

# CONNECTIONS

New York State Office of Children and Family Services

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## CONNECTIONS Case Management Build 18.7 Permanency Bill Highlights

### Background Information

The Permanency Bill was signed into law as Chapter 3 of the Laws of 2005. As the implementation of the bill approaches, on December 21, 2005, many local districts, contract agencies and Family Courts have begun the process of preparing new procedures and practices to integrate the provisions of the law into their daily operations. The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) is working with the New York State Office of Court Administration and New York City's Administration for Children's Services, as well as local districts and contract agencies statewide, to support a smooth transition to these new requirements.

The Permanency Bill impacts several areas of CONNECTIONS design. In order to be in compliance with the law, as well as to support CONNECTIONS users, it is necessary to make modifications and enhancements to the CONNECTIONS Application. One of the areas of change impacting users is the frequency of permanency hearings for:

- children who have entered foster care as abused or neglected children (Family Court Act Article 10);
- children who have entered foster care through a voluntary placement agreement (§384-a of the Social Services Law);
- children who have been surrendered for adoption (Social Services Law §384);
- foster children who are *completely legally free for adoption*, whether in foster care pursuant to Family Court Act Articles 3 (juvenile delinquent), 7 (PINS), or 10 (abused/neglected), or by voluntary placement or surrender; and
- children placed by the court directly with a relative or other suitable person as an outcome of a Family Court Article 10 matter.
- It will also apply to Unaccompanied Refugee Minors in foster care.

The initial permanency hearing for non-completely freed Article 10, voluntarily placed or Article 651.b children must be commenced on the date of removal from home plus 60 days plus 6 months - no later than 8 months from the removal to placement. The Initial Permanency Hearing for a completely freed child must be commenced immediately following an approval of a surrender or termination of parental rights disposition; or no later than 30 days after the court hearing completely freeing the child. Subsequent Permanency Hearings for freed and non-freed children must be commenced no later than 6 months following the preceding permanency hearing. This is a change from the twelve-month cycle that has been the standard.

The court has the authority to establish a "Date Certain" at an earlier date than the timeframes listed above. A "Date Certain" for the next permanency hearing will be set by the court at the removal hearing, the hearing approving a voluntary placement agreement or surrender, or the previous permanency hearing so that the families and child welfare staff know when the next permanency hearing will take place. The "Date Certain" is entered in CCRS Legal Activities in modifier D and this date is pulled into CONNECTIONS as a view only

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data field on the Removal Information tab. Alerts to the assigned workers will be generated based upon this "Date Certain".

No petitions are filed for this population and legal authority is retained without any lapses, as the court holds continuing jurisdiction. It is important to note that this change does not apply to children subject to Article 3 or Article 7 proceedings, unless they are *completely legally freed for adoption*. The necessity of filing petitions for permanency hearings for non-freed children subject to Article 3 or Article 7 remains, as does the twelve-month cycle for permanency hearings.

## Application Changes

The following information will identify and describe the specific modules within the CONNECTIONS Application that will be modified in Build 18.7.

- **Tracked Child Detail Window:** A new tab will be added to Tracked Child Detail titled "Removal Information". This is where the "Date Certain" will be displayed and other removal information will be entered.
- **Family Assessment & Service Plan:** A Removal Update pushbutton will be added on the main FASP window to allow for completion and submission of required information (foster care issues or non-ldss information and the service plan) during the period that a periodic FASP is in process and can not be completed or approved in time to inform completion of the permanency report.
- **FASP Reports (Includes Plan Amendment Report):** All FASP reports will be updated to include the new removal information.
- **Plan Amendment:** A new status change will appear on the Plan Amendment Maintenance window for direct placements with relatives or other suitable persons under Article 10 of the FCA. Child Entering/Reentering Direct Placement with a Relative/Resource.
- **Non-LDSS Custody:** The question appearing on the Appropriateness of Alternative Setting pop-up window has been modified.
- **Foster Care Issues:** The first question on the Activities Prior to Placement tab on the Appropriateness of Placement window has been modified.
- **Event List:** When the final approval occurs for a Removal Update report, a navigable event will be created; Removal Updates will not appear on the FASP tree.
- **Approval Status:** The system will navigate the approver to the Removal Update report.

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- **Person Merge/Split:** The Person Merge/Split process will be modified to incorporate new database tables that contain the Removal Information.
- **CCRS Extract – New or Existing:** The “Date Certain” is pulled from CCRS on a daily basis and brought over into CONNECTIONS.
- **New Permanency Report Alert:** Workers will receive alerts based on the “Date Certain”, that the permanency hearing report is coming due.
- **New SPR Alert:** Workers will receive alerts based upon removal and “Date Certain”, that an SPR/Consultation is coming due.
- **New Plan Amendment Alert:** Workers will receive alerts based upon removal information, that a plan amendment for a child who has been placed in foster care or direct care is due.
- **Case Summary FSS Tab:** A Family Services stage that has a Removal Update report pending approval displays a pop message when the user attempts to close the FSS.
- **Key Dates:** The Key Dates tab will be enabled for those stages closed prior to the implementation of the Build 18.7 permanency changes. The Key Dates tab will be disabled for all open and closed stages post implementation of the Build 18.7 permanency changes, because the Permanency law has changed some of the calculations.