviewing relevant payment and claiming reports (e.g., BICS Non-Reimbursable/Non IVE Expenditure Report). Districts should consider running a two-year **BICS Non-Reimbursable/Non IVE Expenditure Report** approximately one month before and one month after implementation. This should be in addition to currently scheduled generation of the one year **BICS Non-Reimbursable/Non IVE Expenditure Report** Wherever possible, clean up possible NR situations prior to implementation.

- **Business Process/Data Entry**--Administrators may also wish to review current business and staff responsibilities processes relative to the flow and entry of data in light of the transfer of function into CONNECTIONS. However, administrators should carefully weigh any change to current business process for data input. **The increased accessibility and ease of data input in CONNECTIONS as compared to CCRS could result in more errors if new staff become responsible for data input and are not fully trained.**

- **Dissemination of Information**--Local district/voluntary agency administrators should be alert to OCFS/CONNECTIONS communications and announcements concerning the new Activity window functionality **and share that information with their staff.** RIST meetings have addressed the new window and more targeted follow up meetings are doing so as well. 'Build Bulletins' will be distributed with updates on the status of the Activities Window Build and will include links to information and resource materials as they are finalized. All materials will be posted on the Implementation Page of the CONNECTIONS web sites.

- **Training/Documentation**--Staffs that currently have responsibility for CCRS data entry should attend training provided by the SUNY Professional Development Program. Other staff involved in reviewing input, supervision or quality control type functions may also benefit from attending the training. Training for this functionality will be instructor-led, computer lab training. This training will address the navigation and ease of use features of the new window, and also cover proper coding and sequencing.

  o A job aid will be available for staff who need to access the new window for inquiry;
  o A tip sheet will be available spelling out the security and business function impacts of the new window;
  o To the extent districts and/or agencies wish to more broadly assign the data entry function, additional instructor-led training sessions, and training material will be provided, as needed, after the implementation.

- **Training Registration**--To enable staff to participate in the training Staff Development Coordinators/Training Coordinators will need to enter staff in HSLC/STARS and make certain that a valid email address and User ID is entered in the HSLC/STARS profile for each trainee.

- **Resources**--Staff should be familiar with the information and training resources available to them to support their use of the new window: These will be announced in CONNECTIONS communications and Build Bulletins when they become available and will be posted in the Implementation section of the CONNECTIONS websites (Internet/Intranet).

- **On Site Support**--Local district/voluntary agency administrators should work with OCFS/ITS regional implementation staff (Internet/Intranet) to arrange on-site support for their staff in the weeks that follow the release of the new windows. These staff will also be available to provide presentations to administrators/supervisory staff in advance of implementation.