George E. Pataki
Governor

NEW YORK STATE
OFFICE OF CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES
52 WASHINGTON STREET
RENSSELAER, NY 12144

John A. Johnson
Commissioner

Informational Letter

Transmittal:	04-OCFS-INF-01
To:	Local District Commissioners Executive Directors of Voluntary Agencies Executive Directors of Preventive Agencies
Issuing Division/Office:	Information Technology Development and Prevention Services Strategic Planning and Policy Development
Date:	January 26, 2004 / ***February 10, 2004 revised***
Subject:	CONNECTIONS Case and Financial Management Implementation
Suggested Distribution:	Directors of Services Program Directors Staff Development Coordinators Child Protective Services Supervisors Foster Care Services Supervisors Preventive Services Supervisors Adoption Supervisors CONNECTIONS Implementation Coordinators
Contact Person(s):	Any programmatic questions concerning this release should be directed to the appropriate Regional Office, Division of Development and Prevention Services: BRO- Linda Brown (716) 847-3145 Linda.Brown@dfa.state.ny.us RRO- Linda Kurtz (585) 238-8201 Linda.Kurtz@dfa.state.ny.us SRO- Jack Klump (315) 423-1200 Jack.Klump@dfa.state.ny.us ARO- Bill McLaughlin (518) 486-7078 William.McLaughlin@dfa.state.ny.us YRO- Pat Sheehy (914) 377-2080 Patricia.Sheehy@dfa.state.ny.us NYCRO- Fred Levitan (212) 383-1788 Fred.Levitan@dfa.state.ny.us Any CONNECTIONS preparation questions concerning this release should be directed to the appropriate Regional Office, Division of Information Technology/CONNECTIONS Field Support Specialist: BRO- Roger Ward (716) 847-3028 Roger.Ward@dfa.state.ny.us RRO- Cynthia Brookins (585) 238-8562 Cynthia.Brookins@dfa.state.ny.us SRO- Cliff Pelton (315) 423-5596 Cliff.Pelton@dfa.state.ny.us

ARO- Mary Arnone *(518) 486-7216* Mary.Arnone@dfa.state.ny.us
YRO- Andrea Straker (914) 377-2081 Andrea.Straker@dfa.state.ny.us
NYCRO-
Mike Prendergast (212) 383-1768 Mike.Prendergast@dfa.state.ny.us
Earl Thomas (212) 383-1854 Earl.Thomas@dfa.state.ny.us
Sharone Jones (212) 383-4712 Sharone.Jones@dfa.state.ny.us

Attachments: Attachment 1: Major CONNECTIONS Case and Financial Management Components
Attachment 2: CONNECTIONS Build 18-19 Rollout Schedule
Attachment 3: Detailed List of Implementation Activities
Attachment 4: The Role of the Local District/Agency Implementation Coordinator

Attachment Available On – Line: Yes

Filing References

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	Dept. Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
03-OCFS-ADM-01					

I. Purpose

The purpose of this release is to provide an update of OCFS progress towards the full implementation of the CONNECTIONS system and to provide information on related planning and preparation activities that will take place over the next three years. During this period, CONNECTIONS will be expanded to include case and financial management, and data reporting functions in a manner that promotes the effective integration of the system with casework practice and business functions.

II. Background

The CONNECTIONS system currently includes the following components:

- Child Protective Services Intake (INT)
- Child Protective Services Investigation (INV)
- Administrative Review/Investigations (ARI)
- Foster Adoptive Home Development (FAD)
- Resource Directory
- Security Structure

OCFS has continued to make improvements to the current production system as well as develop the new case and financial management functionality. Over the past three years, the CONNECTIONS Project has made significant improvements to content, presentation and navigation within the CPS Investigation and FAD components, has added the administration of vacancy control and local data maintenance and established the Data Warehouse. During this same period, substantial progress was made in defining requirements for and designing the forthcoming case and financial management components. In all of these endeavors, the project has relied heavily on stakeholder and user participation in conducting the requirements, design, testing and change management processes.

CONNECTIONS provides system support for OCFS policy, program and practice initiatives, including those that have been developed in conjunction with the current research and with Program Improvement Plan in response to the Federal Child and Family Services Review. CONNECTIONS automates current child welfare policies and practice and provides the foundation to support the communication linkages, assessment tools and quality assurance mechanisms that are critical to advancing child safety, permanency and well-being. CONNECTIONS supports the use of evidence-based best practices and structured decision making models, including an emphasis on family involvement in planning, the utilization of family strengths, concurrent planning and the Risk Assessment Profile. CONNECTIONS reflects a closer link to the principles and practices that are the foundation of our outcome-based training system.

III. Program Implications

Implementation Strategy

The OCFS strategy for implementing CONNECTIONS Case and Financial Management centers on a phased approach that allows for users to gain an incremental understanding of the system. This includes structured planning, preparation and learning activities that are designed so that users derive the most benefit from the system.

CONNECTIONS Case and Financial Management is being released over three years through a series of four stages, known as "builds." Build 16, which was implemented on December 13, 2003, incorporates the Risk Assessment Profile, modified Safety Assessment and Consolidated Investigations processes as well as online Progress Notes into the CPS Investigation stage. Aspects of these tools are incorporated into the new required CPS Uniform Case Record (UCR) templates as well as the optional templates that were released on the same day. Please refer to 03-OCFS-ADM-01 for additional information about CONNECTIONS Build 16 and these templates.

The key features of the remaining three builds are as follows:

CONNECTIONS Build 17 – March 2004
- Enhanced Security for CONNECTIONS Case and Financial Management

CONNECTIONS Build 18 – December 2004-November 2005
- Standardized Intake (Family Services Intake)
- Single, electronic case record (Family Services Stage)

- Family Assessment and Service Plan
- Child Case Record (for children freed for adoption)
- Service Plan Review
- Progress Notes
- WMS Interface

CONNECTIONS Build 19 - December 2005-September 2006

- Foster Care Placement
- Legal Activities
- Funding Eligibility
- Services Authorization
- Adoption Photolisting
- Adoption Subsidy
- Health
- Education
- Interfaces with other systems (such as MMIS, CSMS)

Additional details on the major components of Builds 18 and 19 are contained in Attachment 1. Note that Builds 18 and 19 are being implemented over extended periods. The implementation of these builds will be phased across the State (and within New York City for Build 18) in order to permit increased levels of training and on-site technical support to users. The rollout schedule for these two builds is contained in Attachment 2.

Planning and Preparation Activities

OCFS has developed a coordinated series of activities to support local districts and voluntary/preventive services agencies. This is to successfully integrate new policy, program and system development in the CONNECTIONS Case and Financial Management into their casework and business process. This approach relies on a partnership between OCFS, local districts, and voluntary/preventive services agencies to provide staff with the operational support needed to make effective and efficient use of CONNECTIONS functionality.

These activities are organized around an implementation cycle that begins 10-12 months before the release of a build within a region and are designed to:

- Assist districts/agencies organize their implementation effort
- Orient key staff to the new functionality and its impact on operations
- Assist districts/agencies build their capacity to participate in planning and preparation activities
- Provide structured tools and methods for planning
- Provide "just-in-time" program and system training
- Provide on-site support.

A listing of the specific activities that will take place in each implementation cycle is contained in Attachment 3.

Some Early Readiness Activities

There are a number of activities that local districts and voluntary and preventive agencies can initiate now to help prepare for the introduction of the new CONNECTIONS Case and Financial Management functionality. Activities include:

- Identifying a CONNECTIONS Implementation Team. As a reference, Attachment 4 – "The Role of the Local District/Agency Implementation Coordinator" – provides information concerning Implementation Coordinators' duties, activities and responsibilities. OCFS recommends the Implementation Team include staff from all program areas as well as staff from the information technology and training area.

- Encouraging all child welfare staff to access the CONNECTIONS intranet website. The site contains up-to-date information about the CONNECTIONS Project, including the CONNECTIONS Project Charter, as well as information on the new development. The website address is http://sdssnet5/ocfs/connect/.

- Assessing the level of computer skills of all child welfare staff. It is not too early to encourage staff who will be new CONNECTIONS users, particularly ones who have limited computer experience, to improve their ability to use the computer to accomplish certain tasks, such as keyboarding documents, sending an e-mail, using the mouse to navigate through a window.

OCFS will continue to work in partnership with the local districts and the voluntary agencies in this project endeavor.

Issued By:
William E. Travis, Jr. s/s

Name: William E. Travis, Jr.
Title: Deputy Commissioner
Division/Office: Information Technology

Larry G. Brown s/s

Name: Larry G. Brown
Title: Deputy Commissioner
Division/Office: Development and Prevention Services

Name: Nancy W. Martinez s/s

Name: Nancy W. Martinez
Title: Acting Director
Division/Office: Strategic Planning and Policy Development

Attachment 1 – Major CONNECTIONS Case and Financial Management Components

The major CONNECTIONS Case Management (Build 18) components are as follows.

Family Services Intake

The Family Services Intake (FSI) process will record and track requests for on-going services. The FSI will be used to record the requestor/referral source, enter basic demographic information, access person search functionality, record the presenting issue in a narrative format, record the results of screening for critical family issues and concerns (non-CPS cases) and record the decision to open for services, or close the intake. If a case is not opened, the system will capture the closing reason.

The FSI process will support the determination of programmatic eligibility for Mandated Preventive Services and provide for a multiple level (local district, voluntary agency and preventive agency) acceptance process. The Family Services Intake will also allow for optional recording and tracking of Information and Referral Requests.

Family Services Stage

The Family Services Stage (FSS) process will support the capacity to record and document the provision of any child welfare service that is made available to any child or family coming into the system for which the Uniform Case Record (UCR) is required. The FSS is the shell that holds all of the family assessment, service planning and (with Build 19) financial activities. The FSS will also support the recording of information for other common services-related cases that do not require the UCR, such as out-of-town inquiries (OTI), court-ordered investigations (COI) and interstate compact matters (ICPC).

Family Assessment and Service Plan

CONNECTIONS will support the workers' need to assess and plan with families continuously over the life of a case, making modifications as appropriate to changing circumstances and evolving needs through the Family Assessment and Service Plan (FASP). The system will present workers with only those components of the FASP that they are required to complete based on Program Choice, Permanency Planning Goal (PPG), child's age (if foster care) and the type of plan. Workers will be able to work on any one of the FASP components in any sequence and update individual components as needed until supervisory approval is complete. If multiple workers are assigned to the case, they will record the parts of the FASP for which they are responsible. The designated Case Planner will compile these contributions into one document. The system will provide for a multiple level approval process. A FASP may only be submitted for approval once all required components have been completed. The system will alert workers to coming-due and overdue FASPs. Components may be printed separately and as a formatted complete FASP, which can be read and signed by the family. The FASP consists of:

Family Assessment

The system will provide all necessary components to guide a worker's assessment, to utilize structured decision-making tools and to record a comprehensive assessment analysis. The Family Assessment will consist of: Safety Assessment, Family Update, Strengths, Needs and Risk Scales, Risk Assessment Profile (CPS cases), and the Assessment Analysis.

Service Plan

The system will support workers in the development of service plans, in conjunction with the family, that address the needs/concerns/risks identified in the Risk and Family Assessments, and also support an evaluation of prior plans.

Foster Care Issues

For children placed in foster care, the system will present a series of questions, based on the child's permanency planning goal, age, and other factors, that address: appropriateness of placement, adjustment and functioning, permanency progress/concurrent planning, life skills assessment, and visiting plans and visiting plan reviews.

Non-LDSS Custody Cases

The system will support customized questions for situations where a child is not in the care and custody of the local commissioner, but placed with relatives under the court's jurisdiction or receiving preventive services while in a relative's care.

Programmatic Eligibility

Workers will record their determination of initial or continuing programmatic eligibility as a component of the FASP.

Child Case Record (for children freed for adoption)

When the information that a child has been freed for adoption has been entered into the system, a separate "case record" for that child will automatically be created. Assessment and service planning for the child will continue in that record.

Service Plan Review

The system will support the recording of invitees and scheduling information, including the production of invitation letters, the meeting summary and third-party reviewer comments.

Progress Notes / Casework Contacts

The system will support the user's need to record and maintain progress notes in a format designed to aid workers and supervisors to quickly access needed information.

Placement/Key Dates

Although the recording of placement information will continue to be performed in CCRS until Build 19, CONNECTIONS will present some placement, legal and ASFA related data in read-only format within the Family Services Stage as a convenience to workers and supervisors.

WMS Interface

Upon the implementation of Build 18, WMS Services cases will be initiated through CONNECTIONS. The two systems will be kept "in sync" through an ongoing interface. The WMS hierarchy, in which Non-Services data takes precedence, will be maintained and users will be notified of the need to resolve any discrepancies between CONNECTIONS and WMS data. Note that WMS cases that are active at the point Build 18 is implemented will automatically convert into a CONNECTIONS case.

<u>The major CONNECTIONS Case and Financial Management (Build 19) components are as follows.</u>

Foster Care Placement

The system will support recording required information related to the removal, placement and movement of a child in foster care. Search capabilities will include the capability to locate a resource and program that will best meet the needs of the child. Proper payment levels will also be supported through collection of information related to level of difficulty (LOD), absences and discharges. The information will be passed to the Benefits Issuance and Control System (BICS) for payment generation; separate placement authorizations will no longer be needed. The system also will maintain an historical record of when and where the child was in foster care. The recording of CCRS movement activities and WMS placement purchase of services (POS) lines will cease.

Legal Activities

The system will support the recording of legal activities, including: petitions filed, hearings held, appeals, termination of parental rights and surrenders. Legal authority information will be passed to BICS to determine the proper level of reimbursement. The recording of CCRS legal activities will cease.

Funding Eligibility

To meet SACWIS requirements, the system will record funding eligibility as is performed in the current system and will allow for the actual determination of the appropriate funding stream for which a case member is eligible. The system will determine the eligibility of a foster child for IV-E, TANF-EAF, Title XX/below 200% and Medical Assistance. For in-home services cases, the system will determine eligibility for TANF-EAF and Title XX below 200%. Once the eligibility of the child or family is determined, it is forwarded to BICS. BICS will use the eligibility data to derive the most beneficial claiming for each expenditure. Any retroactive eligibility changes will result in claiming adjustments. Eligibility/claiming categories will no longer be entered in WMS.

Services Authorization

The system will support the entry and approval of services authorizations. Detailed information concerning the service provider, the schedule for service and the amount of services authorized will be supported. The information will be passed to BICS for payment generation. WMS will no longer be used to authorize purchase of services (POS).

Adoption Photolisting and Subsidy

The system will support various adoption activities, including photo-listing and adoption subsidy. Adoption milestones will be tracked by the system and a history of adoption activities will be maintained. Once an adoption is finalized, and if an adoption subsidy payment is established, the information will be passed to BICS for payment generation. The recording of CCRS adoption activities will cease and adoption subsidy cases will no longer be maintained in WMS.

Health

The system will support the recording of key information regarding children in foster care including health status, heath exams, vital information, clinical diagnoses, and other select information regarding their health history and that of their parents. This functionality will be optional for non-foster care cases.

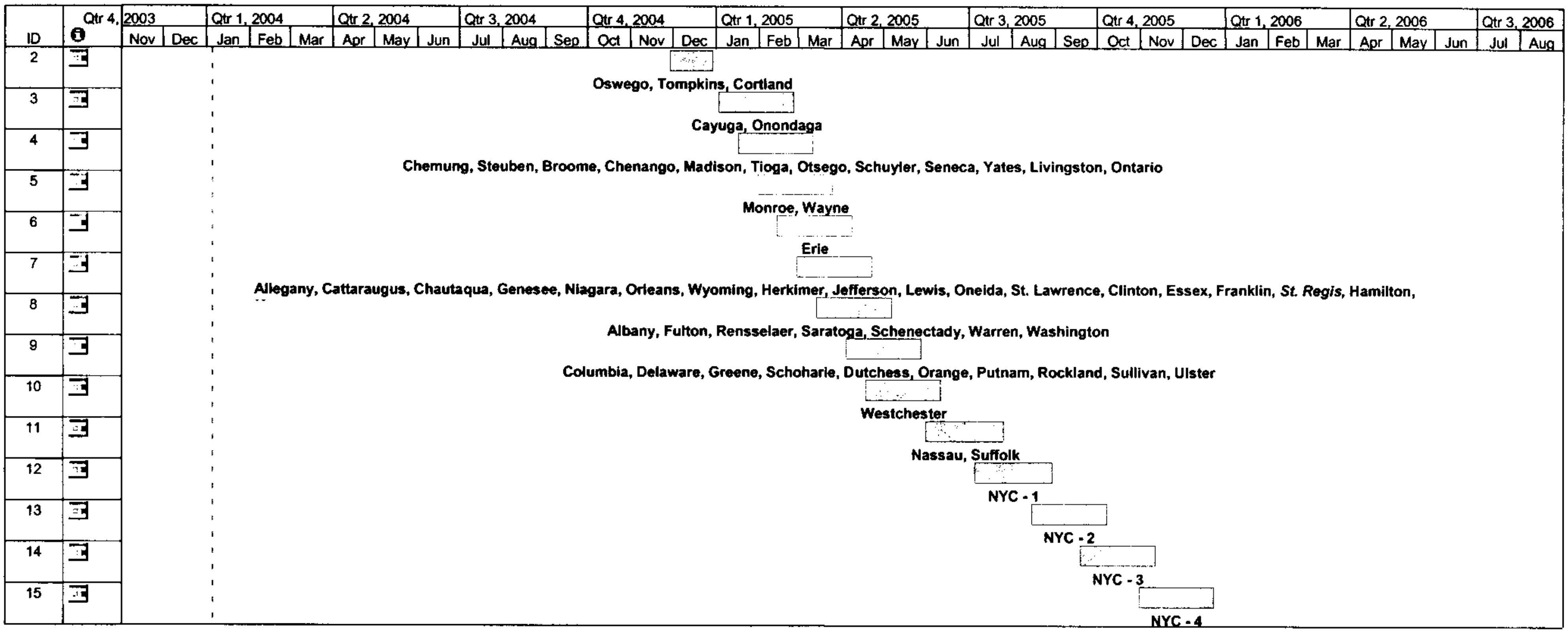
Education

The system will support the recording of key information regarding school placements and associated information for children in foster care. This functionality will be optional for non-foster care cases.

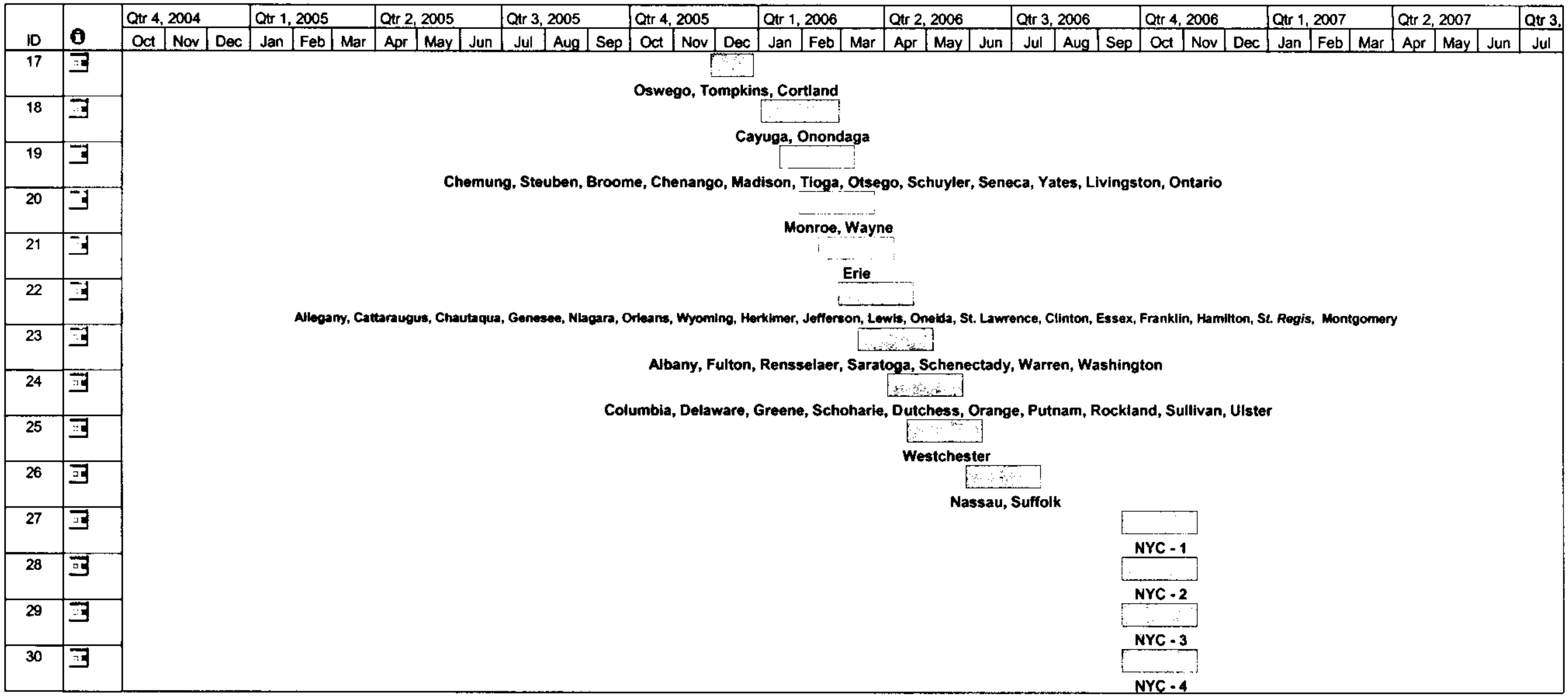
System Interfaces

The system will support interfaces with various legacy systems. An interface with WMS will allow the individuals in CONNECTIONS to be cleared through the WMS clearance process. The system will also interface with the medical assistance system (Title XIX), the child support system (Title IV-D) and the Putative Father Registry.

Build 18 Deployment Plan



Build 19 Deployment Plan



Attachment 3 - Detailed Listing of Implementation Activities

Organizing the Implementation Effort

OCFS Organization

Within OCFS, the Implementation Management Bureau has primary responsibility for planning and coordinating the implementation of CONNECTIONS Case Management in the field. The Implementation Management Bureau consists of three major areas: Training, Field Support, and Communication. The Bureau is responsible for user readiness, change management, systems training, on-site support and communication to stakeholders and end users.

Local District/Agency Organization

Implementation Coordinators are **district/agency staff** that serve as a liaison between the agency and the OCFS project team. This role is often assigned to Information Technology staff, however, as the project progresses toward the concurrent implementation of programmatic and system changes, OCFS recommends that this role be assigned (or co-assigned) to staff that have significant grounding in program and casework. The prompt flow of information to the correct people is the most critical responsibility of this role. In addition, the Implementation Coordinator is frequently the point person for agency preparation and planning activities. **This responsibility should be assigned to a staff person in the immediate future.** (Note – a more detailed statement of duties for Implementation Coordinators is contained in Attachment 4.)

The *Implementation Team* guides and oversees the implementation effort. These teams consist of representatives from each program area as well as the district/agency's Implementation Coordinator, LAN administrator, Security Coordinator, and Staff Development Coordinator. The Team should be formed no later than **ten months** prior to the implementation of Build 18 within the district/agency.

Other workgroups or subcommittees of the Implementation Team are formed to plan and coordinate district/agency clean-up activities and make system security decisions. It is also likely that workgroups will be formed to analyze and re-design business processes that are affected by the new system. Agencies/districts are encouraged to involve staff most directly affected by these functions in assessing impact and making procedural and workflow adjustments. Workgroups pertaining to **data clean up and security** should be formed no later than **nine months** prior to the implementation of Build 18 within the district/agency. Workgroups to address **business process re-design** should be formed no later than **six months** prior to the implementation of Build 18 in the district/agency.

Resource Users are staff **designated by a district or agency** to receive extra training and support to enable them to be an on-site resource to their co-workers during the implementation of a build. This is a supplement to the support provided by CONNECTIONS staff. The project will train a district/agency staff persons to serve as a resource user at a ratio of **one to twenty**, with a minimum of two per district/agency. Resource users should be designated no later than **five-six months** prior to implementation.

Regional Implementation Support Teams (RIST) consist of implementation coordinators and other staff from the local districts and voluntary agencies in a particular region of the State. These groups provide the forum to share both practice and technical solutions to commonly experienced problems as well as to standardize procedures for functions that involve an interface between districts and agencies. It is expected that these groups will meet **monthly** during the 10-12 month preparation cycle.

Orienting Administrators to the System

The *High Level Overview for Administrators* is an OCFS **half-day presentation** targeted at **district/agency administrators** that will a description of the new policy and practice changes supported in the new system; provide an end to end conceptual review of the new CONNECTIONS development being released; preview the look and feel of the system; and draw out impacts for business processes, casework and preparation. A session will be scheduled on a regional basis approximately **ten months prior** to the implementation of Build 18 within the district/agency.

The *Wave Forum* is an OCFS **half to full day presentation** targeted at **district/agency managers, second-level supervisors and Implementation Coordinators** to provide a somewhat more detailed look at the system at the level of window functionality, system business rules and describe the planning and preparation activities that are to follow over the next several months. Wave Forums will be scheduled approximately **nine months prior** to the implementation of Build 18 within the district/agency.

Managerial Building Blocks will take the form of a reference guide targeted at **managers and administrators** to be provided in conjunction with the above noted orientation sessions. It will provide grounding in generic system features and functionality as well as tools and data available in the system to support management and operational decision-making.

Building Capacity of Districts and Agencies

Implementation Coordinator Training is **a full-day classroom session** designed to familiarize district/agency **Implementation Coordinators** with their roles and responsibilities in preparing their agencies for implementation and key change management issues. Participants will be provided with a **detailed reference guide.** This training will be provided on an ongoing basis. Implementation Coordinators should attend no later than **ten months prior** to the implementation of Build 18 within the district/agency.

Resource Use Training, targeted at the staff designated as **Resource Users**, will, in addition to training that all other line staff will receive, consist of exercises and reinforcement of the build training and instruction on the role of the Resource User. This training will be provided in approximately **three sessions** during the **four to six weeks** prior to the implementation of Build 18 within the district/agency.

Security for Managers, targeted to district agency **administrators/managers**, consists of a **training video** that provides a high level overview of the CONNECTIONS security system and identify the key decision points and options available to managers to enable them to make informed decisions in establishing their district or agency security structure. The training video will be available starting in the late Spring of 2004; where possible, managers should become familiar with the CONNECTIONS security system no later than **eight months** prior to the implementation of Build 18 within the district/agency. Note that the one-day training course for Security Coordinators is provided on an ongoing basis.

Build 18 Training for Supervisors will consist of a **half-day training** and will focus on system functionality that supports supervisory processes (e.g., on line approvals) as well as using CONNECTIONS as a management tool. It will also address change management issues to help supervisors support their staff's adjustment to program and system changes. **Supervisors** will attend approximately **one to four weeks** prior to the implementation of Build 18 within the district/agency.

Methods and Tools

District/Agency Profile is a web-based data collection instrument designed to support implementation planning by the CONNECTIONS Implementation Management Bureau and district/agency administrators. Up to ten district/agency staff may be assigned to work on the profile at a time. Several sections of the instrument are pre-populated with data that district/agency staff need only update if necessary. The profile is accessed through the CONNECTIONS web site. Districts and agencies should complete/update the data during **February-March 2004.**

Impact Analysis Documents identify the ways in which CONNECTIONS Case Management program and system changes will affect district/agency operations. Each document focuses on a specific functional area (e.g., intake, assessment and service planning) and includes a brief description of the affected function, what will stay the same, what will change, and system and programmatic implications. These documents will be used in conjunction with the *Self Assessment* Process (see below). They will be provided at the *Wave Forum,* approximately **nine months** prior to the implementation of Build 18 within the district/agency; however, they will be available on the CONNECTIONS web site in February 2004.

Self-Assessment Tool and Local Implementation Plan is **completed by a team of district/agency staff**, such as the Implementation Team, as a means to assess its state agency readiness to implement the new system and formulate an action plan to address any "gaps" in agency readiness. It is designed to focus energy on the steps most critical to a successful implementation. The self-assessment process and tool will be explained at the *Wave Forum.* Each district/agency should initiate the self-assessment approximately **seven months** prior to the implementation of Build 18. The Team should monitor achievement of the action plan during the months that precede implementation.

Business Process Analysis and Redesign is the method through which a district/agency reviews and, as needed, revises business processes (e.g., procedures, work flows) in order to take maximum advantage of the efficiencies of the system. The CONNECTIONS Implementation Team will provide tools and "model" business processes as well as on-site support to assist users with this effort. It is recommended that staff who perform the work being assessed participate in **work teams** to conduct this assessment/re-design. It is expected that this will be an ongoing activity starting approximately **six months** prior to implementation.

Data Clean-up Reports will be provided starting at approximately **seven-eight months** prior to implementation to help district/agencies identify potential data issues in the legacy system or in CONNECTIONS and focus their data clean-up effort where it is most needed. Data clean-up is likely to involve a **broad array of district agency staff.** The CONNECTIONS Project will also provide districts and agencies with staff assistance to conduct clean-up activities.

User Acceptance Test (UAT), which will occur several months prior to the initial release of Build 18, provides agencies that volunteer to participate an opportunity to better understand how the system functions and how it will support their business functions. The Implementation Team will solicit volunteers for UAT in the **Spring** of 2004

The *Preview Application,* that will be available **just prior to Build 18,** provides a broad cadre of CONNECTIONS users with the opportunity to view new functionality. Users are able to apply the system to a copy of their own case data without affecting the Production system. The Preview Application will be made available on a limited basis to help **district/agency administrators** better understand the impacts of the new system no later than **eight months** prior to the implementation of Build 18 in the district/agency. It will be more broadly available to **line staff** for practice and training re-enforcement approximately **one-two months** prior to implementation.

A *Readiness Checklist* will be distributed to districts/agencies approximately **one month** prior to implementation of Build 18. The checklist helps district/agency administrators, managers and supervisors focus on key preparation activities that immediately precede implementation.

Just in Time Training

Classroom Policy and Casework Practice Training will support **supervisory and line staff's** understanding of the structure decision-making model, policy changes, casework values, knowledge and skills upon which the system is designed as well as support staff's ability to use the new assessment tools and complete documentation. This **training , estimated to be about two days in length,** will be conducted in a classroom setting in regional locations throughout the State approximately **5-12 weeks** prior to an implementation.

Introduction to CONNECTIONS/Readiness Training is a course that supplements CONNECTIONS Building Blocks Computer Based Training (CBT). This **half-day** session will be provided in a lab setting in locations throughout the State approximately **4-8 weeks** prior to implementation. The content will focus on orienting staff to basic CONNECTIONS concepts and familiarizing them with the tool bar functionality, assigned workload, task list and basics of person search. The target audience is staff new to using CONNECTIONS.

Introduction to CONNECTIONS and Build 18 is a **half-day session** intended for **supervisors and workers** and will be offered in a classroom setting approximately **7-10 weeks** prior to an implementation. This training will provide users with a brief orientation to the basics of the CONNECTIONS system including an introduction to CONNECTIONS concepts and vocabulary.

Lab-based training will be provided to **supervisors and workers** approximately **4-6 weeks** prior to implementation to train staff on the navigation and functionality of the system. Each worker will attend **either one or two days** of lab-based training depending on job function. This training is provided in labs located across the State.

Follow-up Training will be offered during the six weeks subsequent to implementation and will continue to be offered on a quarterly basis as "Operational Training." This training will contain content similar to that of the initial Build 18 training to support staff that may have missed the training or that may need a refresher.

Other training resources include **Job Aids, Training Videos.**

The 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 signs on to the Training Database from their own workstation. Districts and agencies may request special training log-ons for a period of up to three weeks.

Onsite Support

Implementation Support by CONNECTIONS Regional Field Support Staff will be available to districts and agencies **during the planning and preparation phase** of the implementation cycle to provide technical assistance in the use of methods and tools, to help facilitate meetings and provide hands-on support for data clean-up activities.

Implementation Support will also be provided for eight weeks that follow the implementation of Build 18 in each area of the State. During the initial days of an implementation, Field Support Staff will assist users in the following ways:

- Working side-by-side with district/agency staff newly trained on the CONNECTIONS system and assisting them with their work in the system, such as entering progress notes, conducting person searches, conducting, person-merge splits or processing local data maintenance).
- Identifying and troubleshooting, resolution and escalation, as appropriate, of technical problems/issues.
- Interpreting instructional materials and Job Aids to assist CONNECTIONS users in comprehending and completing tasks.

Attachment 4- The Role of the Local District/Agency Implementation Coordinator

- Serve as point of contact between CONNECTIONS Project staff and the local district/agency for announcements concerning:

  - New builds
  - New initiatives
  - Project updates
  - Workgroups and committees
  - Technical considerations

- Coordinate local teams to assist in implementing major CONNECTIONS changes.

- Participate in regional implementation meetings.

- Coordinate local preparation for new CONNECTIONS development:

  - Identify affected staff, supervisors and managers.
  - Share information with them about the changes as well as plans State training and field support.
  - Monitor achievement of items on readiness checklists.
  - Assure review and necessary revisions to local procedures to support the change.
  - Work with program supervisors and managers on local strategies for supporting the staff as they use the new functionality.
  - Establish local procedures for use of the Helpdesk and alternate contacts for return calls.

- Facilitate staff access to the following CONNECTIONS resources available to support them:

  - Videos
  - Job Aids
  - Application help
  - Helpdesk
  - Training
  - Communications in the Public Folder and on the Intranet Site.
  - Training database
  - Manuals, guides

- Coordinate requests for on-site training or technical assistance from Regional implementation staff.

- Keep agency management informed of progress, issues and solutions.

- Communicate staff changes to the CONNECTIONS Project Staff regarding changes to Implementation Coordinators, Security Coordinators, Directors of Services, Commissioners and CONNECTIONS report recipients.

Recommended Attributes for Local District/Agency Implementation Coordinator:

- Has enough authority and support from agency executive management to implement decisions and assign tasks
- Has excellent knowledge of the agency's child welfare staff, program and processes
- Can communicate well with all levels of staff in agency and with CONNECTIONS Project staff
- Can facilitate problem solving and local decision making
- Will influence staff to try new tasks
- Can organize information in the best way for it to be understood and acted upon specific to agency processes and procedures
- Will disseminate information quickly and accurately to the appropriate people.