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 | INFORMATIONAL LETTER |
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TRANSMITTAL: 95 INF-21

TO: Commissioners of
 Social Services
 Directors of
 Voluntary Agencies

DIVISION: Services and
 Community
 Development

DATE: June 27, 1995

SUBJECT: CONNECTIONS Information Survey

SUGGESTED
 DISTRIBUTION: Directors of Services
 Child Welfare Staff

CONTACT PERSON: Gerald Seeley, 1-800-342-3727, extension 2-2932,
 or (518) 432-2932, User ID 0FL130.

ATTACHMENTS: CONNECTIONS Informational Survey (available on-line)

FILING REFERENCES

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	Dept. Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
94 INF-20					94 LCM-114
94 INF-25					

The New York State Department of Social Services continues to move forward with its initiative to develop a Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS), to be called "CONNECTIONS". Over the past several months we have completed a variety of activities with the user community.

Focus Groups: In order to ensure maximum user input from various points of view and differing regional perspectives around New York State, a series of Focus Group meetings about the SACWIS initiative were held. The primary audience was caseworkers and supervisors to ensure that this project is designed from the "bottom up". Sixteen sessions were held for approximately 300 child welfare caseworkers and supervisors, including five sessions in New York City.

SACWIS Survey: The input received from our Focus Group was distilled to 21 vital features and functions which were incorporated into the Department's SACWIS survey. This survey allowed us to hear from a much larger and broader population than the Focus Groups allowed. The designated respondents were all local district and voluntary agency child welfare staff who provide, supervise or are otherwise directly involved in the administration or management of child welfare services. With nearly 5,000 responses received, the survey affirmed the input derived from the Focus Groups and provided an opportunity for districts and agencies to target critical areas to be considered in the development of the SACWIS system.

Regional Forums: A series of six Forums were initiated in order to hear directly from management staff about their specific needs, any additional staff needs not covered in the survey and to provide an opportunity to air concerns and ask questions. Attendees were provided with background information about the SACWIS initiative, a planning activities update and an opportunity to discuss training needs and procedures for effective training.

Solution and Discovery: This project was an intense six day effort to bring key stakeholders from various disciplines together to refine the strategy for the continued development of SACWIS. Unisys Corporation, acting in a pro bono capacity, facilitated group sessions and workshops that included representation from the State, local social services districts, New York City Child Welfare Administration, and voluntary agencies. A core group of personnel attended each session, and consultant members rotated into sessions that dealt with their particular area of expertise. The core and consultant groups included representatives from both program areas (CPS, preventive, foster care, adoption, homefinding, family reunification and independent living) and systems areas (legacy systems, technological innovations, network administration, and data storage).

The main objective of the Solution Discovery project was to allow New York State to move from a vision to a strategic solution. This objective was furthered by activities such as: mapping and defining the "business process" of child welfare workers; defining goals, objectives and critical success factors of child welfare particularly as they related to technological solutions; generating features, functions and applications necessary or desirable, including federal SACWIS requirements, in a new comprehensive system; understanding the system environment in which we operate today, including a description of each legacy management system, networks and databases. Barriers and issues were defined at each stage and from each perspective. Additional activities included discussions about process reengineering and preparing for change.

Child Welfare On-Line: This initiative continues the Department's multi-faceted identification of user needs and system design options. This phase, specifically involving about 30 child welfare services program staff from local districts and voluntary agencies as well as training contractors, will enable us to lay out specific case record content and related services processes that SACWIS technology will support. Through facilitated workgroups, and written communication, this group is assisting in case record design, incorporating a customized design adaptable to the particular characteristics of each case, risk assessment principles and automation features that will improve efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery.

On April 7, 1995, the Advanced Planning Document Update (APDU) for New York's SACWIS System, named CONNECTIONS, was submitted for review and approval. A draft Request for Proposals (RFP) has been released with vendor information. A conference has been scheduled to provide the Offeror community with an opportunity to review and make suggestions to New York State regarding the scope and content of its planned CONNECTIONS RFP. A final RFP is expected to be released to the vendor community in July, 1995.

As we move from a planning phase in our development of CONNECTIONS, certain information is required. First, we are requesting each local district and agency to designate a CONNECTION's point person. This person should be familiar with both child welfare programs, staff and issues, and comfortable with systems. The designee will be your contact person for State DSS CONNECTIONS staff. Issues that will need to be addressed by the point person include, but are not limited to: planning for equipment allocation and installation, site survey preparation, training and implementation schedules, and design and development of the child welfare functions and processes.

Your contact person should be able to draw together the necessary staff in your district or agency to work with us through the various phases of the project.

Date June 27, 1995

Trans. No. 95 INF-21

Page No. 4

The second issue which must be quickly addressed at this time is the verification of current information for equipment allocation. Under a separate cover we are sending you an organization chart which has been used for initial equipment estimates for your district or agency. In order to complete our estimate of equipment needs for CONNECTIONS, please complete the enclosed form and return it as soon as possible.

Please review and advise us of any changes which have occurred and changes which may occur before November 1995. We will need a listing of all staff who devote 100% of their time to child welfare services (include caseworkers, social workers, supervisors, program area specialists, clerical staff, and administrators). Please be as specific as possible in this listing as it will be used as a basis for developing and evaluating equipment allocations and for planning site preparation and installation. The information regarding the organization chart should be returned by July 7, 1995 with a listing of staff. Mailing or faxing instructions are included on the enclosed CONNECTIONS Cover Sheet. Please return your entire district/agency/office listing in one mailing/faxing.

If you have any questions, call Gerald Seeley at 1-800-342-3727, extension 2932, at OFISLINK 0FL130 or Internet Gerald.Seeley@dss.MAILNET.NY.STATE.US.

Donald K. Smith

CONNECTIONS INFORMATIONAL SURVEY

NAME: _____ NO. OF CHILD WELFARE STAFF: _____

ADDRESS: Central Office:

TELEPHONE: () _____ - _____

I. CHILD WELFARE SERVICES LOCATION(S): (use additional pages for additional locations)

	NUMBER OF:		
	CW SUPERVISORS	CW WORKERS	CW CLERICAL STAFF

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: () _____ - _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: () _____ - _____

II. CONNECTIONS CONTACT FOR YOUR DISTRICT/AGENCY

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: __ (____) _____ - _____

ON-LINE ADDRESS: OFISLINK: _____ INTERNET: _____

FAX #: __ (____) _____ - _____

III. Do you anticipate changes in the number of staff or office locations within the next year? _____ yes _____ no

. Staff changes (increase/decrease by site location):

. Office location (relocation, elimination, new):

IV. Do you have training facilities which could be made available for CONNECTIONS Training? _____ yes _____ no

If yes, where is the facility located? _____

Please return the completed survey by July 7, 1995. Mail to:

Gerald Seeley, Director of Implementation and Operations, BSIS,
40 North Pearl Street, Arcade Building, 4th Floor, Albany, New York 12243.

Fax: 518-432-2946.

If you have any questions, please contact Gerald Seeley at 1-800-342-3727,
on OFISLINK at OFL130, or at Gerald.Seeley @ dss.MAILNET.NY.STATE.US.