



Office of Children and Family Services

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Administrative Directive

Transmittal:	19-OCFS-ADM-17
To:	Commissioners of Social Services Executive Directors of Voluntary Authorized Agencies
Issuing Division/Office:	Bureau of Child Welfare and Community Services
Date:	October 9, 2019
Subject:	Placement Module Phase 3 – Searching/Matching Function
Suggested Distribution:	Directors of Social Services Child Protective Services Supervisors Child Welfare Supervisors Foster Care Supervisors Staff Development Coordinators CONNECTIONS Implementation Coordinators
Contact Person(s):	See section VI.
Attachments:	None

Filing References

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	NYS Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
18-OCFS-ADM-07 18-OCFS-ADM-13		18 NYCRR 428.6, 430.10(d)(1), and 431.10	SSL §§ 358-a, 384-a; FCA §1027-a		<i>Activities Coding Guide</i> GIS #16-006

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Administrative Directive (ADM) is to introduce Phase 3 of the Placement Module in CONNECTIONS (CNNX). This new searching/matching component of CNNX is designed to assist local department of social services (LDSSs) and authorized voluntary agencies (VAs) in finding appropriate foster care placements efficiently and quickly. Additionally, management staff may analyze the information gathered in this module to identify placement population trends, program strengths and weaknesses, and project foster home recruitment needs.

II. Background

When a child has been placed by Family Court in the care and custody or guardianship and custody of an LDSS, it is the responsibility of that LDSS, or a VA under contract with the LDSS, to place the child in the least restrictive and most home-like setting in which the child can be maintained safely and receive all services specified in his or her service plan.¹ Traditionally, the home finder created a manual method for locating placements that involves knowledge of the child and of the foster care resources available in their community.

III. Program Implications

LDSSs and VAs are required to use the Placement Module effective the release of Phase 3 of the module, which is currently scheduled for October 18, 2019.

The Placement Module allows workers quick access to all placement-related data, and will replace the Vacancy Control Module for the few LDSSs and VAs still using it. The Placement Module will streamline a multitude of processes for many LDSSs/VAs currently handled outside of CNNX, including placement resource searches and initiating communication between LDSS and VA's regarding placements. The Placement Module will help standardize foster care placement across LDSSs/VAs and promote fact-based, consistent decision making.

Phase 1 and 2 of the Placement Module were implemented to prepare for the searching of foster homes in Phase 3. The preparation work included:

- Data entry of the "Child Characteristics"
- Data entry of the "Resource Characteristics"
- Data entry of current valid "Contracts" between LDSS and VA's
- Data entry of email for staff
- Selection of email notifications, and
- Selection of new business functions

Additionally, functionality was included that allows the worker to collect data on special restrictions that apply to children in foster care. A placement evaluation tool was created that allows workers to collect information relating to each child in the form of predefined questions and comments. Reports that support data collection and population and resource monitoring were also implemented.

While these tasks were preparatory for Phase 3, it should be noted that these are ongoing. As new resources are established, the characteristics must be entered. "Child Characteristics" should be updated and maintained regularly, Contracts with Voluntary Agencies should be maintained in the CNNX application to reflect any new or updated changes, and new staff should have email and notifications in their profile and the Placement business functions needed for the work they are doing.

Phase 3 of the Placement Module provides an automated process for identifying a potential placement from a pool of placement resources that match a child's characteristics in order to provide home finders with information that can assist in selecting the most appropriate placement for a child. The process of matching a child with a resource that meets that child's needs will

¹ 18 NYCRR 430.11(d)(1).

have several benefits regarding the permanency of a child's placement, promoting and supporting a more positive foster care experience for foster children and foster parents, reduction of future moves, and improvement in the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in foster care.

Information from existing CNNX Foster and Adoptive (FAD) stages, the Resource Module, and the Activities Module will be used to determine which resources will be considered in the search and match process. Data collected within the Placement Module will be shared with the Activities Module to eliminate duplicate data stored in and outside of CNNX as well as to expedite the current foster care activities data entry process. There will no longer be direct entries made in the Activities Module for M910 (Child Placed), M981, and M982 (transfers) codes. Direct entries will also not be allowed for M960 (Return from Absence) and M980 (Return from Trial Discharge) when the return is to a different placement setting. These specific Movement codes will originate from the Placement Module. The Placement Module will prepopulate the Activity record with the placement data collected in the Placement Module and require a user to verify and save the record in Activities.

Placement-related data will be collected at a high level and is not intended to replace detailed data collected in the Family Assessment and Service Plan, nor is the module intended to replace valuable communication between placement staff and VA foster care staff. The data will be useful in providing a more accurate understanding of capacity in real time. Data collection rules and security rules will remain as is for all existing modules unless otherwise noted below.

LDSS and VA staff with responsibility for the placement of children must be proactive in maintaining up-to-date and accurate information on their foster boarding homes and congregate care settings as well as for the children needing placement. The goal of the home finder is to find a placement that is a good fit for the child's interests and needs, and that makes as few changes as possible in the child's life, (e.g., supporting educational stability by keeping the child in the same school when it is in the best interest of the child, close to family and friends). In addition, there are statutory² and regulatory³ requirements to place siblings together unless it is not in the best interests of one or more of the children to do so.

The Placement Module promotes efficient, best-fit placements by allowing workers to match placement-related child characteristics with resource-provided characteristics to obtain the best foster care resources available on a case-by-case basis.

CNNX will return a list of resources using the multi-facility search based on the following rules:

- A. The caseworker first selects a setting type of foster home or a congregate care, enters proximity and school addresses for the child(ren), and designates all child characteristics as either optional or required criteria in the search
- B. CONNECTIONS then returns resources based on the below:
 - Resources in **Accepted Active** status
 - Resources with at least the **Program** and **Local Program Types** selected for the search
 - Resources with the required child capacity that can accept the specified gender and age ranges

² SSL §§ 358-a(11), 384-a(1-a) and FCA §1027-a.

³ 18 NYCRR 428.6(a)(2)(vi) and 431.10.

- Resources that are either direct LDSS homes *or* voluntary agency licensed homes when the voluntary agency has an **Active Contract** with the placing LDSS
 - Resources that have all **Required Characteristics**
 - Within-county matches are the default returns. Matches with resources outside of the county can also be viewed using “view all”
 - Resources that have sufficient vacancies to support the request are the default returns. Resources that do not have sufficient vacancies can also be viewed using “view all”
 - Resources that speak the same language selected within the placement request. This may be the language spoken by the children in the request or the language of the parents of the children
 - For a “Congregate Care” search, only the selected **Facility Type(s)** will return
- C. The ordering of the results is as follows:
- Resources with the greatest number of matching **Optional Characteristics** to the least number of matching Optional Characteristics
 - Resources in the same county/borough (for the Administration for Children’s Services) first and then out-of-county/borough when using “view all”
 - Shortest distance from the home address (when known) first
 - Shortest distance from the school address (when known) first
 - Resources certified by the county first
 - VA resources will return in a rotation. With the longest ago referred agency appearing first in the results, all other things being equal
- D. A resource will not return if:
- the **Close to Home** indicator on Resource Characteristics is selected, or
 - the **Office of Refugee Resettlement Unaccompanied Alien Children (ORRUAC)** indicator on Resource Characteristics is selected, or
 - the home is **Closed to Intake**, or
 - the Foster Care Agency (FCA) certifying the resource does not have an **Active Signed Contract Period** in CNNX

Exact Resource Search

In some cases, the LDSS or VA may have already identified a placement resource for the child(ren), such as a kin resource or a former foster parent, in which case a direct match between the child and the placement resource is appropriate.

The “Exact Resource Search” for known resources allows the worker to search for a specific resource by name, resource ID, vendor ID, or address. The existing “Resource Search” window, accessed from within the Placement Module, will be used to allow the worker to select a resource from the “Resource Search List” to be used in the Placement Module. This process allows workers to bypass many of the rules constructed in the multi-facility search process and, as such, in cases where an exact resource search is necessary, workers will be responsible for ensuring foster care policies are followed.

Emergency Kinship Placements

In emergency kinship placement situations, the “Exact Resource Search” from within the Placement Module may be used. In order to ensure that children in foster care are placed

appropriately, it is necessary to enter the information on the identified resource into the FAD stage in CNNX within two business days of the child's emergency placement.

IV. Systems Implications

Placement functionality in CNNX is being built in 4 phases.

In June 2018, Phase 1 implemented windows that support preparatory actions for the Placement Module. These actions included the recording of appropriate child characteristics, resource characteristics, and special restrictions. CNNX will use this information along with information on licensed capacity, setting, program types, language, and proximity and school address information to identify matches. Additionally, the first phase implemented the "Email" tab for recording staff business email addresses. In order for CNNX to communicate automatically with caseworkers and home finders upon Phase 3 implementation, these email addresses must be recorded. See 18-OCFS-ADM-13 dated June 5, 2018, for additional details.

Phase 2 enhanced and provided additional support for the search and match functionality. New reports were released as part of this phase. For each child and resource, they combine and display the information collected during Phase 1. This information can be used during Phase 2 and Phase 3 to assist workers in making placement decisions.

Phase 3 adds search and match functionality to allow for a pool of appropriate placement options to be provided for children entering foster care or moving to a new placement. Additionally, workers will send referrals for desired resources and fully record the child's placement into foster care within the Placement Module.

Phase 3 of the Placement Module will result in changes to the entry of "Movement Codes" (M codes) in the Activities Module of CNNX. The values M910 Child Placed, M981 Intra Agency Transfer, and M982 Inter Agency Transfer will no longer be displayed in the "Event" dropdown list. These will be system-generated records initiated from the Placement Module. There will no longer be the ability for a LDSS to manually enter these Movement Codes in the Activities Module. However, workers must still save the prefilled record into Activities.

There will be a new grid called the Pending Activities Data Entry grid, which will be visible only to workers with the "Maintain Activities" business function. The status column will remain in "Pending" until four requirements are met. These requirements are:

- (1) a WMS case exists for the current stage of the child(ren) needing placement
- (2) a verified Client Identification Number (CIN) exists for the Person Identifier (PID) of the tracked child
- (3) an Open Track record exists for the selected child
- (4) the "Verification Status" from the *Verify Placements* window equals "Placement Verified," generated by the placement request from which the record was created

When all four of these requirements are met, the "Pending" status will change to "Navigate." Upon selecting the "Navigate" link from the grid, the new record will display in the *Activities Search* Window with the following values prefilled:

- Date of Activity
- Type of Activity

- Event
- Facility Modifier(s)
- Reason for Transfer (when applicable)
- Out of County/Borough Reason (when applicable)
- Type of Placement

These values are non-modifiable with the exception of Reason for Transfer, Out of County/Borough Reason, and Type of Placement. Upon a successful save, the status will then be updated to “Complete.”

Listed below is a brief overview of the changes that affect the placement process:

- *Child Characteristics Window*
 - This allows the caseworker to record characteristics for children who are the subject of a placement search. Characteristics recorded on the “Characteristics” subtab (implemented in Phase 1) are displayed for children within the selected stage.
- *Matching Factors -Child*
 - This process allows users to compare the characteristics of a selected resource returned from the Placement Resource Search Process to the characteristics identified for each child included in the Placement Search Request.
- *Matching Factors -Resource*
 - This process allows users to compare the combined characteristics of the child(ren) selected in the Placement Request to the characteristics of one, two, or three resources selected from the Placement Resource Search Result or Referral Detail window.
- *Notifications Tab*
 - The Notifications tab will be used to select which notifications a staff member receives. This tab is modifiable if the employee is in active status and the local part of the employee’s email address has been recorded. Only those in the worker’s LDSS/VA with the “Maint Security” business function can modify this window (most often the security coordinator).
- *Placement Window*
 - This window serves as a central location for child-specific information related to placement needs at the time of a placement request. (Placement requests will be functional with Phase 3.) This window is intended to assist workers in making decisions about placements for children. It is most valuable for those who work with children in foster care and children entering placement, and their supervisors.
- *Prior Placements - Child Window (View-Only Window)*
 - Displays prior foster care placements for the selected child as recorded on the *Activities Window*.
- *Placement Evaluation Window*
 - This window allows for the entry of additional information with regards to a selected child in need of foster care placement. The data recorded on this window is used to document and communicate detailed information about a child’s needs beyond what is captured for the purpose of resource matching. Workers may use this information to

make more informed decisions when determining the best placement for a child. The data recorded on this window is informational only and has no bearing on the search and match process, nor does it replace any data collected for the children and families in the Family Services (FSS) stage.

- *Priority Criteria Window*
 - This displays a summary of characteristics selected for all children included in the placement request. The data is taken from information recorded on the *Child Characteristics* window or the **Characteristics** subtab of the *Person List* window. Workers will have the ability to designate any, all, or none of the selected characteristics as “Required” in the search parameters. All active characteristics for the child(ren) in the request will default to optional.
- *Prior Placements -Resource Window (View-Only Window)*
 - Displays all prior placements for the selected child at a specific resource as recorded on the Activities window.
- *Placement Dashboard Window*
 - This enables workers to modify, view and monitor all placement requests for cases within their jurisdiction.
- *Placement Resource Roster Window*
 - This displays a view-only list of children placed in a selected resource, with a selected agency, or within a selected LDSS, along with their associated characteristics. Workers will be able to filter and sort by any column. With the exception of child characteristics sorting, any filters applied will carry over to the printed report. The information that displays is based on state, regional, LDSS, or VA worker job function. The “Place Dash” business function is required to access this window.
- *Place Child*
 - This process records the placement action and the date the action occurred for the children in the request.
- *Placement Resource Search Results Window*
 - Combines data collected at the child level and the resource level. The search process will compile the needs of the children as entered by the worker, the requested services and necessary vacancies. The system will then match that criteria to the corresponding real-time resource data and deliver a result set to assist the worker in choosing the best placement resource on a case-by-case basis. To ensure equality within resource distribution, this process will monitor the frequency of placement referrals to VA’s by LDSSs. The system will choose (1) those resources that meet the required search parameters, (2) whose characteristics are most closely aligned with the optional criteria selected and (3) whose agency is next in line to receive a referral.
- *Resource Availability Report*
 - This report will provide workers with on-line and printed offline access to resource vacancy information to be used for afterhours foster care placement needs.
- *Resource Characteristics*
 - This process will allow persons with the business function of “Resource Administrator”

to record characteristics of the resource as they pertain to foster care placement. Prior to implementation of the Placement Module, Resource Administrators will collect current characteristics for existing resources to be used in the matching process.

- *Referral Detail*

- This process allows for viewing or maintenance of referrals for each placement request. Workers on the receiving end of the referral request are able to respond that the referral for their resource is either 'Accepted' or 'Declined.' District workers or voluntary agency workers who initiate the placement request and send referral requests will be able to monitor the referral responses.

- *Resource Summary Report*

- This report will display the current state of the resource and the characteristics and a history of how they have changed.

- *Special Restrictions Window*

- Displays any extraordinary placement needs that apply to a child. The information displayed on this window does not restrict the available resources for a child to be placed; however, it does alert the worker to potential conflicts between children already in the home and children needing placement.

- *Verify Placements*

- This process allows for a summary view of all individual children recently placed by, or at specific district or agency. Workers may use this process to verify that children did or did not arrive at the destination resource, after they have been placed from within the Placement Module.

Phase 4 will provide added functionality around reporting.

Notifications

The CNX Placement Module provides automated email notifications to workers for various placement process events involving their LDSS/VA. The use of automated notifications will help to expedite the placement process by keeping LDSS and VA staff informed and reducing manual emails and phone calls.

In order for LDSS and VA workers to receive automated placement notifications, workers must have their business email entered on the staff **Email** tab and opt into the desired notifications on the **Notifications** tab. Workers are able to update their own email address. Users with the "Maint Security" business function (most often the security coordinator) can enter the worker's email and make modifications to the **Notifications** tab for staff in their LDSS/VA.

V. Additional Information

Effective with the release of the Placement Module, LDSSs and VAs are encouraged to develop business processes to support the new Placement Module functionality in CNNX. The table below provides a listing of placement-related tasks and suggested performers. Actual processes implemented by LDSSs/VAs may vary from those identified in the table.

Task Description	District Performer	VA Performer
Assign Placement BF's	CNNX Security Coordinator	CNNX Security Coordinator
Enter Staff eMails	CNNX Security Coordinator/Worker	CNNX Security Coordinator / Worker
Select Notifications	CNNX Security Coordinator / Worker	CNNX Security Coordinator / Worker
Enter/Update Contract Headers	District Contract Admins	n/a
Enter/Update Child Characteristics	FC/CPS/Ongoing Preventive Workers	CP / CW
Enter/Update Special Restrictions	FC/CPS/Ongoing Preventive Workers	CP / CW
Create/Modify Resource	FAD Workers or Supervisors	FAD Workers or Supervisors
Enter/Update Resource Characteristics	FAD Workers or Supervisors	FAD Workers or Supervisors
Initiate Placement Request	FC/CPS/Preventive Units	Foster Care Supervisor
Send Referral	FAD Units	HF/FAD Unit
Receive and Process Referral	FAD Units	Intake or FC Administrator
Place Child	CPS/FC/ FAD Workers	Intake / FC Admin / FAD
Verify Placement	Foster Care Worker	FAD /FC Administrator
Update Activities	Data Entry / CM/Administrators	Data Entry Worker
Close Placement Request	Foster Care / FAD Workers	FAD / FC Administrator
Perform Placement Evaluation	Case Manager	CP / CW
Execute a Direct Placement (Known Resource/Relative/CTH/ORRUAC)	FAD Units	FAD Unit
Close Resource to Intake	FAD Supervisor/ Administrator	FAD Administrator

The following resources are available to assist LDSSs/VAs with the successful implementation of the Placement Module:

- *Preparing for the Placement Window in CONNECTIONS: Phase 1 Quick Start Guide*
- *Preparing for the Placement Window in CONNECTIONS: Phase 2 Quick Start Guide*
- *Preparing for the Placement Window in CONNECTIONS (WebEx)*
- *Placement Module Preparation for FAD Workers (WebEx)*
- *Completing the Placement Module in CONNECTIONS Job Aid*
- *Completing the Placement Module in CONNECTIONS Classroom Training*
- *Initiating Placements (WebEx)*
- *CONNECTIONS Tip Sheet: Placement Dashboard*
- *CONNECTIONS Tip Sheet: Security Business Functions*
- *CONNECTIONS Tip Sheet: Initiating the Placement Request in CONNECTIONS*

VI. Contacts

Any questions concerning this release should be directed to the appropriate regional office, Division of Child Welfare and Community Services:

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Questions regarding the CONNECTIONS changes can be directed to the appropriate CONNECTIONS implementations specialists.

For upstate implementation in BRO, RRO, SRO, and ARO

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For downstate assistance in SVRO or NYCRO

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VII. Effective Date

This directive is effective with the release of Placement Module Phase 3. This release is expected on October 18, 2019.

/s/ Lisa Ghartey Ogundimu

Issued By:

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Title: Deputy Commissioner

Division/Office: Child Welfare and Community Services