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Administrative Directive

Transmittal:	15-OCFS-ADM-25
To:	Commissioners of Social Services
Issuing Division/Office:	Child Welfare and Community Services
Date:	November 23, 2015
Subject:	**Timely Data Entry and Use of Incident Date**
Suggested Distribution:	Directors of Social Services Child Protective Services Supervisors Foster Care Supervisors
Contact Person(s):	Any questions concerning this release should be directed to the appropriate Regional Office, Division of Child Welfare and Community Services: Buffalo Regional Office-Dana Whitcomb (716) 847-3145 Dana.Whitcomb@ocfs.ny.gov Rochester Regional Office - Karen Buck (585) 238-8201 Karen.Buck@ocfs.ny.gov Syracuse Regional Office - Sara Simon (315) 423-1200 Sara.Simon@ocfs.ny.gov Albany Regional Office - Kerri Barber (518) 486-7078 Kerri.Barber@ocfs.ny.gov Spring Valley Regional Office - Yolanda Désarmé (845) 708-2498 Yolanda.Desarme@ocfs.ny.gov New York City Regional Office - Raymond Toomer (212) 383-1788 Raymond.Toomer@ocfs.ny.gov Native American Services - Heather LaForme (716) 847-3123 Heather.LaForme@ocfs.ny.gov
Attachments:	None

Filing References

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	NYS Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.

I.   **Purpose**

The purpose of this Administrative Directive (ADM) is to notify local departments of social services (LDSSs) of CONNECTIONS data entry requirements relevant to the calculation of performance metrics included in the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). In order to improve the accuracy of CFSR metrics, all foster care movements must be recorded in CONNECTIONS within 30 calendar days and the incident date associated with any substantiated allegation of child abuse and maltreatment involving a child placed in out-of home care must be entered.

II.   **Background**

As part of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), each state is evaluated based on its performance in relation to seven key outcome metrics. Several of these metrics focus on a child's foster care experiences and are calculated using movement and child protective services (CPS) data captured within CONNECTIONS. Relevant data is shared with the federal Administration for Children and Families Children's Bureau several times a year through required federal reporting submissions known as the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS) and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS).

Delayed entry of foster care movement codes into CONNECTIONS can adversely affect AFCARS reporting and the calculation of CFSR metrics for New York State (NYS). The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) submits AFCARS data twice a year, with data extractions occurring on approximately May 1 and November 1. Movements entered into CONNECTIONS after the extraction date are not included in the AFCARS file. This can lower NYS' performance on various CFSR permanency metrics. For example, if a child is discharged from foster care to home on March 30, but the movement is not recorded in CONNECTIONS until May 5, NYS will not get credit for achieving permanency for that child when certain CFSR metrics are calculated. In addition, the Children's Bureau considers the state noncompliant if 10 percent or more of recorded discharge dates submitted as part of the AFCARS file are entered after more than 60 days.   The same non-compliance rule applies to removal dates.

Missing information on the incident date of substantiated child abuse and maltreatment allegations can also inflate measures of child abuse and maltreatment while in foster care, another CFSR metric. The Children's Bureau determines the rate of victimization while in foster care by dividing the total number of reported substantiated allegations involving children in out-of-home care (by any perpetrator) by the number of foster care days provided during the observation period. If states provide an incident date for the reported child abuse and maltreatment, events that occurred before the child's placement and reported after the child's foster care admission are dropped from the numerator. In other words, if a child in foster care newly discloses that s/he was abused or maltreated by a caregiver six months **before** being placed in care and the subsequent investigation substantiates this allegation, this report would **not** be flagged as an incident of child abuse or maltreatment while in foster care **if** the date of the incident is included in the federal submission file. If no incident date is provided, the Children's Bureau uses the report date to categorize the incident, making it appear that the child was victimized while in foster care. While a field for entering the incident date is available within CONNECTIONS, this information is frequently not entered. To reduce the likelihood that historical allegations will be interpreted by the CFSR as new incidents of abuse or

maltreatment which makes NYS' rate of victimization while in foster care appear higher than it actually is, LDSSs need to enter incident dates for all substantiated allegations involving children placed in foster care.

III.   Program Implications

Delayed and incomplete entry of information into CONNECTIONS may be adversely affecting NYS and LDSS performance on key CFSR performance metrics. Delayed data entry of movement activities, particularly exits and discharges from foster care, can result in permanent exits from care not being captured in the calculation of CFSR permanency metrics. Missing incident date information may inflate victimization while in foster care rates. Counties can improve the accuracy of state and county level CFSR metrics by entering CONNECTIONS data in a timely manner and routinely recording incident date information for substantiated allegations of abuse and maltreatment of youth in foster care.

Improved data entry practices will provide districts with more accurate information about their performance and reduce the likelihood that districts will look to implement various interventions that may not be necessary.

IV.   Required Action

Effectively immediately, LDSSs are expected to data enter into CONNECTIONS all key movement activities (admissions and discharges) for children in foster care no later than 30 calendar days after the movement has taken place.

Additionally, child protective reports with substantiated allegations for any child in foster care must include an incident date. The "Date/Time of Incident" data field is located on the allegations tab in CONNECTIONS. If the exact incident date is not known, an approximation is required; for example, an event occurring two years prior to a report taken on 04/20/15, would be entered as 04/01/2013.

V.   Effective Date

Immediately upon dissemination of this ADM.

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