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# **CONNECTIONS**

## ***Reference Guide for Implementation Coordinators***



**CONNECTIONS Training Project  
SUNY Training Strategies Group**

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# **CONNECTIONS Step-by-Step Guide for Implementation Coordinators**

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# Introduction

This reference guide is designed to help CONNECTIONS Implementation Coordinators in local districts and voluntary and preventive services agencies identify their many roles and discover the different tools that are available to help their agencies prepare for changes to the system.

## Contents of this Guide

This guide leads you through the tasks that you'll perform in your role as Implementation Coordinator. It provides you with suggestions on how to carry out these tasks efficiently and effectively, defines the key issues for upcoming builds and describes available tools and resources.

## Features of this Guide



**Definitions** provide background information on topics that may be new to you.



**Step-by-Steps** provide detailed instructions on how to access an available resource.

# Module 1: What is CONNECTIONS?

## Overview

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) is responsible for overseeing New York's child welfare system and services. Child welfare services are provided through 58 Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) and over 350 voluntary and preventive services agencies. Caseworkers and other staff from local districts and agencies use a case management computer system called CONNECTIONS to document child welfare activities.

The CONNECTIONS system is part of a Federal initiative called the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS). In 1993, the Federal government provided financial incentives for states to develop statewide automated child welfare processes in an effort to provide more efficient and effective administration of programs and Federal reporting. Many other states have similar systems with other names. By law, a SACWIS program is required to support the reporting data to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS) and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS).

CONNECTIONS is designed to become a single, statewide, integrated system for the collection and recording of child protective, preventive, foster care and adoption service information. Currently, CONNECTIONS is used by Child Protective Services caseworkers, as well as caseworkers responsible for the initial certification, approval and maintenance of foster and adoptive homes. CONNECTIONS Case Management (Build 18) introduces over 10,000 new users to CONNECTIONS. These workers—from Foster Care, Preventive and Adoption units in local districts and voluntary and preventive services agencies—will join CPS and Foster Care workers currently using the system. The new case management functionality that will be launched with Build 18 provides a single electronic case record in which workers will record assessments, service plans, and progress notes for a family.

With the implementation of CONNECTIONS Case and Financial Management (Build 19), caseworkers will record placement and legal activities, document financial eligibility, enter service authorizations, and track progress toward adoption finalization using the CONNECTIONS system. CONNECTIONS will become the sole "system of record." Financial eligibility determinations and service authorizations for Child Welfare Services will be performed in CONNECTIONS instead of in the Welfare Management System (WMS). Information currently collected in the Child Care Review Service (CCRS) system will be processed in CONNECTIONS. CCRS will be kept for historical purposes only.

## What is a Build?

CONNECTIONS has been implemented in a series of packages. Updates and enhancements to the CONNECTIONS system are often bundled together and implemented at the same time. These upgrades are called a “build.” The origins of these changes are sometimes the result of specific user needs, SACWIS requirements, technical issues or SIRs.



### System Investigation Request (SIR)

A **SIR** is a method by which CONNECTIONS problems are investigated and resolved. SIRs begin with a call from a user to the Help Desk. If the Help Desk is unable to resolve the issue, the problem is assigned a Ticket number. Tickets that involve the CONNECTIONS Application are reviewed by the Production Application Triage Team. If they are unable to resolve the problem, a SIR is logged. New SIRs are reviewed by a team each week. The task of solving the SIR is then assigned. Once the work is completed, the fixed SIR is delivered to the field via a build.

Historically, builds that have introduced substantial technical changes to the system have brought about changes in procedures. For example, prior to Build 16, Risk Elements were recorded by CPS workers in a section of the paper-based Uniform Case Record (UCR). Build 16 (implemented on December 15, 2003) introduced many enhancements and modifications to CPS case recording. One of these enhancements was incorporating the Risk Assessment Profile (RAP) functionality into CONNECTIONS.



### Risk Assessment Profile (RAP)

The **RAP** is a research-based assessment tool that estimates the likelihood of recurrence of child abuse and maltreatment. It is the result of a research study that examined the relationship between family characteristics and subsequent indicated reports of child abuse and maltreatment for actual cases in New York State. Research-based (actuarial) risk assessment models have consistently proven to be more reliable and accurate than consensus-based models in determining the likelihood of future abuse or maltreatment, even when the consensus-based models have been utilized by experienced caseworkers.

## Implementing a Build

From the beginning of CONNECTIONS and through Build 16, builds have been implemented statewide to all users at a single time. Build 17 (Security for Case Management) will also be implemented in this way.

A different approach will be used for both Build 18 (CONNECTIONS Case Management) and Build 19 (CONNECTIONS Case and Financial Management). These builds are being implemented using a phased approach. This means that each of these builds will be implemented in successive areas (waves) across the state over the course of approximately one year. This approach was selected to allow for the increased levels of training and on-site technical support that will be provided to users. It would not be possible, for example, to provide lab-based training in the weeks preceding the implementation of Build 18 to over 15,000 users at the same time. The same is true for providing on-site support to users during the initial weeks that follow the implementation.

With the phased approach, different sites will have different implementation dates. In this document, a “local” implementation date refers to the date when the build is scheduled to be implemented in your agency.

## **How Are Changes Made to the CONNECTIONS System?**

The CONNECTIONS Project follows a System Development Life Cycle (SDLC) approach to the development of new system features. (See the box on page 7). Under the SDLC, every effort is made to design a system that meets user needs, is compatible with best casework practice and addresses State and Federal SACWIS requirements. The length of time to follow the SDLC from start to finish varies from build to build. Larger builds can take years to develop.

In order to implement the new system successfully, districts and agencies undertake a series of preparation activities several months prior to the actual release date of a build. The next module, *Your Role as an Implementation Coordinator*, outlines these activities.



## Phases of the System Development Life Cycle (SDLC)

<b>Requirements Phase</b>	During the Requirements Phase, OCFS staff and user groups define what needs to be changed in the system and propose a solution.
<b>Design Phase</b>	Once the requirements have been established, programmers plan out how the new and modified functionality will work in the application.
<b>Construction Phase</b>	Programming for the new and modified functionality occurs during the Construction Phase. Initial testing is performed and feedback is provided to the programmers. Errors in the application are addressed before the next phase of testing, User Acceptance Test (UAT).
<b>User Acceptance Test (UAT)</b>	Prior to the implementation of the build, workers from the CONNECTIONS UAT team, as well as volunteers from local districts and agencies, use a copy of the Production database to conduct a final test of the technical changes to the application.
<b>Implementation Phase</b>	The Implementation Phase includes preparation activities designed to implement the new system successfully. Instructor-led training, videos and job aids are delivered to users at a scheduled time prior to a build. Informational materials are provided that prepare users for upcoming changes. On-site implementation assistance, provided by CONNECTIONS Field Support Staff, is planned for Build 18 and 19. CONNECTIONS Field Support Staff will work closely with district/ agency staff to assure preparations for the build(s) have been accomplished.

## Module 2:

# Your Role as an Implementation Coordinator

As an Implementation Coordinator for your Local Department of Social Services or voluntary and preventive services agency, you will serve as a liaison between staff from your office and staff from the CONNECTIONS Project. Implementation Coordinators have many roles and responsibilities, including:

- serving as a point person for all CONNECTIONS-related issues;
- assembling and coordinating a local “team” to help your agency implement the changes to the system;
- participating in regional meetings; and
- introducing staff to the resources available to them that will promote a successful change.

In this module you will learn the roles and responsibilities of the local Implementation Coordinator and the variety of training, communication and implementation tools and supports available to you and your agency’s staff.

### Keeping Everyone Informed

Implementation Coordinators serve as the liaison between CONNECTIONS Project staff and the staff from your agency for all communications concerning CONNECTIONS. These communications include weekly updates, alerts, announcements of upcoming builds, new initiatives, project updates, workgroups and committees, training, and technical considerations.

The CONNECTIONS Weekly System Update is sent on a regular basis by e-mail to all CONNECTIONS Implementation Coordinators, LAN Administrators, Security Coordinators, Directors of Services, CONNECTIONS Project staff and other key users. The Weekly Update notifies users about current system activities, policy and procedure changes, and reminders.

Alerts are sent to specific groups when unanticipated technical problems occur within the system.

Communications leading up to a build are very important. They are designed to inform users of the content of the build, time frames for distribution, available training, and implementation activities associated with the build. Prompt distribution of this information to the staff in your agency helps prepare them for upcoming changes to the system. These communications include the following:

- **Highlights**  
The Highlights document is an overview of the build. It is sent approximately six weeks prior to implementation.
- **Release Notes**  
The Release Notes describe the updates associated with the build, as well as general points and reminders. They also contain a list of related changes, enhancements and fixes

relative to the build. The Release Notes are sent approximately one to two weeks prior to implementation. The Build Schedule is sent along with the Release Notes.

➤ **Distribution Memo**

The Distribution Memo is the final communication on a build. It is sent immediately (one to two days) prior to the implementation.

➤ **Training**

Training materials and schedules are mailed to districts and agencies prior to the build.

The above referenced materials will be mailed directly to district and agencies. This information is also posted on the OCFS CONNECTIONS Intranet Website.

It is important to keep CONNECTIONS Project staff informed of changes in your district or agency. When there is a change to the person serving in the role of Implementation Coordinator, Application Security Coordinator or Backup Application Security Coordinator, a CONNECTIONS Coordinator Update Form must be used. This form is posted in the Public Folders. The path is: Public Folders>All Public Folders>Statewide>CONNECTIONS>Application>Implementation. A copy of this form can be found in Appendix B of this guide. Send Implementation Coordinator updates to [donna.cramer@dfa.state.ny.us](mailto:donna.cramer@dfa.state.ny.us). Send completed update forms pertaining to Application Security Coordinator or Backup Application Security Coordinator to [jo.shrader@dfa.state.ny.us](mailto:jo.shrader@dfa.state.ny.us).

In addition, please notify the CONNECTIONS Project Staff if there are changes to the recipients of the CONNECTIONS OCI Report. Please contact the Communications Team at [CONNECTIONSCommunications@dfa.state.ny.us](mailto:CONNECTIONSCommunications@dfa.state.ny.us) if you have questions about updating the recipients of the CONNECTIONS OCI Report at your agency.

## **Coordinating Your Local Implementation Team**

In order to prepare your staff for upcoming changes to the system, it will be important for you to coordinate the local Implementation Team in your agency. At a minimum, your team should consist of the LAN Administrator, Security Coordinator, Data Warehouse Coordinator and Staff Development Coordinator, as well as a representative from each functional area (e.g. CPS, Foster Care) and other appropriate agency administrators.

The team will have many responsibilities. One of the first tasks the team will have is identifying all staff in the agency (e.g., managers, supervisors, caseworkers, and support staff) who may be affected by changes made to the CONNECTIONS system when a build is implemented. The team will also review all upcoming changes to determine if it is necessary to develop or modify local policies and procedures. They will also establish training and data clean-up plans and determine how to share information with staff. The strategy for supporting staff as they use the new functionality must be planned out and organized. Local Implementation Teams should schedule meetings on a regular, on-going basis.

## **Working with CONNECTIONS Regional Field Support Representatives**

Your primary contact with OCFS regarding CONNECTIONS- related issues is your CONNECTIONS Regional Field Support representative. Regional Field Support representatives

are a valuable resource for information. They are available to answer questions, offer guidance and provide technical assistance on the CONNECTIONS application. Your Regional Field Support representative can provide you with essential tools and strategies that will assist your agency in preparing for implementation.

A listing of Regional Field Support representatives can be found on the OCFS CONNECTIONS Intranet Website on the Implementations page.

## **Participating in Regional Planning**

Regional Implementation Support Teams (RISTs) consist of Implementation Coordinators from local districts and voluntary agencies, as well as other designated staff from a particular region in New York State. These teams provide a forum to share practice and technical solutions to commonly experienced problems. The RIST also attempts to standardize functional procedures that involve an interface between local districts and agencies. The agenda and frequency of meetings are determined by each team. RISTs begin meeting 10–12 months prior to the implementation of a build.

## **Preparing Your Agency for New Development**

Prior to the implementation of a build, there are many resources available to help you and your team prepare for implementation. OCFS has developed a coordinated series of activities to support the successful integration of program and system changes that will be necessary in order to incorporate CONNECTIONS Case Management into casework practice and business functions.

This approach relies on a partnership between OCFS, local districts and agencies to provide staff with the operational support needed to make effective and efficient use of CONNECTIONS functionality. With this approach, information concerning the content and impacts of CONNECTIONS functionality is released in manageable parts over a period of time, starting with the provision of high-level overviews to management staff and culminating with detailed instruction about how the system works.

Appendix D contains a timeline which illustrates program and system activities leading up to the implementation of Build 18 (from a district/ agency perspective). Listed below are descriptions of these activities, as well as other mechanisms used to introduce changes to the system, develop strategies, address concerns and communicate issues that may develop.

### ***District/Agency Profile***

The District/Agency Profile is a Web-based document that is designed to collect data. The data collected will help the CONNECTIONS Implementation Management team, and your agency, plan and prepare for the release of new CONNECTIONS functionality. The District/Agency Profile solicits information concerning agency contacts, caseloads, staffing and non-CONNECTIONS computer equipment. Much of the document is pre-filled with data from existing sources that should be updated by agency staff, as needed. Once completed, the information is kept as a resource.

Appendix G contains a screen print of a page from the District/ Agency profile.

## ***CONNECTIONS Case Management Issue Brief***

The CONNECTIONS Case Management Issue Brief is a standardized series of documents intended to assist administrators from local districts and agencies. Each Issue Brief presents a different decision point or issue. It provides background information about the issue and lays out the costs and benefits of alternative courses of action. Recommendations for appropriate decisions are included in each Issue Brief; however, districts and agencies have the discretion to select other decision(s).

Issue Briefs will be distributed to local districts and agencies as appropriate, and they are posted on the CONNECTIONS Intranet Website. Appendix C contains a copy of the first Issue Brief, “Entry of WMS Number into CONNECTIONS.”

## ***High Level Overview***

The High Level Overview is an orientation session presented regionally to local district and agency management personnel ten months prior to the implementation of a build. These sessions will provide a summary of the key features of the build, outline policy and operational impacts, as well as describe the implementation plan and identify the next steps for the group. This overview is led by CONNECTIONS Implementation and OCFS Program Staff.

## ***Regional Forums***

Regional Forums are designed to provide local districts and agencies with a more detailed overview of the operational impacts, implementation activities, and key features of a build. Regional Forums are scheduled to occur eight months prior to the implementation of a build. These meetings include a prototype of what the pending changes will look like, as well as information about how the system will support those changes. Managers, Supervisors and Implementation Coordinators should attend these meetings.

## ***Impact Analysis Documents***

Impact Analysis documents are developed to help districts and agencies prepare for builds and new functionality. Each document focuses on a specific functional area in the system and explains how it is impacted by the new design. The analysis includes a brief description of current functionality (or current manual process) and outlines for the user what will stay the same and what will change with the build. In addition, System and Program implications and considerations are reviewed and summarized.

Impact Analysis documents are covered in more detail in Module 3 of this guide.

Impact Analysis documents can be found on the OCFS CONNECTIONS Intranet Website.

## ***Self-Assessment Tool and Local Implementation Plan***

The Self-Assessment Tool is designed to help local districts and agencies identify significant programmatic, staff- and system-related issues that must be considered while preparing for a build. It is intended to guide the agency in an assessment of its own readiness and development of a local Implementation Plan. The Self-Assessment is generally divided into five sections:

### **➤ Organizing the Implementation of the Build**

Local districts and agencies identify the appropriate staff to carry out implementation tasks. This includes designating a Local Implementation Coordinator, forming the

Local Implementation Team and identifying all other appropriate staff needed to support implementation of the build.

➤ **General Readiness Issues**

Local districts and agencies ensure that staff and stakeholders have a basic understanding of the new functionality, and that planning for the build has taken into account the impact of the changes (e.g., casework activities, workflows, operating procedures etc.).

➤ **Staff Computer Literacy**

Local districts and agencies assess whether appropriate staff have the necessary computer skills and are competent with current CONNECTIONS procedures.

➤ **Data Clean-up**

Local districts and agencies identify potential data issues and review activities that can be completed prior to implementation.

➤ **Program and Operational Considerations**

Local districts and agencies review activities regarding policy and practice changes that may be necessary as a result of the build.

Each item listed is considered a benchmark. An assessment is conducted on the district/agency's current state of readiness in comparison to each benchmark. If a gap is discovered, necessary plans are developed to address areas that need the greatest attention prior to the build.

The Self-Assessment Tool is covered in more detail in Module 3 of this guide.

### ***Readiness Checklist***

The OCFS Implementation Management Team provides a Readiness Checklist and schedules Readiness Checklist Meetings for each district and agency prior to a build. The Readiness Checklist contains key activities to help local districts and voluntary agencies prepare for the changes in functionality with the upcoming build.

The Implementation Coordinator's role in this process is to monitor the achievement of items on the Readiness Checklist. It is recommended that the Implementation Coordinator and the local implementation team review their readiness in connection with the items on the checklist and begin to take any necessary actions to prepare for a smooth transition. If areas are identified where assistance is needed, you may contact your CONNECTIONS Regional Field Support representative.

### ***Data Integrity***

Leading up to a build, it may be necessary to clean up data in the legacy system or within CONNECTIONS in order to take maximum advantage of the functionality to be released. The CONNECTIONS Project will provide districts and agencies with clean-up reports, along with instructions on what needs to be done. These reports are designed to help identify potential data issues and focus effort where it is most needed.

The Multiple Person Clean-Up Report is a clean-up report developed to help agencies identify and eliminate multiple person identifiers for the same person or update demographic data. Conversion reports are used to compare a snapshot of current data with how it will be converted

in CONNECTIONS. For Build 18, this process begins eight or nine months prior to the Implementation in each specific area (wave).

On-site assistance from your CONNECTIONS Regional Field Support representatives is available. In addition, the CONNECTIONS Project will have a cadre of staff devoted to assisting agencies with larger clean-up activities. A listing of Regional Field Support representatives can be found on the OCFS CONNECTIONS Intranet Website on the Implementations page.

### ***Business Process Analysis and Redesign***

Prior to the introduction of new functionality, districts and agencies should examine their current business processes to determine if there is a need to revise procedures and workflows in order to take full advantage of new features in the system. This process is referred to as the Business Process Analysis and Redesign.

The CONNECTIONS Implementation Team provides Local Implementation Coordinators with tools and “model” business processes, as well as on-site support on a request basis to assist in this effort. Once staff in a district or agency understand how new system functionality works, they will want to assemble a team. It is critical that teams studying a particular process include workers who perform that particular function as part of their regular duties.

There are several methods that can be used to undertake this task. Most approaches involve mapping the steps in a specific business process and then identifying what will be affected or should be changed.

For example, district/agencies that employ a procedure to review progress notes may wish to review that procedure since progress notes will be entered on-line upon the implementation of Build 18 and they will "freeze" (i.e. will no longer be modifiable) after 15 days.

CONNECTIONS Field Support staff are available to provide on-site support and assistance to your agency

### ***Resource Users***

Resource Users are staff designated by their district or agency to receive extra training and support in order to enable them to be a resource to their co-workers during the implementation of a build. This is intended as a supplement to the support provided by CONNECTIONS Implementation staff. Districts and agencies have the option of assigning staff to this function. The number of Resource Users a district or agency will designate may vary from build to build.

Additional lab-based and classroom training will be provided to Resource Users for Build 18. This training will include supplemental hands-on application training that is intended to give a more thorough understanding of the new functionality. In addition, this training will provide information on conversion issues, reinforce the role of the Resource User, and include strategies on how the Resource User may assist other staff during the implementation process.

Resource Users will be invited to participate in conference calls covering implementation issues and discussions about how users in other agencies have solved problems.

## **Supervisors**

Supervisors are a vital part of any change effort. They will receive lab-based training covering the functions they will be performing in the system. In addition, supervisors will receive specific training to prepare them to assist their staff during the implementation process, including training on issues pertaining to change management.

## **User Acceptance Test (UAT)**

Prior to the implementation of a build, experienced workers and supervisors from local districts and agencies are invited to participate in User Acceptance Test (UAT). These volunteers, along with staff from the CONNECTIONS UAT team, participate in the final round of testing. In UAT, workers use a copy of the Production database to test the technical changes made to the application. Districts and agencies participating in UAT benefit from the experience by having their staff use the new functionality prior to the build.

## **Preview Application**

The Preview Application, available just prior to a build, provides CONNECTIONS users with the opportunity to view and practice new CONNECTIONS functionality in advance, using a copy of real data. Practicing in Preview does not affect the Production system. **Information entered in Preview does not carry over to the Production database.** Users will receive notification when the Preview Application becomes available.



### **Step-by-Step: Launching the CONNECTIONS Preview Application**

- 1** Double-click the **Logon to Connections Training/Preview** icon.  
*The Citrix Logon dialog box displays in Microsoft Internet Explorer.*
- 2** Enter *your* user name in the **Username** field.  
*This field is pre-filled with information entered by the last person who used this computer.*
- 3** Enter *your* password in the **Password** field.  
*This field is case sensitive.*
- 4** Enter the appropriate domain in the **Domain** field.  
*This field is pre-filled with information entered by the last person who used this computer. If you are unable to logon using the **NYSDSSNYC** domain, enter **NYSDSSALB** in the **Domain** field. If you are unable to logon using the **NYSDSSALB** domain, enter **HSEN** in the **Domain** field*
- 5** Click on the **Logon** button.  
*A File Download Progress box displays, followed by a Confidentiality Warning message box.*

- 6 Click on the **OK** button in response to the confidentiality warning message.  
*The Citrix desktop displays and your Citrix session begins. When you sign on using the **Logon for CONNECTIONS Training/Preview** icon, three icons display on the Citrix desktop:*
  - *CONNECTIONS Training*
  - *CONNECTIONS Preview*
  - *Policy Library*
- 7 Double-click the **CONNECTIONS Preview** icon on the Citrix desktop.  
*When the CONNECTIONS Preview Application has launched successfully, the CONNECTIONS Toolbar displays. The title bar reads:  
"CONNECTIONS Preview - <Your Name>."*

### **On-Site Support**

When significant new functionality is released, CONNECTIONS Project Field representatives provide on-site support and technical assistance. This support continues for weeks following the implementation of the build. Staff will be available to help develop solutions to system-related problems and assist users who are experiencing difficulty with the new system. During the initial days of implementation, Project Field representatives keep the lines of communication open by staying in touch with each other and with staff from other regions, districts and agencies. This practice supports staff by enabling them to benefit from each other's experience. As a result, they are better able to assist users.

On-site support activities planned for Build 18 include:

- working side-by-side with local district and agency staff newly trained on the CONNECTIONS system and assisting them in processing Child Welfare cases (possibly including entering progress notes into the system, directing person searches, directing person merges/splits and processing local data maintenance);
- assisting newly trained staff in acquiring a proficiency in using the new CONNECTIONS application to document case information;
- providing direct technical assistance;
- identifying and troubleshooting technical problems/issues and providing resolution and escalation, as appropriate; and
- interpreting instructional materials and Job Aids to assist CONNECTIONS users in comprehending and completing tasks;

### **Enterprise Help Desk**

Part of the Implementation Coordinator's role is to establish a local 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.

The Help Desk is available to answer basic questions related to equipment, or to solve problems with the CONNECTIONS application, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The phone number is **1-800-697-1323**. If they cannot solve the problem occurring at your agency, they will record the information and forward it to others who can. The designated staff person will be given a ticket number to use for tracking the issue and following-up on the issue's resolution. A record of this ticket number should be maintained at your agency for any follow-up conversations with the Help Desk.

For more information about the Enterprise Help Desk, please refer to the UNISYS Enterprise Help Desk Users Guide. Copies of this guide are available on the CONNECTIONS Intranet Website at:

*[http://sdssnet5/ocfs/connect/miscfile/NYS\\_End\\_User\\_Communication\\_Guide\\_031302.pdf](http://sdssnet5/ocfs/connect/miscfile/NYS_End_User_Communication_Guide_031302.pdf)*

## **Training Tools**

A variety of CONNECTIONS training tools and courses are available. Some of these tools and courses are designed specifically to help staff prepare for a build. Build training includes instructor-led classroom training, videos, job aids and the Training Database. In addition to build training, a variety of regular instructor-led courses are provided on a year-round basis. There are also Step-by-Step Guides that contain detailed instructions on how to carry out CONNECTIONS tasks efficiently and effectively.

### ***Build Training***

Build training is specifically designed to help staff prepare for a build. These classes are instructor-led and offered in a classroom or computer laboratory setting. Build training is provided in the weeks preceding the implementation of a build. These trainings focus on changes to the system and provide hands-on practice to reinforce the skills that will be needed with the build. Numerous trainings will be provided for upcoming builds. Each of these trainings is designed for a specific target audience. Trainings planned for Build 18 include the following courses:

- **Classroom Policy and Casework Practice Training**  
This training will support supervisory and line staff's understanding of the casework values, knowledge and skills upon which the system was designed as well as support staff's ability to use the new assessment tools and documentation. This two-day training session will be conducted in a classroom setting in regional locations throughout the State approximately 5-12 weeks prior to an implementation.
- **Introduction to CONNECTIONS and Build 18**  
This training is a half-day course, offered to all caseworkers and supervisors 7-10 weeks prior to local implementation of the build. It will provide users with a brief orientation to the basics of the CONNECTIONS system, including an introduction to CONNECTIONS concepts and vocabulary. The majority of the training will focus on providing a framework of Build 18. Other Build 18- related trainings and necessary preparations will be identified and discussed.
- **CONNECTIONS Readiness**  
This training is a half-day course offered to new CONNECTIONS users 4-8 weeks prior to local implementation. It is intended to complement the Building Blocks

- computer- based training (CBT). The Building Blocks CBT will be provided to new users who are unfamiliar with CONNECTIONS and Build 18. The content will focus on orienting staff to basic CONNECTIONS concepts and familiarizing them with the Toolbar functionality, Assigned Workload, Task List and the basics of Person Search.
- **Resource User Training**  
This training is two and a half days of additional training offered to selected individuals from districts and agencies 4-6 weeks prior to local implementation. This course focuses on B18 application training, familiarization with CONNECTIONS, the role of the Resource User and conversion issues.
  - **Build 18 for CPS Workers**  
This training is a one-day course offered to CPS caseworkers 4-6 weeks prior to local implementation. This course addresses Build 18 functionality used by CPS workers.
  - **Build 18 for Non-CPS Child Welfare Workers**  
This training is a two-day course offered to Foster Care, Adoption and Preventive Service workers from local districts and voluntary and preventive services agencies 4-6 weeks prior to local implementation. This course addresses the segments of Build 18 functionality used by these workers.
  - **Build 18 Supervisory Training**  
This training is a half-day course, offered to line and second level supervisors who are regular CONNECTIONS users or who are directly involved with the implementation of Build 18. This course will be offered 1-4 weeks prior to local implementation and should be taken after completing Build 18 training. This training is designed to help supervisors use CONNECTIONS as a management tool, address change management issues and perform basic supervisory system functionality (e.g., approvals, reports).
  - **Build 18 Follow-up Training**  
This training is a one or two-day course (depending on the topic) offered to CPS or non-CPS Child Welfare Workers who need additional assistance with Build 18, or those who missed a previously scheduled Build 18 training. This training will be offered during the six weeks immediately following the phased implementation of an area and will continue to be offered on a quarterly basis as Operational Training. The content will be similar to that of the initial Build 18 training.

## **Videos**

Training videos are designed to help introduce staff to the key features of a build or other specific training needs. Some videos are developed to be used in conjunction with a job aid or as a stand-alone introduction to the build. Build-related videos are mailed to Directors of Services, Implementation Coordinators and Staff Development Coordinators in local districts and agencies several weeks prior to a build.

One of the videos planned for Build 18 is *Security for Managerial Staff*. This video is meant to provide managers and supervisors in local districts and agencies with a high-level overview of the CONNECTIONS security system and information necessary to help them make informed decisions when establishing their agency/district security structure.

## **Job Aids**

Job Aids provide step-by-step instructions for completing new or modified tasks that will be introduced with the build. They are intended to serve as a helpful reference tool for regular users of CONNECTIONS. Several weeks prior to a build, copies of Job Aids are mailed to Directors of Services, Implementation Coordinators and Staff Development Coordinators in local districts and agencies. Copies of all these documents, as well as previous Job Aids, are posted on the CONNECTIONS Intranet Website.

## **Ongoing Operational Training**

Trainers from the SUNY Training Strategies Group, CONNECTIONS Project, lead full- and half-day training sessions in labs across New York State. Training classes for both CONNECTIONS and Data Warehouse courses are available for individuals with a variety of skills and experience levels. Courses include:

- *Building Blocks of CONNECTIONS*
- *Basic Foster and Adoptive Home Development (FAD)*
- *Advanced FAD for Experienced Workers*
- *Child Protective Services (CPS) Investigation*
- *Data Warehouse*
- *Advanced Data Warehouse*
- *CONNECTIONS Security*
- *Vacancy Control*

## **Computer-Based Training (CBT)**

The Building Blocks CBT is designed for new CONNECTIONS users, providing an overview of CONNECTIONS and instructions on basic navigation in the application. This CBT is in CD format, offering new workers the ability to gain these fundamental skills right at their own desks.

## **Step-by-Step Guides**

Step-by-Step guides provide detailed instructions for users on specific topics or functions that are necessary for accomplishing tasks in CONNECTIONS. These guides include introductory remarks that provide a work context for these tasks, as well as guidelines and hints for carrying out these tasks efficiently and effectively. Some guides also cover general computer skills and navigation in CONNECTIONS and provide hands-on practice exercises for you to use with the Training Database to reinforce your CONNECTIONS skills. (See the Training Database segment on page 19.)

Step-by-Step guides are provided to participants during training and/or posted on the CONNECTIONS Intranet Website:

- *Building Blocks of CONNECTIONS for CPS Workers*
- *Building Blocks of CONNECTIONS for FAD Workers*
- *Data Maintenance Step-by-Step Guide for CPS Caseworkers*

- *Data Maintenance Step-by-Step Guide for FAD Caseworkers*
- *Search Techniques Step-by-Step Guide for CPS Workers*
- *Child Protective Services (CPS) Step-by-Step Guide*
- *Basic Foster and Adoptive Home Development (FAD) Step-by-Step Guide*
- *OCFS Data Warehouse Reporting Step-by-Step Guide – Impromptu*
- *OCFS Data Warehouse Reporting Step-by-Step Guide – PowerPlay*
- *CONNECTIONS Security Step-by-Step Guide*

### **The Training Database**

The CONNECTIONS Training Database mirrors the CONNECTIONS Production database and provides a safe environment for workers to learn and practice using simulated case materials. Local district and voluntary agency staff are able to sign on to the Training Database from their own workstations. Staff must use a special training logon (referred to as a Desktop User or DU number), obtained by calling SUNY TSG toll-free at 1-877-451-4835. Districts and agencies may request up to four DU numbers at a time for a period of up to three weeks.

The Training Database can be used as a training tool to develop new skills or as a resource for your daily work in CONNECTIONS. It has the look and feel of the CONNECTIONS system currently in production and is updated to reflect system changes weeks before a build is implemented. Workers can use the Training Database to become more familiar with changes to the system.

Information entered in the Training Database is deleted when the computer system is refreshed each night; any material that you enter into the system is available to you only until the end of that day.



## Step-by-Step: Launching the CONNECTIONS Training Database

- 1 Double-click the **Logon to Connections Training/Preview** icon.  
*The Citrix Logon dialog box displays in Microsoft Internet Explorer.*
- 2 Enter a training user name (DU or IL#) in the **Username** field.  
*This field is pre-filled with information entered by the last person who used this computer.*
- 3 Enter the same training user name (DU or IL#) in ALL CAPS in the **Password** field.  
*This field is case sensitive.*
- 4 Enter **NYSDSSNYC** in the **Domain** field.  
*This field is pre-filled with information entered by the last person who used this computer. If you are unable to logon using this domain, enter **NYSDSSALB** in the **Domain** field.*
- 5 Click on the **Logon** button.  
*A File Download Progress box displays, followed by a Confidentiality Warning message box.*
- 6 Click on the **OK** button in response to the confidentiality warning message.  
*The Citrix desktop displays and your Citrix session begins. When you sign on using the **Logon for CONNECTIONS Training/Preview** icon, three icons display on the Citrix desktop:*
  - *CONNECTIONS Training*
  - *CONNECTIONS Preview*
  - *Policy Library*
- 7 Double-click the **CONNECTIONS Training** icon on the Citrix desktop.  
*When the CONNECTIONS Training Database has launched successfully, the CONNECTIONS Toolbar displays. In the title bar, the DU number you entered displays as the fictional caseworker Darryl Wilson with the same ending digits, not counting zeroes (e.g., DU0123 displays as Wilson123,Darryl). If you entered an IL number, the title bar displays the name of the fictional caseworker Jamie Miller with the same ending digits, not counting zeros.*

## Resources

### **Public Folders**

A variety of CONNECTIONS-related materials, including guides, reference materials, alerts and notices that contain information related to various aspects of CONNECTIONS are posted and available within the Microsoft Outlook Public Folders. These materials are also posted on the CONNECTIONS Intranet Website.



#### **Step-by-Step: Accessing Public Folders**

- 1 Double-click the **Microsoft Outlook** icon.
- 2 On the left side of the window, click on **Public Folders**.
- 3 Click on **All Public Folders**.
- 4 Click on **Statewide**.
- 5 Click on **CONNECTIONS**.
- 6 Click on the folder you want to view.

### **CONNECTIONS Intranet Web Site**

The CONNECTIONS Website (<http://sdssnet5/ocfs/connect>) provides up-to-date information about the CONNECTIONS Project and the OCFS Data Warehouse. Information that was previously posted is stored and available on this site. You can navigate to specific areas of interest by clicking on one of the following pages:

- **Update/New Development**  
Contains the current version of the CONNECTIONS Quarterly Report and information regarding new application development efforts
- **System/Network**  
Includes current Alerts and Notices regarding system and network activities, as well as access to the Weekly System Update
- **Training Info & Schedule**  
Posts the current training schedule and site locations, as well as descriptions of course offerings
- **For CPS Workers**  
Contains quick tips and helpful hints specific to CPS caseworkers and training information, including access to the *CPS Step-by-Step Guide*
- **For FAD Workers**  
Includes quick tips and helpful hints specific to FAD caseworkers and training information including access to the *FAD Step-by-Step Guide*

- **Quick Tips**  
Contains general tips for users regarding the CONNECTIONS Application
- **Desk/Job Aids**  
Contains various step-by-step guides and job aids applicable to CPS and FAD caseworkers/supervisors as well as to OCFS Data Warehouse users
- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**  
Includes numerous questions that the “field at large” has asked regarding various topics related to CONNECTIONS
- **Implementation**  
Highlights current and previous implementation activities and documents including changes related to the CONNECTIONS Application and technical upgrades to the system
- **Security**  
Provides targeted, timely and pertinent information to Local District and Voluntary Agency Security Coordinators about CONNECTIONS security initiatives (including specific information about training, policies and procedures for security, business function guidelines, security reports that are generated by the OCFS Data Warehouse, and other general informational bulletins and topics)
- **OCFS Data Warehouse**  
Provides general information regarding Data Warehouse developments, ongoing updates regarding enhancements to the Data Warehouse and new development efforts
- **Search**  
Provides the ability to locate information contained on the site by entering a word or words in the form on the Search page
- **Site Map**  
Provides a comprehensive outline of the information contained within the Intranet site (useful if a particular document or specific information is sought).



### **Step-by-Step: Accessing the CONNECTIONS Intranet Web Site**

- 1** Double-click the **Internet Explorer** icon.  
*The NYS Department of Family Assistance home page displays.*
- 2** Click on the **OCFS** link on the state map on the left side of the page.  
*The Office of Children and Family Services home page displays.*
- 3** Click on the **CONNECTIONS** link on the Office of Children and Family Services home page.  
*The CONNECTIONS home page displays.*
- 4** Click on a topic to access information.
- 5** To close Internet Explorer, click on the **File** menu and select **Close**.

## **Module 3: Using Tools to Manage Change**

The CONNECTIONS application is regularly upgraded and new elements of casework process are being implemented. As an Implementation Coordinator, you will encounter many opportunities in which changes, both large and small, will occur. Your ability to understand these changes will make you and your team better prepared.

Many substantial changes to the CONNECTIONS system will be introduced with Build 18. Once implemented, over 10,000 new users will begin documenting their casework using the CONNECTIONS system. New users, primarily Foster Care, Preventive and Adoption staff from Local Districts and voluntary agencies, will change from working in a paper-based, or WORD template, environment to using a single, electronic family record. Current CONNECTIONS users will also see system enhancements that may change the way they record their work.

This module takes a closer look at the two of the primary tools used to help you and your agency prepare for CONNECTIONS Case Management (Build 18). These tools will help you identify the steps your agency needs to take to successfully make the transition.

### **Impact Analysis Document**

One of the primary tools developed by the CONNECTIONS Implementation Team to assist you in preparing for Build 18 is the Impact Analysis document. The Impact Analysis document identifies the ways in which program and system changes will affect district/agency operations. Each document focuses on a specific functional area (e.g., intake). It also includes a brief description of the affected function, describing what will stay the same and what will change, in addition to system and programmatic implications. When this document was used for Build 16, it provided a useful, concise summary of each change.

Impact Analysis documents generally include the following sections:

- Subject
- Functional Area
- Brief Description of Current Function/Process
- What Remains the Same
- What is New or Changed
- Implications/Considerations - System
- Implications/Considerations - Program
- Recommendations/Next Steps

It is intended that district and agency administrators and other staff assisting in the preparation for Build 18 use the Impact Analysis documents in conjunction with conducting the self-assessment. (See Self- Assessment segment on page 24). The documents will help local planners understand the specific ways the new system will affect child welfare activities and functions.

An example of the Family Services Intake Impact Analysis document is included in Appendix E.

## **Self-Assessment**

The Self-Assessment tool is designed to focus the attention of local districts and agencies on planning and early readiness activities that will prepare them for future changes. It serves as a guide to the issues that need to be considered while providing a well organized approach to identifying potential gaps and targeting preparation efforts.

Each item in the assessment is stated as a benchmark. Local districts and agencies should evaluate their own current state of readiness in regard to each benchmark. Potential gaps that are discovered between current readiness and the benchmark(s) should be identified and a course of action developed to lessen the gap.

The Self-Assessment should be conducted by the local Implementation Coordinator and the Implementation Team. Teams should be multileveled and consist of a cross-section of staff from units that are affected by the build. Teams should meet on a bi-weekly basis in order to monitor the progress and update the Self-Assessment as needed.

The CONNECTIONS Implementation Management Team recommends that districts and agencies initiate the self-assessment process no later than right after the Regional Forum, which is approximately nine months prior to the release of the build. Most districts and agencies will need this amount of time to review and, as required, update policies and procedures. Work flows may need to be adjusted, business processes refined and staff prepared with the skills necessary to perform their functions. In addition, agency stakeholders, who may be affected by the system changes, may need notification of the upcoming changes and additional assistance.

An example of the Self-Assessment for Build 17 is included in Appendix F.

## **Module 4: Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1 Who should be contacted to address technical problems?**

Contact your LAN Administrator, if you have one, otherwise contact the Help Desk at (800) 697-1323.

### **2 Who should be contacted to address programmatic problems?**

Call the Regional Office Program Manager to resolve program and policy concerns/ issues.

### **3 Who should be contacted to address equipment problems?**

Most projects have a designated project manager who originally contacted the agency and provided information. Direct your questions to that person. Contact the CONNECTIONS Regional Office Implementation Specialist if you need further clarification.

### **4 Under what circumstances should an Implementation Coordinator contact the Help Desk?**

Technical questions should be referred to the LAN Administrator or supervisor prior to calling the Help Desk, as dictated by district or agency local policy.

### **5 Who from my agency should help with implementation responsibilities?**

At a minimum, your team should consist of the LAN Administrator, Security Coordinator, Data Warehouse Coordinator and Staff Development Coordinator, as well as a representative from each functional area (e.g. CPS, Foster Care) and other appropriate agency administrators.

### **6 Where can an Implementation Coordinator find information about CONNECTIONS Training?**

The CONNECTIONS Website, at <http://sdssnet5/ocfs/connect> has a link to the Training Schedule. A brochure is sent to various district and agency staff before each quarter. In addition, information regarding build training is provided on the Website and to Staff Development Coordinators in the weeks preceding the implementation of the build.

### **7 How much time should be dedicated to implementation responsibilities?**

Every build will require differing amounts of time and resources. It is not possible to quantify time commitment by any one person. A team sharing Implementation responsibilities will reduce the amount of time any individual would have to spend.

### **8 What are examples of post-implementation responsibilities?**

Solicit and report district/ agency problems to the Regional Office Implementation Specialist and distribute information/ resolutions to staff. Complete necessary post-implementation surveys for each build.

### **9 Should an agency have a “back up” Implementation Coordinator?**

It would be advisable to have a back up Implementation Coordinator.

## Appendix A: CONNECTIONS/Child Welfare Acronyms

<b>ACS</b>	Administration for Children's Services (NYC Daytime)
<b>ADD</b>	Additional Information
<b>ADVPO</b>	Advocates Preventive Only (B18)
<b>ADM</b>	Administrative Directive Memo
<b>AppReg</b>	Application Registration
<b>AFCARS</b>	Adoption & Foster Care Analysis & Reporting
<b>ARI</b>	Administrative Review
<b>ARO</b>	Albany Regional Office
<b>BCFI</b>	Behavioral Concerns and Family Issues
<b>BICS</b>	Benefits Issuance Control System (1986)
<b>BFP</b>	Business Function Profile
<b>BRO</b>	Buffalo Regional Office
<b>BT</b>	Bureau of Training
<b>CCF</b>	Congregate Care Facility
<b>CCR</b>	Child Case Record (B18)
<b>CCRS</b>	Child Care Review Service (1982)
<b>CD</b>	Community District (NYC)
<b>CID</b>	Case Initiation Date
<b>CIN</b>	Client Identification Number in WMS system
<b>COI</b>	Court Ordered Investigation
<b>CPRS</b>	Child Protective Record Summary
<b>COFCCA</b>	Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies
<b>COS</b>	Court Ordered Supervision
<b>CPM</b>	Child Protective Manager
<b>CPS</b>	Child Protective Services

<b>CQC</b>	Commission on Quality Care
<b>CWS</b>	Child Welfare Services
<b>DDPS</b>	Division of Development and Prevention Services
<b>DFA</b>	Department of Family Assistance
<b>DRS</b>	Division of Rehabilitation Services
<b>DUP</b>	Duplicate Report (CPS)
<b>ECS</b>	Emergency Children's Services (NYC b/w 4:30 p.m. - 8:30 a.m.)
<b>EHD</b>	Enterprise Help Desk
<b>FAD/FAHD</b>	Foster and Adoptive Home Development
<b>FAR</b>	Finalized Adoption Record (B19)
<b>FASP</b>	Family Assessment and Service Plan (B18)
<b>FBH</b>	Foster Boarding Home
<b>FCI</b>	Foster Care Issues
<b>FRS</b>	Foster and/or Adoptive Home Record Summary
<b>FSI</b>	Family Services Intake (B18)
<b>FSS</b>	Family Services Stage (B18)
<b>GPS</b>	Group Preparation & Selection (FAD)
<b>HPF</b>	High Priority Factor (NYC)
<b>HSEN</b>	Human Services Enterprise Network
<b>IAB</b>	Institutional Abuse (CPS)
<b>ICPC</b>	Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children
<b>INF</b>	Informational Letter
<b>INI</b>	Initial Report (CPS)
<b>INT</b>	Intake (CPS)
<b>INV</b>	Investigation (CPS)
<b>IRI</b>	Individual Report Involvement (CPS)
<b>LAN</b>	Local Area Network
<b>LDM</b>	Local Data Maintenance
<b>LDSS</b>	Local Department of Social Services

<b>MAPP</b>	Model Approach to Parenting Program (FAD)
<b>NCANDS</b>	National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System
<b>NIS</b>	Network Integration Services
<b>NYCRO</b>	New York City Regional Office
<b>NR</b>	Non-Reimbursable
<b>O&amp;A Block</b>	Outcome and Activity Block in Service Plan
<b>OASAS</b>	Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services
<b>OCFS</b>	Office of Children & Family Services
<b>OCI</b>	Open Case Inquiry (CPS report in CONNECTIONS)
<b>OCI</b>	Office of Confidential Investigations (investigates NYC foster care & daycare reports)
<b>OMH</b>	Office of Mental Health
<b>OMRDD</b>	Office of Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities
<b>OTI</b>	Out of Town Inquiry
<b>PC</b>	Program Choice
<b>PPG</b>	Permanency Planning Goal
<b>PID</b>	Person Identification Number in CONX
<b>RIST</b>	Regional Implementation Support Team
<b>RAP</b>	Risk Assessment Profile
<b>RID</b>	Resource ID
<b>RRO</b>	Rochester Regional Office
<b>SA</b>	Safety Assessment
<b>SACWIS</b>	Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (1993)
<b>SCR</b>	State Central Register (created 1982 - CONNECTIONS R2 1997)
<b>SDLC</b>	System Development Life Cycle
<b>SED</b>	State Education Department (Licensing Entity)
<b>SIR</b>	System Information Request
<b>SPPD</b>	Strategic Planning and Policy Development
<b>SPR</b>	Service Plan Review

<b>SRO</b>	Syracuse Regional Office
<b>SSPS</b>	Statewide Services Payment System
<b>SUB</b>	Subsequent Report (CPS)
<b>TCD</b>	Track Child Detail
<b>UAT</b>	User Acceptance Test
<b>UCR</b>	Uniform Case Record
<b>YRO</b>	Yonkers Regional Office
<b>VA</b>	Voluntary Agency
<b>VID</b>	Vendor Identification Number
<b>WMS</b>	Welfare Management System (1982)

## Appendix B: CONNECTIONS Coordinator Update Form

Please use this form to delete, add or update Implementation, Application Security and Backup Application Security Coordinators information. Use one form per site. Place the cursor in the desired gray field and type your information. To move forward from field to field, press the TAB KEY. To move Backward from field to field, press the SHIFT and TAB KEYS SIMULTANEOUSLY. (If you hit the Enter key, you will add blank lines to the form. They can be deleted by pressing the Backspace key.) To send this form, choose File and Send. This will bring up the Exchange Mail Window. **Send the Implementation Coordinator form to: [donna.cramer@dfa.state.ny.us](mailto:donna.cramer@dfa.state.ny.us). Send the Application Security and Back-up Security Coordinator form to: [jo.shrader@dfa.state.ny.us](mailto:jo.shrader@dfa.state.ny.us).** You can save the form to your local drive. Data elements in **bolded** text must be completed to accurately identify the changes. (Rev.1/28/99)

**Name of the Person submitting form:**

**Date Form Submitted:**

**District or Agency Name:**

**District or Agency Code:**

**Site ID(for Districts/Agencies with multiple sites:**

**Office/Borough (ACS/NYC only):**

Type the name(s) of the Deleted Coordinator(s) in the appropriate box(es) below (if any):

<b>DESIGNEE CHANGE</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION COORDINATOR</b>	<b>APPLICATION SECURITY COORDINATOR</b>	<b>BACKUP APPLICATION SECURITY COORDINATOR</b>
<b>Delete:</b>			

Type the name, Exchange ID, and phone number for each New Coordinator:

	Implementation...	Application Security...	Backup Security...
<b>Add New:</b>			
<b>Exchange ID</b>			
<b>Phone #</b>			

Update the following Site information **if different:**

<b>Phone #</b>			
<b>Street Address</b>			
<b>City Address</b>			
<b>Zip Code</b>			
<b>FAX #</b>			

**Comments:**

# Appendix C: Case Management Issue Brief

## *New York State Children and Family Services* CONNECTIONS Case Management

*Issues Brief 10/17/2003*

**Subject:** Entry of WMS Number Into CONNECTIONS

**Date:** October 17, 2003

**Intended Audience:** OCFS Directors of Services and/or CPS Coordinators

**Contact Person:** Suzanne Frizzell, CONNECTIONS Implementation Support

**Additional Notes:** Should Local Social Service Districts require the entry of the WMS Number on the Investigation Conclusion Window for Child Protective Services cases that are opened for ongoing services?

### **Background:**

CONNECTIONS will process ongoing services cases (e.g., preventive services, foster care) with the implementation of Build 18. WMS services cases will be opened from CONNECTIONS with the implementation of Build 18. The WSEWK2 and WSUWK2 screens will be supported in WMS; only the App Reg and person demographics will be initiated from CONNECTIONS.

An automated batch conversion of WMS Services case, address and person data into CONNECTIONS is being developed in order to reduce the need for child welfare staff to re-enter existing data as well as to promote consistency between the legacy system and CONNECTIONS. The success of the conversion program relies heavily on the existence of a case number cross-reference between the respective systems. In the event no such cross-reference exists a new CONNECTIONS case will be created. This could lead to multiple CONNECTIONS cases for the same family, which will in turn create more work for staff to clean up (merge) the WMS converted case with its corresponding CPS case.

To support the case conversion strategy, a field called "WMS Case #" was added to the CPS Investigation Conclusion Window in Build 15.2, released in the Spring of 2003. This field may only be populated when the investigation is being closed with an "open for services" closure reason. CONNECTIONS will validate that the WMS number entered by the worker reflects an active Services case for that district, however, no additional validation for case matching is supported. This number is carried forward to any subsequent CPS investigation stages for that case, and is modifiable. When Local Data Maintenance functionality is enhanced with the implementation of Build 16 in December 2003, it will be possible to enter the WMS Number into CPS investigations that were closed without entering the number. Through this function, a correction to the WMS number in CONNECTIONS can also be made.

A local district may request that the WMS Number field be required, in which case it will be required for all new CPS investigations for which that district has primary responsibility. Otherwise, completion of this field is an optional function. The use of the Investigation Conclusion to record WMS numbers will discontinue when Build 18 is implemented at which time an automated interface between WMS and CONNECTIONS will be supported.

### **Benefits and Costs:**

Entry of the WMS Number in CONNECTIONS is the primary matching criteria that the conversion program will use to match WMS to CONNECTIONS cases, and the persons associated with them, thereby reducing the amount of manual data entry and/or case consolidation/merge that staff will need to perform when Build 18 is implemented. To assist local districts to prepare for the conversion of these cases, the CONNECTIONS Project will furnish “clean-up” reports that emulate the conversion and focus attention on data that will need correction to assist with appropriate matches. Clean-up reports will only include cases (and associated persons) that contain a cross-reference (WMS case #). Establishing these cross-references through closed CPS investigations will enable local districts to get a “jump start” on case matching and clean-up activities and to spread this work over both time and a larger number of staff.

There are no costs associated with the entry of WMS case number into CONNECTIONS, however, there are a number of considerations.

- Districts should examine, and as needed, revise procedures that pertain to WMS case opening so that child protective staff has access to the WMS case number by the time the investigation is being closed.
- A second consideration, as noted above, is that a WMS number that is entered into CONNECTIONS will be validated only to the extent that it is an active WMS Services case in the district. Hence, not all entry errors will be detected.
- Lastly, this approach involves entering the WMS case number into cases where the “linked” WMS case may close by the time Build 18 is implemented.

### **Alternatives:**

1. Enter the CONNECTIONS case number into WMS.

It is currently possible to record CONNECTIONS case numbers, prefaced with the letter “C,” in the “Related Case Number” fields in WMS. Approximately 18,000 (of 100,000) child welfare WMS cases contain this cross-reference. There are two drawbacks to this approach. First, there is no system check to determine that the CONNECTIONS Case # recorded in WMS is valid. Second, there is no trigger to remind staff or edit to require staff to update the CONNECTIONS case number information in WMS in the event that a new CONNECTIONS case is established, thereby maintaining the link with an outdated case.

2. Use new LDM functionality.

Local Districts may wish to wait until shortly before Build 18 implementation to establish the case linkages, using Local Data Maintenance (LDM) in CONNECTIONS to enter the WMS Numbers into Investigation Conclusions on only those cases that are actually going to convert. This method might result in reducing some level of worker effort in the recording of WMS numbers in CONNECTIONS. The drawback of this approach is that all clean-up activities will

need to be concentrated into a relatively smaller time period, negating the opportunity to use ongoing clean-up reports to correct data as well as verify that corrective actions had the intended results.

**Recommendation:**

The CONNECTIONS Project Team recommends that local districts request that the WMS number field on the Investigation Conclusion window be made a required field and that the district implement procedures that provide this number to the appropriate staff consistent with the timely completion of investigations.

The project is also recommending that, upon the implementation of Build 16 in December 2003, local districts implement procedures to use Local Data Maintenance in CONNECTIONS to record the WMS number of all active services cases that existed prior to the decision to require the WMS number in the Investigation Conclusion.

Directors of Services or CPS Coordinators who wish to make this request should complete the attached form and forward to their CONNECTIONS Regional Field Support contact. The project team will make the required update on the nearest weekend to the requested date. (The form must be received by Noon on the Thursday prior to that weekend).

**Request to Require Entry of the WMS Case number in CONNECTIONS  
Investigation Conclusion.**

**District:**

**Requestor:**

**Name:**

**Title:**

**Telephone Number:**

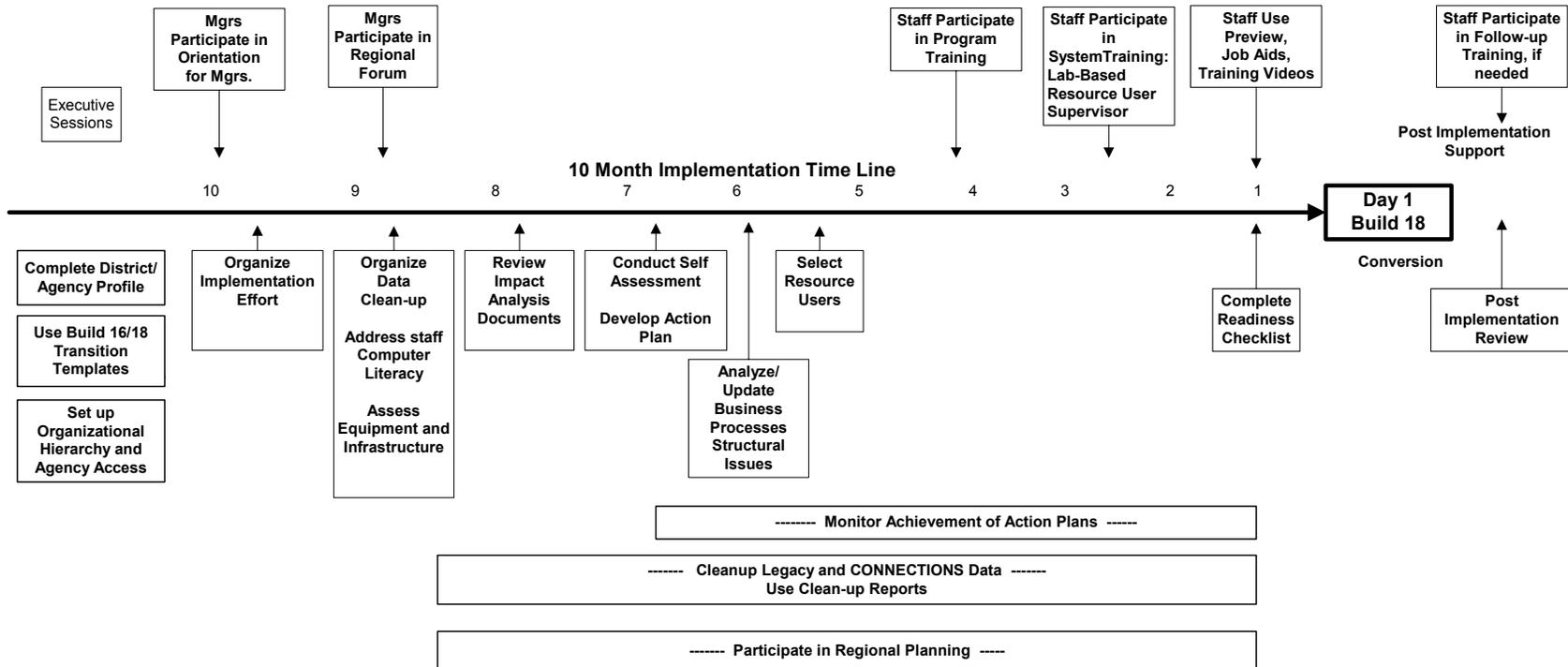
**Effective date of change (when do you want the edit to be effective):**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

## **Appendix D: Build 18 System and Program Activities**

# Implementation Timeline Build 18 From a Site Perspective



1/23/04

## **Appendix E: Family Services Intake Impact Analysis Document**

### **Impact Analysis**

**Subject:** Family Services Intake (FSI)

**Functional Area:** Documenting Intake

#### **Brief Description of Current Function/Process:**

Currently, the Intake process occurs entirely outside of CONNECTIONS. The Application for Services, which may be signed by the client or by the caseworker on behalf of the client, is completed on a triplicate paper form. There is no standardized format for documenting an Intake for services case, including presenting needs and services requested. Each district follows its own procedures.

#### **What Remains the Same:**

- The Common Application for Services continues to be completed off-line in triplicate paper form. To avoid redundant entry of demographic information, demographic information entered into CONNECTIONS can be printed for attachment to the Common Application for Services.
- Intakes are initiated by LDSS or by Voluntary Agencies.
- LDSS approval is required to open a case.
- The criteria for opening a case are unchanged.

#### **What is New or Changes:**

- All Intakes will be recorded in CONNECTIONS.
- There will be a standardized format for recording Intakes for Family Services.
  - A screening for behavioral concerns and issues must be completed for all Intakes for Child Welfare Services (CWS) that do not originate from a CPS Investigation.
  - Emergency interventions taken during the Intake stage must be documented.
  - In order to determine if a case is eligible for mandated preventive services, Programmatic Eligibility must be completed as a part of all Intakes for “Preventive only” services.
  - Local districts may opt to require worker completion of a checklist of “Requested Services.”

- Workers have the ability to perform various case maintenance activities within the FSI. These include relating and unrelating persons and linking the FSI to an existing CONNECTIONS case.
- The system will automatically open a Family Service Intake upon approval of an Investigation Conclusion (both indicated and unfounded) with a closure reason indicating that the case will be opened for services.
- Case Composition fields will be pre-filled if the Intake is opened from a CPS Investigation.
- There is a new concept of “types” of Intakes (examples: Child Welfare Services, Court Ordered Investigations, ICPC, Out of Town Inquiries, Advocate Preventive Only) All Intakes must be assigned a Type in order to be completed. Intake documentation requirements differ by type. (Ex. Intakes for certain types (COI, ICPC, OTI) do not require an Application for Services.)
- Intakes taken by a Voluntary Agency must be submitted online for LDSS approval/acceptance. Upon submission, they are taken off the workload of the VA caseworker and are assigned to the LDSS Intake Unit it is being submitted to.
- LDSS will approve the Intake and open the Family Services Stage online. [Rejected Intakes are returned to the worker who submitted it.]
- Voluntary Agencies may close an Intake without opening a stage for services without LDSS approval, unless the worker received a signed application for services.
- Approval of LDSS Intakes is not required. Intakes may be “submitted for review” to a supervisor (LDSS or VA) for internal review if desired. Upon submission, they are taken off the intake worker’s caseload and are assigned to the supervisor.
- The system will automatically close Intakes if there has been no activity (FSI has not been updated) for a period of 60 days and the date “Application signed” is not filled in.
- There is a new security BFP, “Create FSI.”
- Note: A separate process will be used to document Information and Referral Inquiries.

## **Implications/Considerations:**

### **System**

- Local districts that currently, or may in the future, contract with Voluntary Agencies that will be initiating Intakes need to build a Family Services Intake Unit for acceptance of these Intakes.
- Voluntary Agencies need to build an Assign Unit for acceptance of cases from local districts.
- Intake workers are responsible for maintaining the system so that duplicate persons and cases will not be created. This is a new role for many workers.
- Intake workers need to ensure that only the relevant persons from an Investigation Stage go forward into the Family Services Stage. Workers have the ability to delete a person from the FSI. Once a Family Services Stage is opened, persons can only be end-dated, not deleted.

LOCAL DISTRICT SELF-ASSESSMENT  
CONNECTIONS BUILD 16

**Program**

- The online, standardized Intake process will undoubtedly require re-engineering of district intake procedures.
- Because submitting a case for LDSS acceptance takes it off the VA worker's caseload, timely LDSS approval and reassignment back to the Voluntary Agency is necessary to allow the Voluntary Agency to continue to work on the case within CONNECTIONS.

**Recommendations:**

1. Review current agency intake procedures and revise as necessary to accommodate the online process and the need to accurately maintain persons and cases within FSI.
2. Prior to build 18, local districts need to identify (by name, code) one or more Intake units for acceptance of Intake stages from Voluntary agencies. The unit(s) name and code must be hard coded into the CONNECTIONS system.
3. Local districts should develop procedures for acceptance and timely review/approval of Intake stages from Voluntary agencies.
4. Prior to build 18, Voluntary Agencies need to identify (by name, code) one or more Assign units for acceptance of Family Services stages from local districts. The unit(s) name and code must be hard coded into the CONNECTIONS system.
5. Voluntary Agencies should develop procedures for acceptance and reassignment of Family Service stages assigned to them by LDSS.
6. Prior to build 18, local districts need to determine if they will require completion of "Services Requested" in Intake so that the correct system edit can be set.
7. Train all Intake workers who do not currently have the "maintain person" functionality.

Security for CONNECTIONS Case Management  
SELF- ASSESSMENT

## Appendix F: Security for CONNECTIONS Case Management Self- Assessment

### Background

The enhancements to CONNECTIONS Security that are being released with Build 17 apply to the new CONNECTIONS Case and Financial Management functions (Family Services Intake, Family Services Stage) that will be implemented in Builds 18-19; these enhancements **will not** affect security for CPS Intake, CPS Investigation or FAD stages. The earlier release of the security functionality enables local districts and agencies to organize their security structure before implementation of the larger case management system.

Build 17 introduces two new windows – Agency Access and Organizational Hierarchy – that will enable districts and agencies to more easily give workers, supervisors and administrators the ability to view and/or maintain cases in which they do not have a direct role. Expanded access may be granted vertically within the organization as well as horizontally to the levels of unit, job function or agency-wide. The use of these features is optional; workers who have a role in a case will continue to be able to conduct work in that case whether or not their district/agency decides to take advantage of the enhanced security features.

In order to effectively use the new security features, it is recommended that district/agency administrators first develop an understanding of basic CONNECTIONS Security as well as the functions that will be performed within CONNECTIONS once Build 18 is implemented. The CONNECTIONS Implementation Management Team will assist administrators to obtain this understanding through the provision of orientations and other support material.

This self-assessment is designed to guide the implementation of both basic and enhanced security. It consists of a series of items – stated as benchmarks – against which to compare your agency's current state of readiness. If a "gap" exists between current readiness and the benchmark, it should be noted in the space under each item. The action steps necessary to eliminate the "gap" should be written in the space provided at the end of each section. These action steps, taken together, comprise the district/agency's Security for CONNECTIONS Case Management Implementation Plan. It is recommended that this plan be completed no later than eight months prior to the district/agency's scheduled implementation of Build 18.

To promote the most comprehensive assessment of the agency's state of readiness, the self-assessment should be conducted by a cross-section of agency administrators and staff. CONNECTIONS Regional Field Staff are available to assist with this effort.

**CONNECTIONS**

Security for CONNECTIONS Case Management  
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**Section I – Organizing the Implementation of Build 17 / General Readiness Issues**

1. The District/Agency’s LAN Administrator has the knowledge and skills to fulfill his/her responsibilities related to security, including establishing staff NT accounts in WEBSTAR.

Gap:

2. The District/Agency has designated a Security Coordinator and Back-up Security Coordinator who:
  - Have an active NT Identification and mailbox
  - Are active in CONNECTIONS
  - Are on the distribution list for Security Coordinators (otherwise, contact Donna Cramer in OCFS-IT for more information)

Gap:

3. The Security Coordinator and Back-up Security Coordinator are familiar with CONNECTIONS Security through:
  - Attendance at the Security Coordinator training course\*
  - Attendance at CONNECTIONS Build 17 Training\*
  - Review of the CONNECTIONS Security Step-by-Step Guide
  - Review of resource material available in the Security section of the CONNECTIONS web page.

\* Note: Experienced Security Coordinators should attend Build 17 training that will be offered in April/May 2004. Staff who are new to this role should take the Security Coordinator course after the implementation of Build 17; this course will be updated to incorporate Build 17 content.

Gap:

4. There are a sufficient number of staff who are able to “maintain security” to permit the efficient administration of this function. District/Agencies may determine who on their staff have this capability through the Business Function Report accessible on the Data Warehouse.

Gap:

**CONNECTIONS**

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5. In order to be able to make informed decisions about the assignment of business functions to staff and the extent to which staff, supervisors and administrators will have access to records in which they do not have a role, the District/Agency's child welfare administrators have obtained a working knowledge of CONNECTIONS Security, through:
- Participation in Security for Managers training course (to be provided via Video or computer-based training)
  - Review of the introductory sections (Modules 1-5) of the CONNECTIONS Security Step-by-Step Guide
  - Review of resource material available on the Security page of the CONNECTIONS web site.

Gap:

6. The District/Agency has formed a workgroup consisting of a cross-section of agency administrators and staff to recommend how the agency's CONNECTIONS Case Management Security should be structured (see Section II). Team members have obtained a working knowledge of basic security and the enhancements being introduced through Build 17 through the methods described in Item 5.

Gap:

7. The District/Agency's Implementation Coordinator participates in or monitors the implementation of CONNECTIONS Case Management Security with an eye toward completing the process before the release of CONNECTIONS Case Management (Build 18).

Gap:

**CONNECTIONS**

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8. The staff who are implementing CONNECTIONS Case Management Security are familiar with the work processes affected by CONNECTIONS Case Management (Build 18) through:
- Attendance at OCFS Teleconferences
  - Participation at Regional Forums
  - Review of build 18 Impact Analysis documents

Gap:

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<b>Section I Action Items</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Due</b>
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**Section II – Security Data Entry and Clean-up Activities**

1. The district/agency’s Security Coordinator is familiar with Data Warehouse reports available to support security clean-up activities. (See Module 9 in the CONNECTIONS Security Step-by-Step Guide.)

Gap:

2. The district/agency has a plan to initially enter, or as needed clean up, CONNECTIONS Security data for staff who perform ongoing services (foster care, preventive, adoption). The plan should address completion of the following activities: (See Modules 6-8 in the CONNECTIONS Security Step-by-Step Guide.)

**CONNECTIONS**

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Initial Entry

- Assure that all staff are assigned a NT logon ID and have “standard access” via WEBSTAR (performed by LAN Administrator)
- Create additional units, including their specialization, as necessary (Note: the designation of “unit specialization” may affect access to cases – see chart in the next section.)
- Each worker who needs to be made “case assignable” and is assigned the business functions appropriate to their job function
- Each worker is assigned to the appropriate unit including reassignment of any staff from default unit(s)

Clean-up Existing Data

- Eliminate units with duplicate unit identifiers
- Delete “default” units (units coded as N and two numbers) that contain only “conversion” workers (Note: CONNECTIONS Security is working on a solution to the inability to delete a default unit that has had a stage assigned to it). No unit should exist with the conversion worker as unit approver.
- End Date staff who no longer work for the agency in CONNECTIONS and then delete those staff in NT through WEBSTAR; staff who have already been deleted in WEBSTAR should be end dated in CONNECTIONS.
- Determine that the WMS/CCRS staff identifier is correctly recorded in the Staff Detail Window for all staff who have an ongoing services case assigned to them. **(NOTE: this is a critically important activity in the effort to match cases to workers as part of the Build 18 conversion.)**
- Determine that all staff who are entered in the system as case assignable should be case assignable. (Information about which staff are case assignable may be obtained on the Staff Detail Window within CONNECTIONS or on the Staff Security Report in the Data Warehouse.)
- Determine that staff are assigned the business functions they need and only those that they need.
- Eliminate “out-assignments” that are no longer necessary in light of the Build 17 case access enhancements.

Gap:

Security for CONNECTIONS Case Management  
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**Section II Action Items** **Responsible** **Due**

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**Section III – Program and Operational Considerations**

1. The District/Agency has decided whether staff will have View and/or Maintain access or No access to information in Case Management stages in which they do not have a role as follows:

Level of Staff Person	View	Maintain	None
To Case Assignable* Staff (Caseworkers) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All FSI and FSS stages within their district or agency</li> <li>• All FSI and FSS stages within their unit</li> <li>• All FSI and FSS stages of staff sharing the same “job type”</li> </ul>			
To Unit Approvers (Supervisors) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All FSI and FSS stages within their district/agency</li> <li>• All FSI and FSS stages in units sharing the same “unit specialization”</li> </ul>			

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Direct Supervisory Line (through Organizational Hierarchy) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff within the direct supervisory line on the “organizational hierarchy”</li> <li>• All non-clerical staff within the direct supervisory line</li> </ul>			
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\* Information about which staff are “case assignable” may be obtained on the Staff Detail Window within CONNECTIONS or on the Staff Security Report in the Data Warehouse.

2. The District/Agency has decided how to align units within the Organizational Hierarchy Window. **Note: this step is only needed if the district or agency has decided to grant access to cases through the direct supervisory line (per the third row in the above chart.)**
3. In light of the expanded sharing of information that will occur upon the implementation of CONNECTIONS Case Management, administrators have reviewed their district or agency’s confidentiality and data security policies and procedures.

Gap:

Section III Action Items	Responsible	Due
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# Appendix G: District/Agency Profile

CONTACT INFORMATION - Microsoft Internet Explorer  
 File Edit View Favorites Tools Help  
 Address http://sdsnet5/ocfs/connect/dpm/contact\_info.asp Go Links

**CONNECTIONS Local District/Voluntary Agency Profile**

[Introduction](#) | [Contact Information](#) | [Program Sites](#) | [District/Agency Staffing](#) | [Contract Relationships](#) | [Computer Literacy](#) | [Use of Non-CONNECTIONS Automation](#) | [Miscellaneous](#) | [Go To Main Page](#)

**Section I: Contact Information** instructions ?

District/Agency Name:	<input type="text" value="()"/>					
Section Last Updated:	<input type="text" value="()"/>					
User IDs having access to profile data:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	
CONNECTIONS Implementation Coordinator:	Last:	<input type="text"/>			First:	<input type="text"/>
Title:	<input type="text"/>					
Non-CONNECTIONS Email Address:	<input type="text"/>					
Daytime Phone:	( <input type="text"/> )	<input type="text"/>	-	<input type="text"/>	Ext. <input type="text"/> (ext optional)	
CONNECTIONS LAN Administrator:	Last:	<input type="text"/>			First:	<input type="text"/>
Title:	<input type="text"/>					
Non-CONNECTIONS Email Address:	<input type="text"/>					
Daytime Phone:	( <input type="text"/> )	<input type="text"/>	-	<input type="text"/>	Ext. <input type="text"/> (ext optional)	
CONNECTIONS Security Coordinator:	Last:	<input type="text"/>			First:	<input type="text"/>
Title:	<input type="text"/>					
Non-CONNECTIONS Email Address:	<input type="text"/>					
Daytime Phone:	( <input type="text"/> )	<input type="text"/>	-	<input type="text"/>	Ext. <input type="text"/> (ext optional)	

Local intranet

# Appendix H:

## Major Changes/Impacts–Build 18

### 1. Single Online Record for a Case

In CONNECTIONS, ongoing child welfare services will be documented within a single online real-time case record. This is a major change to current practice. All workers assigned to the case will work within this record and, as a result, will also see the work of all other assigned workers, including each other's progress notes. Workers that provide ongoing services, including Voluntary Agency workers, will be able to view CPS information in indicated and in process investigation stages. Increased information sharing will support service coordination and timely, informed decision-making. It also requires the maintenance of confidentiality by all staff involved in a case. Districts and agencies should plan their over-all approach to preparing staff to work cooperatively within a shared case record.

### 2. New, Standardized Intake

- **Intake Process** – Every case for ongoing services will need to be first opened as a Family Services Intake stage. Much of the information required for an Intake resulting from a CPS investigation will be taken from the Investigation Stage. Districts/agencies need to determine who (caseworker and/or clerical staff) will be responsible for entry of non-CPS intakes into CONNECTIONS and ensure training of all responsible staff. Current agency intake procedures may need revision to accommodate the standardized online process.
- **Movement of Intakes Between Voluntary Agencies and Local Districts** – In addition, the movement of Family Services Intakes between Voluntary Agencies and Local Districts requires specific preparations. Local Districts need to set up an Intake Unit for acceptance of Intake stages from Voluntary Agencies. Voluntary Agencies need to set up an Assign Unit for acceptance of Family Services Stages from Local Districts. Voluntary/preventive agency workers will be precluded from documenting any further work in CONNECTIONS until the LDSS accepts and returns the case, necessitating the development of procedures for timely action on these referrals.
- **Person Search and Maintenance** – Workers that perform intake will need to accurately maintain persons and cases within CONNECTIONS to avoid creation of duplicate persons/cases. This is a new requirement for both Intake and Services staff.

### 3. Family Service Stage Roles

In CONNECTIONS, there can be only one open Family Services Stage (FSS) for a family per jurisdiction (local district). Multiple workers, including workers from other agencies, may be assigned to this stage. Each worker is assigned to one of the following four roles that governs what they do and their ability to enter data in various system components. Basically current work

roles remain the same, but in some areas CONNECTIONS will necessitate changes to how staff do their work.

- **Case Manager**

Every FSS must have a single Case Manager. He/she must be a LDSS staff. The Case Manager provides oversight of the case and must approve the Family Assessment and Service Plan (FASP). When the Case Manager also acts as the Case Planner, the Case Manager's supervisor must approve the FASP.

- **Case Planner**

The Case Planner may be either a LDSS or VA staff. He/she is responsible for coordination of work with a family. He/she is also the author of the FASP and is responsible for the entirety of its contents and the timeliness of its submission for approval. This means he/she must review all work done by other workers that contribute to the FASP, and either accept it as their own or revise it accordingly. The Case Planner sends the FASP to the Case Manager for approval.

- **CPS Worker/Monitor**

The CPS worker must be a LDSS staff. He/she may complete the CPS Risk and Safety Assessments. The system supports, but does not require, review of the FASP by a CPS worker/monitor. The Case Planner needs to alert the CPS worker/monitor in circumstances where they need to complete work in, or review, the FASP.

- **Case Worker**

Case Workers may be either LDSS or VA staff. They may be associated to a specific child(ren) in the FSS and can complete specific work within the FASP such as the Child Scales and Foster Care Issues in regard to the children to whom associated. There may be multiple Case Workers assigned to the FSS.

#### **4. Changes to Process of Assessment and Service Plan Completion and Approval**

- **Multiple Workers Recording within a Single Family Assessment and Service Plan (FASP)** - All workers assigned to the FSS will work within a single FASP. Workers will enter their contribution to specified FASP components in draft format. Upon launch of the Case Planner Summary, the system will compile all draft entries for Case Planner editing and modification into the official FASP document. Individual draft entries will not be saved past the time of FASP approval. Each LDSS and Voluntary Agency will need to define individual worker responsibility and timeframes for the entry of FASP components and develop procedures for utilization of Case Planner Summary functionality. Voluntary Agencies may want to develop procedures pertaining to Case Worker completion of assigned FASP components.

- **Online Approval of the FASP** – Local Districts should review timelines for contract agency submission of the FASP since this will be done electronically and will accommodate immediate review upon submission. The chain of command for approvals should also be reviewed and revised if appropriate. It should be noted that submission of the FASP to the Case Planner’s supervisor is not automatic. The system will accommodate this, but the Case Planner must choose to send it for review by the supervisor prior to submitting it to the Case Manager for approval. Since only the Case Planner can submit the FASP for review or approval, Case Workers who wish to have their supervisor review their work in the FASP, will need to send them a “To Do” to review the FASP online.
- **Online Completion of Plan Amendments** – Plan Amendments will be completed and approved online. Easy access to update the current Service Plan in conjunction with the status change will always be available, but is not required for submission. Supervisors should be alert to ensuring that workers are updating service plans as warranted by the status change. Districts might also want to review their current procedure for Plan Amendments and consider recommendations for utilization of optional Plan Amendments, particularly the “Change to Visitation Plan” amendment for foster care cases.

## 5. Changes to Content of Assessment and Service Plan

- **Required Assessment of All Tracked Children** – Currently workers assess the family as a unit, highlighting the needs of specific children where relevant. CONNECTIONS implements the requirement for individual assessment of all tracked children (children with a Program Choice and PPG) in the FSS. This will be done through the completion of individual child scales and child-focused narrative questions.
- **Use of Structured Decision- Making Tools** – Completion of the revised Safety Assessment and Risk Assessment Profile is required in all CPS cases. Workers will require training in the use of these tools and a learning curve is to be expected. The benefit is improved safety and casework decisions for children and families.
- **New Family Assessment** – In addition to the Safety Assessment and the Risk Assessment Profile, a new assessment of family functioning, strengths and needs must be conducted and recorded. This assessment provides the Case Planner with areas of family functioning that need to be rated using a set of scales. Case Planners will synthesize this information with information on safety and risk with the aid of new assessment analysis questions. The answers to the analysis questions form the basis upon which the service plan is constructed. Case Planners, Case Workers and Case Managers will all need to learn the new assessment tools so that their work with the family provides all the information necessary for a thorough and accurate assessment of strengths, needs and risks.

## **6. Online Scheduling and Documentation of the Service Plan Review**

Online support for scheduling and notification of Service Plan Review (SPR) conferences is provided. Workers record scheduling details in CONNECTIONS and generate system alerts to all assigned workers and notification letters to family members and other invitees. Districts need to review current procedures and determine who should be given the new “Access SPR” Business Function to facilitate SPR scheduling and documentation.

The 3rd party reviewer comments must also be entered in the system. Districts should review the 3rd party reviewer designation process and modify as desired to take advantage of “Access SPR” Business Function. Districts must also determine how 3rd party reviewer comments will be entered for non-CONNECTIONS users.

## **7. Entry of Progress Notes in CONNECTIONS**

Workers will need to learn a new process for recording progress notes that includes entry of single notes and completion of accompanying fields, such as date, type of contact, participants, etc. There will be a learning curve for workers that may result in increased time to complete progress note recording. Since progress notes will freeze 15 days after entry, procedures for review and approval should be considered and revised as appropriate. Districts and contract agencies also need to determine if clerical/support/on-call staff will be given the “Enter Progress Note” Business Function and how this will be used.

## **8. Interim Period of Dual Entry in CONNECTIONS and CCRS**

Until the implementation of Build 19 when CONNECTIONS becomes the system of record in NYS workers will still need to record the assessment and service plan in CCRS (Plan Type, Service Needs and Status, Program Choice, PPG, Worker Function, Case Status). [Since PPGs have been revised in CONNECTIONS, a mapping guide will be provided to assist workers. Workers will continue to receive cues from CCRS for entry of assessment and service plan data.]

## **9. New Program Choice: Non-LDSS Custody**

There is a new Program Choice, “Non-LDSS Custody,” for children in the care of a relative or other resource person, but not in the custody of the local Commissioner of Social Services. The Program Choice is an “add” that reflects the unique legal status and planning needs of this population. It is not meant to be a substitution for “Protective” or “Preventive Services” program choices. Appropriate FASP questions are customized for this population. Local districts should review their caseloads to identify the cases that fit this status, and make sure workers understand when to use new Program Choice.

## **10. System Generated Creation of Child Case Record for All Freed Children**

A new Child Case Record for a freed child will be created, within the Family Services Stage, in CONNECTIONS. The timing for the creation of the separate record is prescribed. [The system will automatically create a child case record when the Case Manager records that the child is completely freed for adoption.] All children who have been freed, including those who might not be placed in an adoptive setting, will have a separate case record and a new PID. Districts who currently delay creating a child record should review, and revise as appropriate, current policies and procedures to accommodate the earlier timeframe for creation of the child record.

