



CONNECTIONS

NEWS FOR USERS

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CONNECTIONS INTRANET:
<http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect>

CONNECTIONS INTERNET:
<http://ocfs.ny.gov/connect>

The Foster Care Notification Window:

Recently, several new features were added to CONNECTIONS to support the identification of foster parents involved in a CPS Intake, Investigation, or Family Assessment Response (FAR) stage. Among these new features, the Foster Care Notification (FCN) window was established specifically to allow workers to view information about foster homes that have been identified in a report, as well as information about the foster children in these homes.

district with legal custody of the foster children named in the CPS report, and the district or voluntary agency that certified or approved the foster home. In some scenarios, all three parties could be the same.

In order to adhere to the legal duties that each responsible party need address, it is important that all parties are made aware of the pending CPS report as soon as possible, which is where the Foster Care Notification window proves an invaluable tool.

When a certified or approved foster parent is the subject of a report of suspected abuse or maltreatment involving a foster child, there are several agencies that have an interest in the report and the safety of the foster children in the home. These agencies include: the district that is conducting the CPS investigation, the

The Foster Care Notification window is accessible from the Search/Maintain dropdown for staff with the View Foster Care Notification business function (FC CPS Notices). The window itself populates based on your district or agency, and displays relevant information in two grids, both of which are explained in the below table.

Foster Care Notification Window Grids		
	Grid 1: <i>Foster Homes Involved in INT, INV, or FAR</i>	Grid 2: <i>Children Placed in Foster Homes Involved in INT, INV, or FAR</i>
Districts	Homes returned are either certified/approved by the district or homes where the district currently has a child placed	Only the children for whom the district is responsible will display
Voluntary Agencies	Homes returned are certified/approved by the agency	Only the children placed in homes certified/approved by the agency will display

A Testimonial: Jason DeSantis

*Children and Family Services Program
Manager, OCFS*



OCFS strongly encourages districts and voluntary agencies to designate at least one staff person and a backup to be responsible for checking the FCN window a minimum of once per business day

“The Foster Care Notification window is especially important in ‘cross border’ situations where the child may be assigned a caseworker from the voluntary agency in which they’re placed, another caseworker who acts as the CPS monitor from the district with care and custody of the child, and still a third caseworker who is investigating a new CPS report involving the foster child. The FCN window allows both the voluntary agency and the care and custody district worker to learn immediately, through CONNECTIONS, when a CPS investigation begins involving one of their foster children.

The traditional way, within CONNECTIONS, that a caseworker assigned to the FSS stage of a child in foster care would be made aware that the child is involved in a new CPS investigation is by an alert sent to the caseworker’s workload. A common complaint with these alerts is that they are often buried in the midst of numerous other alerts, and therefore can sometimes be overlooked. Also, many different caseworker caseloads from a district or voluntary agency must be monitored for any new alerts, which can be an onerous task for larger districts and agencies with dozens, sometimes hundreds, of caseworkers. Additionally, traditional alerts do not inform the caseworker assigned to the foster child’s FSS stage when the foster parent is involved in a new CPS report involving the foster parent’s own biological children.

I recently had an opportunity to hear from a homefinder from a local voluntary agency. She had just checked the FCN window and noticed one of her foster parents, who currently did *not* have a foster child placed with her, was on the window regarding a new investigation involving the foster parent’s biological child. The home finder thought it likely she would remain unaware of this investigation without the ability of having learned of it via the FCN window.

The CONNECTIONS Implementation team has done a great job working with local districts and voluntary agencies to ensure they understand FCN window functionality, how it improves upon the traditional alert system, and why it is so important that the window is checked each business day.”

Resources

The following resources are available to all staff interested in learning more about the Foster Care Notification window, as well as the other modules within CONNECTIONS that support identifying foster parents in ongoing investigations:

- Quick Start Guide ([Intranet/Internet](#))
- Impact Analysis ([Intranet/Internet](#))
- Letter from Deputy Commissioner Laura Velez to District Commissioners and Executive Directors ([Intranet/Internet](#))
- Administrative Directive 16-OCFS-ADM-13: Requirements Relating to CPS Reports Involving Foster Parents ([Internet](#))

Meet Your Implementation Specialists: New York City Regional Office - ACS

CONNECTIONS Implementation Specialists are an integral part of the statewide CONNECTIONS team. Located within each regional office, implementation specialists are dedicated to providing personalized CONNECTIONS assistance to all districts and voluntary agencies within their assigned region. In each *News for Users*, we will feature a different regional implementation team, acquainting you with your local CONNECTIONS experts.

The New York City Regional Office (NYCRO), featured this season, includes a large number of implementation specialists stationed at various borough offices and voluntary agencies. Below is a closer look at three implementation specialists who specifically support NYC Administration of Children Services (ACS) borough offices.



Iris Gonzalez

Background: No stranger to CONNECTIONS, Iris has worked with the application for over 10 years, beginning her career as an Implementation Specialist shortly after graduating from New York City College of Technology with her Computer Engineering Technology bachelor's degree in 2005.

A Day in the Life: Iris is currently stationed at the ACS Bronx Field Office, where she supports approximately 250 CONNECTIONS users between two sites. Iris manages a busy schedule, balancing in-person requests at her sites with more formally routed tickets and emails, and provides regular “elbow-to-

elbow” training on all areas of the application, most frequently Person Merges, Consolidations, and Permanency Hearing Reports (PHRs).

A Common Q&A: Iris often receives questions on why the Initial FASP cannot be submitted. This is usually due to a pending component on the “Check FASP Detail” that a user is unable to clear. Iris finds that a common resolution is to ensure the Case Planner Summary checkbox is checked on certain windows.

Words of Wisdom: “If you are ever in doubt and don't know what to do, call me!”

Johnny Tranquille

Background: Like Iris, Johnny is a CONNECTIONS veteran who began supporting the application around 2006. Additionally, Johnny is a Microsoft Certified Professional and has a bachelor's degree in Business Management from York College.

A Day in the Life: Working primarily with CONNECTIONS users from Brooklyn, Johnny balances his time between two sites and supports close to 400 users. To begin his day, Johnny reviews all requests for assistance submitted through the ACS Service Desk portal, checks his email and voice messages from the night before, and then plans his day, balancing hands-on assistance with remote support, and often participating in training presentations along the way.

A Common Q&A: Johnny considers himself particularly proficient in solving issues related to consolidating investigation stages. The key here is to report any issues right away, since consolidations are time-sensitive.

Words of Wisdom: “It only takes a few minutes to submit a ticket for assistance with your CONNECTIONS issues. It may save you a lot of valuable time down the road!”



Continued: Meet your Implementation Specialists

Saifur Rahman



Background: Another longtime CONNECTIONS professional, Saifur has over twelve years experience as an Implementation Specialist, working at the Division of Rehabilitative Services at OCFS, as well as in Quality Assurance at ACS before becoming part of the CONNECTIONS Implementation team. Saifur has a bachelor’s degree in Information System Management from CUNY.

A Day in the Life: Saifur is assigned primarily to the Manhattan and Staten Island ACS field offices, where he supports over 300 CONNECTIONS users. Like his coworkers, a typical day begins on-site, checking emails and assigned tickets, followed by scheduling site visits and one-on-one training where necessary.

A Common Q&A: The most common question that Saifur encounters is: “I’m the Case Manager, why can’t I modify the FASP?” Saifur reminds his users that if a case has a Case Planner assigned, the Case Manager cannot modify the FASP unless the Case Planner is unassigned.

Words of Wisdom: Saifur defers to his favorite quote from Mr. Rogers: “Anyone who does anything to help a child is a hero to me.”

We’re Here to Help!

Contact your Regional Implementation Specialist with any CONNECTIONS issue! A list of contacts by region is available on the Contact Us page of the [Intranet](#) and [Internet](#).

Hey NYC...

Do you need technical assistance on a case where ACS is the Case Manager? Have you freed a child and need a CCR opened? Received a new case but still don’t have a role in the stage? Need to transfer your stage to another agency? Or, does your ADVPO case need to be converted to a CWS case?

These are just a few of the things that ACS’ CONNECTIONS Mailboxes can handle quickly and efficiently! Developed to deliver technical assistance to ACS and voluntary agency staff, the ACS Mailboxes provide resolutions to various inquiries pertaining to the CONNECTIONS application, business process, and policy and procedural issues.

To contact the ACS Mailboxes, send an email with a brief but clear description of the issue to one of the following mailboxes. Remember to include all information that is needed to accomplish the task, i.e., CONNECTIONS case and stage IDs, plus any relevant information like the new agency and new worker for transfer requests, which child you’re requesting health responsibility for, name of

the worker to assign a role to in a stage, etc.

When you send your request, do not cc anyone else, as this may result in a duplication of efforts.

Mailbox staff are here to assist. Let them work for you!

Mailbox	Customer
CPS@acs.nyc.gov	Division of Child Protection (DCP) and Close to Home (CTH)
fostercare@acs.nyc.gov	Foster Care Providers
prev@acs.nyc.gov	Preventive Providers

CONNECTIONS
Builds are announced and detailed in the **CONNECTIONS Build Bulletin**, all of which are posted on both the [Intranet](#) and [Internet](#)

Did You Know...

Incident Dates are now Required for all Substantiated Allegations in CONNECTIONS!



As of Friday, July 7th, with the implementation of the most recent CONNECTIONS Build, incident date and time is now a required field for every substantiated allegation in investigation stages.

When an allegation is substantiated in the Allegations window of INV stages, "save" will not be enabled until an incident date and time is entered.

This enhancement is in support of Administrative Directive (ADM) 17-OCFS-ADM-03, Entry of Incident Date for Substantiated Allegations. The ADM, which provides important background information as well as program implications, is available on the OCFS Intranet website at the following link:

<http://ocfs.state.nyenet/policies/external/>

A Tip Sheet a Season...



Check out all of our **CONNECTIONS Tip Sheets** on our **Job Aids and Tip Sheets Page** — available on the [Intranet](#) and [Internet](#), and soon — available from directly within **CONNECTIONS!**

CONNECTIONS tip sheets are valuable tools that target a specific area in the application, often one which is troublesome to many users. With step-by-step instructions and screenshots, these frequently-updated resources, of which roughly 60 currently exist, are great go-tos for quick and easy resolutions.

This season, we're highlighting two new Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) tip sheets.

New York, like all states, is required to report adoption and foster care information to the federal government every six months. AFCARS information is used to identify trends, plan for needed services, establish funding priorities, conduct research and evaluation, maintain and update regulations, and respond to requests for data about foster care and adoption. In New York, CONNECTIONS is a primary data source for these federal reporting requirements, so it is important that data

is entered in an accurate and timely manner.

1) Recording AFCARS Information ([Intranet/Internet](#))

This tip sheet provided an overview of AFCARS reporting requirements and *where* in CONNECTIONS the data should be entered.

2) AFCARS and Activities: Documenting Removal Information ([Intranet/Internet](#))

AFCARS also requires states to collect a number of data elements on children in out-of-home care. For each child with an M910 Placement Date recorded in the CONNECTIONS Activities window, there must be an associated Date of Physical Removal, Type of Legal Event Associated with the Removal, and the condition(s) associated with that removal recorded in the Tracked Child Detail Removal Information window. This tip sheet provided workers with examples of how to correctly record removal information in CONNECTIONS.

CONNECTIONS Clue

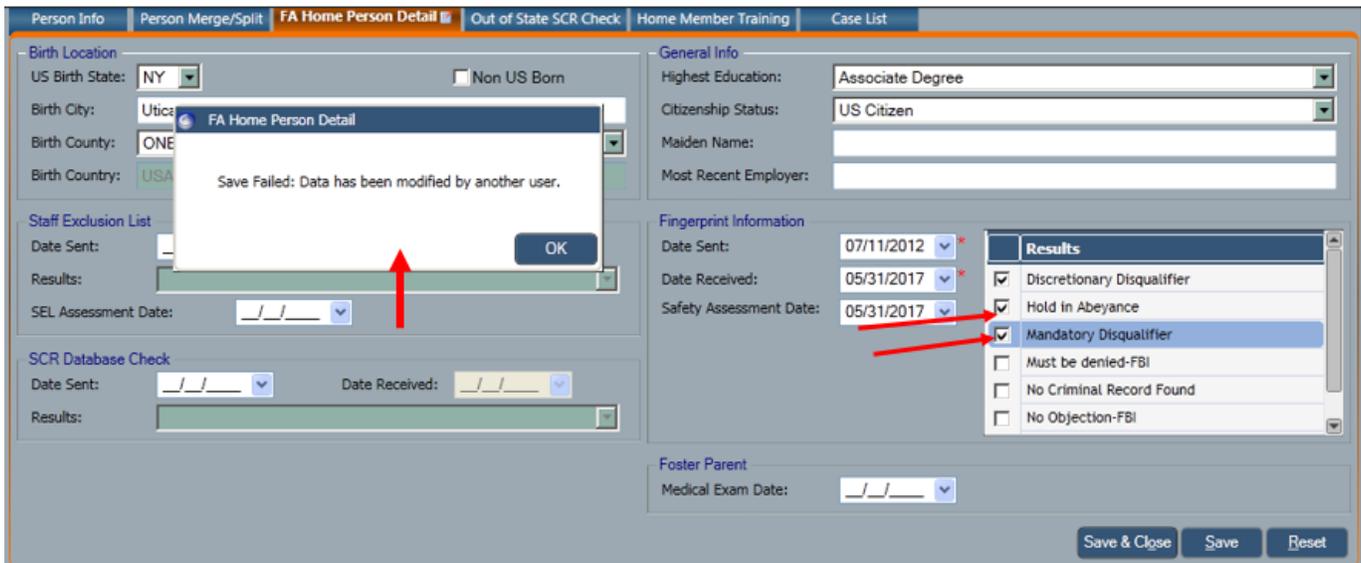


Receive a “Save Failed...” message when inputting fingerprint information in a FAD stage?

When inputting fingerprint result information in a Foster and Adoptive Home Development (FAD) stage in CONNECTIONS, users may sometimes receive a seemingly inconsistent error message: “Save Failed: Data has been modified by another user.”

This happens when you’ve selected *more than one*

result in the Results listbox of the Fingerprint Information section, when working in the FA Home Person Detail tab. Per Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) policy, only one result may be chosen. If more than one result is selected and you attempt to save the window, you will receive this error message and be unable to save until the issue is corrected.



CONNECTIONS Puzzler



Time for some fun! Can you find the following ten CONNECTIONS terms?

1. ALLEGATION
2. CASEWORK
3. FASP
4. FLAG
5. HOMESTUDY
6. INDICATED
7. INTAKE
8. MOVEMENT
9. OUTCOMES
10. PERMANENCY

