CONNECTIONS CASE MANAGEMENT (BUILD 18)
SELF-ASSESSMENT

Background

CONNECTIONS Case Management (Build 18) establishes a single electronic case record for ongoing child welfare services cases and extends critical CONNECTIONS functionality to these cases for the first time. The extension of case management functionality to services cases joins over 10,000 new local district and contract agency Preventive Services, Foster Care and Adoption staff to the CONNECTIONS system. It also calls for the re-engineering of work processes to take advantage of system benefits and efficiencies and to accommodate the demands of cooperative work within a single record.

Due to the scope and complexity of CONNECTIONS Case Management, there will need to be an intensive period of preparation. OCFS has prepared a set of tools to assist districts and agencies to engage in a successful implementation preparation process. One of these tools is the CONNECTIONS Case Management Self Assessment. Use of this guided self-assessment process will assist local district and agency staff to organize their planning and preparation efforts. It provides a structured means to identify and assess the internal and interagency work processes that will be affected by the new system and that may require re-engineering. The action plan that the district or agency develops in response to the self assessment will support a smooth transition into the CONNECTIONS Case Management environment and better staff acceptance of programmatic and system changes.

It is critically important that before you complete this self-assessment that the Implementation Team have both a conceptual and real understanding of Build 18. Only with such an understanding will the team be able to sufficiently assess the changes Build 18 will have on your organization in terms of casework practice, business processes and case documentation. The *Impact Analysis* series of documents, which may be found on the OCFS/CONNECTIONS website, should be reviewed by the district or agency implementation team prior to beginning work on the Self-Assessment. Those documents will serve as a useful reference tool while working on the self-assessment.

The self-assessment consists of a series of assessment items grouped under topical section headings. Each assessment item is stated as a benchmark against which the district or agency should assess its current state of readiness. Any “gap” between current readiness and the benchmark should be noted in the space provided under each item. The team working on the self-assessment should then record the action steps to eliminate the “gap” in the space provided at the end of each section

For example, item one under Section I addresses the designation of an Implementation Coordinator. The gap statement under this item might read: “The former person designated as Implementation Coordinator left the agency and has not been replaced.” The Action Item at the end of Section I might read:

Section I Action Items	Responsible	Due
Designate Person “X” as Implementation Coordinator	Executive Director	1/1/04

All of the action items, taken together, constitute the district or agency’s implementation plan. As with any plan, it will be continually reviewed and modified as the team learns more abut the application and its impact on its operations.

The district or agency's Implementation Coordinator and Implementation Team should conduct this self-assessment. The team should consist of a cross section of staff affected by the implementation of CONNECTIONS Case Management (see Section I). It is recommended that the team meet at least bi-weekly to collect and analyze the information necessary to conduct the assessment and to monitor progress toward achieving the implementation plan. It is also recommended that the team be empowered, or directly report to a member of the organization that is empowered, to make decisions and direct achievement of action items by the appropriate staff within the organization.

CONNECTIONS Regional Implementation staff are available to facilitate and support work team meetings as well as help arrange for training or technical support in any area where the Implementation Team determines a need for such assistance. . The names and contact information for these staff are contained on the OCFS/CONNECTIONS website.

Section I – Organizing the Implementation of CONNECTIONS Case Management

The successful implementation of CONNECTIONS Case Management will require a concerted effort over a sustained period. The accomplishment of the tasks involved in preparing to implement the system will be far more manageable if the responsibility for preparation is shared by a team and if all of the preparation steps are performed in a logical sequence. An early investment in organizing activities will reduce the overall workload and the facilitate staff's transition.

1. The district or agency has designated an Implementation Coordinator and afforded that person the responsibility and authority necessary to prepare the district for implementation. (See Role of Implementation Coordinator in the Implementation section of the OCFS\CONNECTIONS web page).

Gap:

2. The district has formed or updated the membership of its Implementation Team to support the Implementation Coordinator, to conduct this self-assessment, to develop an implementation plan and to accomplish all plan activities and objectives.

- At a minimum, the team consists of representatives of the following:
    - Children's Services Administration
    - Child Protective Services
    - Foster Care
    - Preventive Services
    - Adoption
    - Quality Assurance/Third Party Review
    - Staff Development
    - LAN Administrator
    - Security Coordinator
    - Data Warehouse Coordinator

- The team consists of representatives of various levels in the organization, including administrative staff who can develop the policy and procedures needed to maintain good casework practices and efficient business processes and line and supervisory staff who can assess the ramifications of the Build from the user's perspective.

.

- The team uses standard workgroup techniques to accomplish its objectives, including:
    - Shared understanding of purpose and outcomes
    - An established meeting schedule that is adhered to by all
    - Agendas, meeting minutes
    - Assignment of specific follow-up tasks (action items) with deadlines
    - Procedure to refer unresolved issues to decision makers for resolution
    - Formation of sub-groups as needed

- The team has developed a process for maximizing staff input into problem solving and business process re-engineering and for communicating team decisions and business process changes to all staff.

- The team has developed a process for monitoring achievement and making necessary revisions to the action plan

Gap:

3. The district or agency has identified staff to serve as Resource Users ("helpers") to support other staff through the implementation of CONNECTIONS Case Management. **Optional** (See "Resource User Job Description" as contained on the OCFS/CONNECTIONS website for additional details.)

Gap:

4. As a subcommittee or work team reporting to the Implementation Team, the district or agency has formed a Data Clean-up Team that will address discrepancies in WMS/CCRS (legacy) and existing CONNECTIONS data (primarily a LDSS concern). Please see Section IV for additional sel-assessment items on this subject.

Gap:

Section I Action Items	Responsible	Due

Section II – General Readiness Issues

1. Key administrators and Implementation Team members have attained a basic understanding of how CONNECTIONS Case Management will likely affect local district or agency operations and have shared this information with their own staff. Resources to facilitate such understanding include:
    - Teleconferences or videotapes of the teleconferences
    - Managerial orientation meetings and regional forums
    - Review of the CONNECTIONS Reference Guide for Managers
    - Review of the Impact Analysis series of documents. These documents are available at OCFS/CONNECTIONS website

Gap:

2. The planning to implement CONNECTIONS Case Management is made a district or agency priority. This is demonstrated by:
    - "Sponsorship" of the planning effort by an executive level staff person
    - Coordination of this effort with other state, district or agency initiatives and priorities.
    - Explanation of the significance and impact of Connections Case Management preparation and implementation to key external stakeholders, such as:
        - Courts, attorneys
        - Funding bodies, financial management agencies
        - Agency partners, community groups, advocacy groups
        - Labor organizations, professional organizations
        - Families, clients
    - A willingness to engage and learn from the experiences and perspectives of other counties and agencies.

Gap:

4. The local district or agency has established a plan to enable all casework staff **to receive the full range of** CONNECTIONS Case Management program and systems classroom and lab-based lab training. This includes plans for case coverage while large groups of staff are in training.

Gap:

5. The local district and agency has reviewed its contracts and where needed updated its contracts to reflect operational and procedural changes as more fully described in Section VI of this self assessment.

Gap:

6. The local district or agency has established a procedure for contacting the New York State Office for Technology (NYS OFT) Enterprise Help Desk. This involves determining which staff members are designated to make the calls (e.g., LAN Administrator, Supervisors, Caseworkers), and which staff members are designated contact representatives for return calls from Help Desk staff.

Section II Action Items	Responsible	Due

Section III – Staff Computer Use and Literacy

Working in an automated environment may represent a significant adjustment for some staff. Local districts and agencies may wish to take advantage of the preparation period in advance of CONNECTIONS implementation to assist staff acquire needed computer literacy skills.

1. The district or agency has established a clear expectation that casework activities will be documented in the CONNECTIONS system and have a plan to monitor staff compliance with these expectations
Gap:

2. Casework staff currently perform/document their work at an acceptable level of proficiency, including the UCR and progress note templates, using CONNECTIONS or local computer system equipment.

Gap:

3. Staff have the skills needed to perform work on a computer system. A tool to assist administrators assess the computer literacy of individual staff is attached to this self-assessment.

Gap:

Section III Action Items	**Responsible**	**Due**

Section IV – Data Clean-up

There will be an automated conversion of active WMS Services cases to CONNECTIONS on the date a given local district is implemented. Where families are known to both WMS and CONNECTIONS, the extent to which case and person data match will reduce the amount of work that staff will need to perform after the implementation has occurred. OCFS will provide reports to local districts pointing to potential discrepancies in data between the systems. In addition OCFS has a cadre of staff to assist local districts perform data clean up.

1. The district has developed a plan to reduce discrepancies between the legacy and CONNECTIONS systems to maximize the number of cases that will successfully convert when the district is implemented. This plan provides for:
   - Assignment of specific staff to manage and/or conduct the clean up effort
   - Timelines for the completion of work
   - Use of OCFS-generated clean-up reports
   - Use of OCFS staff to assist with clean up, including the scope of such staff's responsibilities
   - Assessing progress

Gap:

Section IV Action Items	Responsible	Due

Section V – Staff Access to Automation Equipment

1. The local district or agency has determined that sufficient computer equipment is available to staff to enable them to conduct their work in CONNECTIONS. This determination takes into account:
    - The amount of time staff will need access to computers
    - The potential for using non-CONNECTIONS equipment, linked to the network through high speed connectivity or through network integration services (NIS)
    - Redeployment of existing equipment to staff with greater need
    - Equipment sharing among workers, if necessary
    - Printer availability

Gap:

Section V Action Items **Responsible** **Due**

Section VI – Program and Operational Considerations

1. District or agency staff have a thorough understanding and an appreciation for the need to maintain the confidentiality of all of information to which they have access in CONNECTIONS. The amount and type of information to which staff will have access will be significantly increased. Toward that end, district/agency administrators have:
   - Reviewed the proposed OCFS regulations regarding CONNECTIONS and the associated confidentiality provisions and communicated the importance of adhering to these regulations to staff
   - Reviewed the need to establish or update existing internal procedures concerning the confidentiality of information
   - Set expectations for supervisors to continually assess staff adherence to confidentiality standards

(Note that the Self Assessment for Security for Case Management (Build 17) addresses the issue of confidentiality and system security in greater detail.)

Gap:

2. District and agency administrators have communicated their expectations and have prepared staff to work collaboratively with other assigned workers within a single, electronic FAMILY case record. Roles and handoffs have been defined to the extent possible in advance, including:
   - Designation of the Case Planner role generally and when a district and one or more agencies have a role in the case
   - Responsibility for case opening in WMS once the process is triggered in CONNECTIONS and for resolving discrepancies that may develop
   - Responsibility for early Family Service Stage tasks such as completion of the Family Relationship Matrix, Primary/Secondary Caretaker designation and Program Choice/PPG information

Gap:

3. Administrators have reviewed the Impact Analysis pertaining to the Family Services Intake and have modified work processes and procedures to accommodate the online recording of intakes. Matters to be considered include:

- Conducting case and person searches in CONNECTIONS early in the intake process
- Designation of staff to record Family Services Intake for non-CPS intakes (including which staff to receive the "Create FSI" business function)
- Supervisory review prior to submission to a local district or prior to stage-progressing the intake to the Family Service Stage
- Prompt action of agency submissions by LDSS to permit continued work by the agency
- Whether the LDSS will require completion of Requested Services
- The need for the LDSS to build a single Family Services Intake unit within CONNECTIONS to accept electronically submitted intakes from agencies and for agencies to build a single Family Services Assign unit to electronically accept case assignments from local districts.
- Decide under what circumstances staff will record requests for information and referral. The local district needs to decide if it will customize the standard services listing

Gap:

4. Administrators have reviewed the Impact Analysis pertaining to the **process** of recording assessment and service plans in CONNECTIONS and have made appropriate adjustments to work processes and procedures. Matters to be considered include:

   - Development of cooperative working arrangements between all staff in the district and agencies where they share a role in a family case.
   - Establishment of communication channels for on-going problem solving
   - Responsibilities and communication prior to launching a FASP, including verification of program choice, PPG and caretaker information and how to handle situations where previously due FASPS are not launched or are in process
   - Whether the Case Planner or CPS Worker/Monitor will conduct and record Safety and Risk Assessments
   - Timeframes for completing FASP components, completing the Case Planner Summary (where applicable) and submission deadlines
   - Supervisory review of:
     - Case Worker contributions to the FASP
     - The FASP prior to Case Planner's submission to the Case Manager (supported by the system but not required)
   - How to enter assessment and service plan information from non-CONNECTIONS users, including out-of-State and non-OCFS licensed agencies
   - That staff are making appropriate changes to the Service Plan as warranted by a status change recorded in a plan amendment and whether the district or agency will record optional status changes on a Plan Amendment (e.g., changes to Visit Plan)
   - Which components of the FASP will be printed and shared with families
   - Coordination responsibilities of a Case Planner

Gap:

5. Administrators have communicated their expectations that staff conduct assessment and service planning within the framework of family-focused, strength-based, outcome focused casework practice and structured decision making. Staff are prepared to engage in and to supervise such practice. Such preparation takes into account:
   - Staff have the engagement and interviewing skills necessary to obtain the information necessary for thorough and accurate assessments
   - Agency support for family involvement in assessment and service plan development
   - Agency expectations that staff internalize and consistently apply the criteria for determining a child's safety and level of risk of future harm
   - Individualized assessment of the strengths and needs of tracked children, adult caretakers and family units using new assessment protocols
   - Staff's ability to synthesize safety and risk assessments with the assessment of family, caretaker and child strengths and needs into an assessment analysis that leads to the identification of specific improvements/changes that need to be made through a change-focused service plan
   - Staff's ability to develop concurrent plans with families and to identify permanency resources for foster care youth
   - Staff's ability to assess and construct visiting plans
   - Staff's ability to assess and address the life skills needs of older foster children
   - Whether the local district will require documentation of Needed Services in the service Plan

Gap:

6. Administrators have modified work processes to take advantage of the online scheduling and documentation of the service plan review. The matters taken into consideration include:
   - Which staff will get the "Access SPR" business function
   - Recording Third Party Reviewer comments, particularly if the reviewer is not a CONNECTIONS user

Gap:

7. Administrators have determined how to apply the new "Non-DSS Custody" program choice and communicated appropriate information to staff. The matters taken into consideration include:
   - Staff with cases of this type on their caseload understand the increased emphasis on permanency outcomes in addition to safety and well being outcomes
   - That this program choice is to be used in conjunction with the protective and/or preventive program choices
   - The new program choice has been applied to existing cases that fit this status
   - Staff understand when to use the program choice in future cases

Gap:

8. Administrators understand the impacts of the online recording of progress notes and have assisted staff to incorporate this process into daily work processes. The matters that should be considered include:
    - The contact-specific entry of notes, including the completion of data fields (the content of which need not be repeated in the narrative)
    - The natural learning curve that may initially increase the time to record notes
    - The potential need to amend procedures if supervisory review of notes is required in light of the freezing of draft notes after 15 days
    - The use of search/sort capabilities to support the organization of progress notes for reports and case reviews
    - The circumstances when addendums should be entered (as opposed to a new note)
    - To whom the "Enter Progress Notes" business function should be given and how it will be used

Gap:

9. Administrators have determined how to manage the dual entry of assessment and service plan data in CONNECTIONS and CCRS during the interim between Builds 18 and19 in order to minimize discrepancies. Staff have been informed about the new CONNECTIONS PPGs and how they are mapped to the CCRS values.

Gap:

10. Staff understand the consequence that "marking" a child as totally freed for adoption will automatically create a new child-only record (and the removal of the child from the family record). Matters to consider are:
    - The need to promptly notify the LDSS Case Manager that a child is legally freed (only the LDSS Case Manager may input this fact in CONNECTIONS)
    - Staff understand the criteria for when a child is totally freed for adoption

Gap:

11. Administrators and staff have reviewed current forms and have eliminated or revised those that duplicate data maintained in CONNECTIONS or outputs/reports available in the system.

Gap:

Section VI Action Items	**Responsible**	**Due**