

**NEW YORK STATE
OFFICE OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

MARISOL A., by her next friends,
Rev. Dr. James Alexander Forbes, Jr., and
Ms. Raymunda Cruz, et al.,

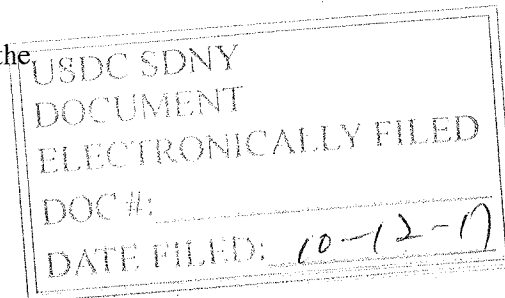
Plaintiffs,

95-Civ-10533 (KTD)

-- against --

RUDOLPH W. GUILIANI, Mayor of the
City of New York, et al.

Defendants.



CONNECTIONS

January 2017 REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) is pleased to report to the Court that, as in the previous semi-annual reports, OCFS has used reasonable efforts and the means available to it to develop and implement a statewide child welfare computer system. Child welfare services are provided through 58 local social services districts (local district(s)), including the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe; and through locally-contracted, private voluntary authorized agencies (voluntary agencies). OCFS also is continuing to transform its child welfare information system so that it will be capable of supporting the needs of caseworkers in the years to come, while leveraging existing child welfare information systems to perform the specific tasks outlined in paragraph 22 of the State Settlement Agreement in Marisol A.

OCFS' ability to support child welfare case activity necessary to manage and supervise the child welfare system is managed across multiple, interfacing systems, including the CONNECTIONS system, that accomplish all of the tasks set forth in paragraph 22. Reporting capabilities have been progressively enhanced since the original State Settlement Agreement in Marisol A. As further detailed in this report, enhanced functionality through the Data Warehouse, Operational Data Store, and SharePoint reporting facility provides capabilities that did not exist when data resided only on mainframe data bases and provides opportunities to introduce new reports to workers from local districts, voluntary agencies and OCFS using more current technology.

The CONNECTIONS system and related components serve as a child welfare information system to assist caseworkers and supervisors in activities that include:

- improving case decision-making and planning;
- improving the overall tracking of cases;
- increasing the accuracy and timeliness of information;
- providing an opportunity to integrate data across all service systems;
- providing ready access to case files and resource information;
- providing supervisory and management assistance in monitoring and evaluating casework;
- providing more efficient case management at all levels; and
- meeting federal reporting requirements.

In prior reports, OCFS indicated that it was working on a CONNECTIONS Architecture Modernization Project (CAMP). The CAMP initiative is an essential maintenance and upgrade of CONNECTIONS' software and hardware that is part of efforts by OCFS to transform the business and technical approaches to its child welfare information system so that it will be capable of supporting the needs of caseworkers in the years to come. This effort has been strengthened through the approval by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in September 2010 of an Annual Advance Planning Document Update (AAPDU) submitted by OCFS, which brought the reporting of the CONNECTIONS project from the point of the 2006 AAPDU to the present. ACF granted final approval of the OCFS 2011-2012 AAPDU on December 1, 2011. OCFS has received prior federal financial participation on all of the hardware and software purchased for the CAMP initiative, as well as for the staff augmentation consultants that are needed for the initiative.

Additional funding for CONNECTIONS transformation activities and operational expenses has been defined through the New York State budget process. State funding in the form of Personal Income Tax (PIT) bonds in support of CAMP transformation activities was provided in the amount of \$17.4 million in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2008-2009, \$19 million in SFY 2010-2011, and \$ \$11.030 million in 2013-14. The financing of CAMP with State PIT bonds has been discontinued and now the State is using Pay-AS-You-Go financing to fund ongoing CAMP activities. The current State Budget for SFY 2016-17 provides support for on-going CONNECTIONS operational non-personal services expenses appropriation authority in the amount of \$9.81 million. This is in addition to the \$13.5 million for services supporting CONNECTIONS users and system that were transferred to the New York State Office of Information and Technology Services (ITS) over the past two state fiscal years.

The focus for application development during the report period continued to be on modernizing the remaining windows written in Visual Basic (VB) 6.0 to VB.NET as well as providing support for the recently implemented functions to comply with the federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act. The components of the system that document the provision of ongoing services cases, house the foster home record summary, and support various system security features are being addressed in the current modernization effort. When this modernization process is completed, CONNECTIONS will have a single development platform as well as user interface across the entire system.

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1. CONNECTIONS AND SYSTEM ENHANCEMENTS

A. CONNECTIONS

CONNECTIONS is New York State's response to federal legislation requiring that each state monitor and report on foster care and adoption services. New York State elected to pursue the design, development, and implementation of a system that would extend beyond the federal data collection and reporting requirements by developing a system under the federal standards for a Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS). CONNECTIONS and related components are designed to assist in more effective and efficient administration and operation of the State's complex child welfare program. New York State's child welfare program is State-supervised by OCFS and locally-administered by local districts, such as ACS, and voluntary agencies.

CONNECTIONS and related components of the child welfare information system have been implemented and upgraded through a series of numbered Releases or Builds, which have been guided in part by operational reviews of the system and input from system users from local districts and voluntary agencies. State staff continue to manage, design, and implement functional and technical improvements to CONNECTIONS. They have successfully met a number of critical project milestones in the areas of application development, implementation planning, and technical infrastructure enhancements.

Since 2001, New York State has made significant progress with the development and implementation of CONNECTIONS. With the statewide implementation of the Case Management Module in 2006, CONNECTIONS is the system of record for child protective, preventive, adoption and foster care case initiation, assessment and service planning. In all 58 local districts and over 250 voluntary agencies, 16,000 caseworkers and supervisors access CONNECTIONS to review and document demographics, investigations, safety and risk assessments, progress notes, family assessments and service plans, and health and education information. The CONNECTIONS Resource Directory is the system of record for service providers and foster and adoptive home initiation and on-going certifications and approvals. Similar progress has been made in the child welfare system in general, such as by decreasing the number of children in foster care or awaiting adoption.

With CONNECTIONS Case Management functions available statewide, the system's ability to track data has been extended, providing caseworkers, managers and OCFS with the ability to follow a case through the delivery of child protective services (CPS) to foster care or other services. Data from CONNECTIONS is migrated to the Data Warehouse, along with data from the Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS) operated by OCFS to record information regarding youth in its custody, to support extensive reporting and analysis including the federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) submission to the federal ACF.

CONNECTIONS provides a single case record and statewide access to case information by local districts and voluntary agencies. System prompts, timeline-tracking and person-search capabilities and opening communication among the workers involved in a case enhance permanency efforts and the safety of children. Planned efforts to track medical and educational needs and progress help to produce better outcomes regarding the well-being of children

The benefits of CONNECTIONS include:

Provides caseworkers with a framework for case practice:

- Standardizes case practice across agencies and workers;
- Focuses the caseworker on what needs to be done in a case;
- Assists in the assessment of the entire family;
- Guides the worker through safety and risk assessments; and
- Facilitates the life skills assessment of children.

Facilitates the availability and communication of information:

- Provides a single electronic case record that organizes and compiles data in a centralized location;
- Allows case information to be viewed and communicated across voluntary agencies and local districts;
- Provides immediate and up-to-date access related to what is occurring in the case, such as through progress notes;
- Facilitates access to the contact information for staff with a role in the case;
- Provides past history on the case;
- Provides easy access to demographic information related to the case, such as household composition and family relationships;
- Facilitates the review of case information since it is more legible and easier to access than handwritten, manual notes; and
- Facilitates the location of information on whether a family has had a previous or open investigation/case through the Person Search tool.

Facilitates workflow and case management in numerous areas:

- Increases the accountability of staff to complete the work;
- Provides the ability to track due dates, manage workloads, and track staff completion of assignments through To Do's and the Open Caseload Inquiry (OCI) report;
- Facilitates assignment of worker roles to a case;
- Provides alerts related to changes in a case, such as the opening of a new investigation or the new assignment of a worker to a case;
- Enables the sharing of foster homes between local districts; and
- Enhances a supervisor's ability to review a worker's casework.

All child welfare cases originate in CONNECTIONS. When a decision to purchase child welfare services is made, CONNECTIONS demographic information is used to drive an interface to the Welfare Management System (WMS), which in turn supports the eligibility and service authorization process. Since October, 2014, CONNECTIONS replaced the Child Care Review Services (CCRS) as the system of record for foster care placement and movement activities, legal activities, and certain adoption milestone recording.

Beginning in 2006, OCFS initiated a major re-architecture effort, the CAMP initiative. Following a phased implementation, CONNECTIONS modules written in the proprietary Foundation for Cooperative Program (FCP) were modernized to VB.NET. This process was completed in 2013. Since then, the state has undertaken the modernization of CONNECTIONS modules written in Visual Basic (VB) 6.0 to VB.Net that will be nearly completed by the end of the current report period. It was necessary to defer work on modernizing the final VB module in order to design, construct and implement a higher priority enhancement to CONNECTIONS. The remaining CONNECTIONS module will be modernized during the early part of the first quarter, 2017.

Additionally, CONNECTIONS has been augmented by related components of New York State's child welfare information system. OCFS is fully capable of producing child welfare case management reports to address multiple purposes and on many levels. The OCFS Data Warehouse was developed to provide access to data retrieved from CONNECTIONS and state legacy data systems. Users, who include local district, voluntary agency, and regional and home office OCFS staff, have on-demand pre-defined summary and detail reports as well as ad hoc (user-generated, on demand) reporting capability directly from their desk computers. These reports can be used for point in time and historical trend analysis of child welfare services in New York State.

Enhanced Data Warehouse capabilities and the development of an Operational Data Store and SharePoint reporting facility provide capabilities that did not exist when data resided only on mainframe data bases. The development of these resources by OCFS provides the capability to produce the reports specified in paragraph 22 of the Settlement Agreement, as detailed in Section 2 of this report.

B. The SharePoint Reporting Facility

Development of the SharePoint reporting facility provides opportunities to introduce new reports using more current technology and reaching a wider audience. This technology supports the new OCI report that provides a caseworker level overview of all critical tasks coming due and overdue within child protective investigations, family services preventive, and foster care case management as well as foster/adoptive home development. The Multiple Person Report (MPR), recently added to SharePoint, provides a current view of potential duplicates for reconciliation to data maintenance experts in each local district. This report provides supervisors and managers with aggregate data on children with possible duplicate person identification data in CONNECTIONS based on an exact match of the primary name, gender, and date of birth. As duplicates are eliminated and redundant person records combined under a single person identifier, data analysis and reporting improves. The reporting capabilities from these existing sources (the Data Warehouse, the Operational Data Store and the SharePoint facility) combine to allow OCFS and local district and voluntary agency users to join data from several sources to get a holistic picture of case activity, history, compliance, and trends.

C. The Operational Data Store (ODS)

The ODS continues to support local districts and voluntary agencies that have an on-going need for current data to support their specific operational needs. The data is sourced from CONNECTIONS and raw incremental files are sent to a local district or voluntary agency-operated server. Data from the ODS allows local districts and voluntary agencies to synchronize their local applications with data entered into CONNECTIONS, conduct custom local analysis, and address specific local reporting needs. Local districts and voluntary agencies are required to have an ODS password and a New York State Office for Information Technology Services (ITS)-approved secure server. Through a secure data transfer, the ODS shares detailed child welfare information with local districts and voluntary agencies.

D. OCFS Data Warehouse

The OCFS Data Warehouse was developed to provide access to data retrieved from CONNECTIONS and State legacy data systems. Users, who include local district, voluntary agency, and regional and central office OCFS staff, have access to on-demand pre-defined summary and detail reports as well as to software that allows them to generate their own custom reports. These reports can be used for both point-in-time and historical trend analysis of child welfare services in New York State.

The OCFS Data Warehouse has over 3,518 users, including staff in 58 local districts, including ACS; the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe; 164 voluntary agencies; and OCFS central and regional office locations. The Data Warehouse provides the means of obtaining customized data and reports to support these organizations in meeting basic operational and strategic planning needs for children and families.

Ten years' worth of foster care and CPS data is available by topic. Case management data has been available in the Data Warehouse since CONNECTIONS Build 18 in 2007. Data in the Data Warehouse is available in a series of standard reports that may be produced on demand at different levels of aggregation and time periods (current, historical and trend). The Data Warehouse also provides selected users with tools to produce customized reports.

We continue to use the upgraded Cognos 10.2 as the primary reporting tool that enables pre-defined and user-generated reports to be run throughout New York State. Data Warehouse plans to update some of the codes written in old programming languages to more updated languages to enable changes to existing datamarts. To achieve this, a team had examined those datamarts and is working toward implementing necessary steps. Additionally, this team is examining the ability to move all the datamarts to one phase and streamline the refreshing schedules.

OCFS remains committed to developing and enhancing Data Warehouse reports in order to continue to provide the tools and information that service providers need to be effective in their work. Reports to key management personnel are available through the Data Warehouse as a tool for administering caseloads. The Data Warehouse also includes pre-defined reports listing CPS Allegations; CPS Investigations; CCRS Reports; Foster Care Cases; Foster Home Reports; facilities licensing and capacity; security; and permanency reports. These reports continue to provide local districts specific case level data to monitor progress on the OCFS Program Improvement Plan for the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). Many of these same reports are also available to local district commissioners and their executive staff through the Commissioners' Dashboard. The Commissioners' Dashboard is a portal that joins summarized reporting from OCFS with the Department of Health and Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance for decision making and strategic planning. The Commissioners' Dashboard has been recognized with numerous awards over the past few years.

A number of new predefined reports have been added in the recent months. These include reports related to casework contacts and other routine activities. OCFS has devoted considerable resources to implement industry best practices in report creation. To this end, joint methodology in existing reports are being changed and necessary changes were made to all public reports (over 100 reports) as well as user defined reports in the Child Welfare Service Reports. OCFS is working on implementing this with Child Protective Service (CPS) reports as well.

The Data Warehouse also serves an important role within OCFS by providing data support for monitoring and evaluation purposes for the entire agency. Projects have included producing data to monitor local district progress in the implementation of their local program improvement plans aimed at improving child safety, permanency and well-being. The CFSR data packets are shared with the districts twice a year, and are used to track performance on key outcome measures. The data, which for some measures is stratified by age, provides information to districts that assists them in selecting which family engagement strategies should be employed to improve outcomes for families and children. Additionally, beginning in 2011, key safety and permanency outcome measures (time to permanency, stability, and re-entry) have been made available to 57 voluntary agencies that primarily serve children outside New York City. Currently, ACS prepares similar data for authorized agencies that serve primarily children from New York City. This OCFS initiative is intended to serve as an opportunity to promote a collaborative data-driven improvement agenda between local districts and voluntary agencies.

The Data Warehouse is the primary data source for federal reporting that includes the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, Adoption and Foster Care Reporting System (AFCARS), Casework Contacts, Youth in Transition Data (NYTD), National Indian Child Welfare Act (NICWA) and the Annual Progress and Services Report for Title IV-B of the Social Security Act. Reports and data sourced from the Data Warehouse are used to respond to the majority of requests made by the general public, the Public Information Office, and the Commissioner's Office for current or historical data on child welfare in New York State.

E. Support and Training

Data Warehouse support is available via a special mailbox (data.warehouse@ocfs.ny.gov) for access, questions or connectivity issues. For the whole of 2016, there were about 848 questions sent to the Data Warehouse mailbox where 290 unique individuals were involved. Additionally, OCFS provided access to 237 new users this year. User guides, periodic newsletters and other printed materials are sent to users or posted by OCFS in the CONNECTIONS Weekly as needed to communicate changes and updates to users.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

In December 1998, the parties agreed to terminate the action in Marisol A., and entered into settlement agreements. In the State Settlement Agreement, OCFS committed, *inter alia*, to develop and implement a statewide child welfare computer system that is capable of performing specific tasks. Those deliverables are contained in paragraph 22 of the State Settlement Agreement (paragraph 22). Specifically, OCFS is required to:

use reasonable efforts and the means available to it to develop and implement in New York State, at the earliest practicable date, an accurate and reliable statewide computer system (now referred to as "CONNECTIONS") to provide information concerning: a) child welfare case activity necessary to manage and supervise the child welfare system and determine compliance with fiscal and legal standards; b) child welfare case management reports sufficient to create aggregate data on issues including but not limited to: timeliness of investigations; re-occurrence of indicated reports; timeliness of case plans; time in care; number of placements; number of re-entries into care; and adoption statistics.

OCFS continues to "use reasonable efforts and the means available to it" in the development and implementation, through CONNECTIONS and other interfacing components, of an accurate and reliable statewide computer system that achieves all of the tasks set forth in paragraph 22 of the Marisol A. State Settlement Agreement. As described elsewhere in this report, OCFS continues to transform both the business and technical approaches to its child welfare information system so that it is capable of supporting the needs of caseworkers in the years to come. This transformation is necessary for New York

State to deliver a case management system that remains accurate and reliable. However, OCFS remains committed to addressing the terms of the settlement agreement by also leveraging the existing child welfare information systems to perform the specific tasks outlined in paragraph 22.

A. “Child Welfare Case Activity Necessary to Manage and Supervise the Child Welfare System and Determine Compliance with Fiscal and Legal Standards”

OCFS’ ability to support child welfare case activity necessary to manage and supervise the child welfare system continues to be managed across multiple, interfacing components. With the implementation of Build 18 in 2005, OCFS’ ability to automate this data was extended through the availability of the Case Management functionality, providing caseworkers with the ability to follow a case through the delivery of child protective services to foster care or other services. Individuals share a common identifier, the Client Identification Number (CIN), across CONNECTIONS and legacy systems so that data not present in CONNECTIONS can be joined across systems to effectively manage and supervise the overall child welfare system.

Section 1.A of this report provides a description of the capabilities of CONNECTIONS and related components to provide information necessary to manage and supervise the child welfare system.

Compliance with fiscal and legal standards was achieved with the implementation of the Statewide Services Payment System (SSPS), phase 2A, which completed statewide deployment in June 2005. This system provides functionality for rate table entry, payment processing, monthly batch claiming, retroactive claiming, and retroactive payments for foster care, adoption subsidies, and Kinship Guardianship Assistance (KinGap). The system delivers automated fiscal support for all local districts, including ACS in New York City, and voluntary agencies.

Implementation of fiscal support through the Vendor Receivables (VR) module has been successfully completed. This module provides computerized support for identifying and recording overpayments made to vendors by local districts and for the automated recoupment of the recovery of overpayments through check intercept. Substantial financial benefits continue to be realized statewide, and the overall SSPS project is complete. Additionally, the Benefit Issuance and Control System (BICS)/SSPS enhancements support an interface with both CONNECTIONS, including the Activities window that replaced the CCRS so that foster care placement and reimbursement meet state and federal standards.

OCFS currently supports three different AFCARS quality improvements reports. The reports allow case workers to determine the level of completeness for a child’s record and identify missing data elements for Clinical Diagnosis, Removal Reasons and Termination of Parental Rights. The Data Warehouse has made progress in creating an AFCARS datamart with bi-annual AFCARS submissions as well as monthly data containing AFCARS data elements. This datamart includes a wider range of handling improvements to enhance LDSS record keeping and improve data entry. Testing of this datamart and necessary improvements are being made. Preliminary reports from the AFCARS datamart to facilitate data quality improvement have been made.

At present, Data Warehouse is exploring bringing in data associated with the Federal Sex Trafficking Legislation (HR 4980) into the Data Warehouse. Progress has been made on this. This will enable reporting to monitor data entry quality as well as final Federal Reporting.

The child welfare information systems currently in place also play a significant role in supporting OCFS’ efforts to meet additional federal eligibility documentation requirements under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act.

B. “Child Welfare Case Management Reports Sufficient to Create Aggregate Data on Issues Including but Not Limited To: Timeliness of Investigations; Re-occurrence of Indicated Reports; Timeliness of Case Plans; Time in Care; Number of Placements; Number of Re-entries into Care; and Adoption Statistics”

Reporting capabilities have been progressively enhanced since the original State Settlement Agreement. OCFS is fully capable of producing Child Welfare Case Management Reports sufficient to create aggregate data on all of the areas cited in paragraph 22 through the CONNECTIONS system and the Data Warehouse. CONNECTIONS data through the OCI is the source of reports on the timeliness of investigations. The Data Warehouse is the source of the remaining reports cited in paragraph 22. The Data Warehouse, Operational Data Store, and SharePoint reporting facility are discussed in greater detail in Section 1 of this report.

Reports Designated in Paragraph 22 of the Marisol Settlement Agreement

A description of each report follows:

Timeliness of Investigations

Timeliness of investigations is supported in a series of on-line reports. CONNECTIONS data is used to produce the timeliness report (CPS OCI Report Series). It is available on-line at the worker level and generated monthly for each investigative jurisdiction. Statewide and regional roll ups are also produced. The report is distributed to each jurisdiction’s liaison(s) and to OCFS regional and central office liaisons.

Timeliness of Case Plans; Family Assessment Service Plans (FASP)

The FASP serves a critical function in working with families. The FASP provides a uniform and effective method for workers to document their assessment of family and child functioning, strengths and needs. These assessments form the basis for determining what aspects of family functioning need to change in order to support the desired outcomes. The service plan and an evaluation of the previous service plan also must be documented in the FASP. FASPs are done on a periodic basis or whenever key status changes occur during the life of a case.

The FASP series in the OCFS Data Warehouse can assist supervisors and managers in local districts, voluntary agencies and OCFS regional offices in improving the FASP process by monitoring the status of open, overdue and coming due FASPs by type (Initial, Comprehensive, or Reassessment) for a particular month and monitoring FASP activity at different stages of the submittal-approval process.

Time in Care; Number of Placements; Adoption Statistics

The CONNECTIONS Activities window replaced CCRS as the system of record for placement and movement-related information for children in foster care. Three reports -- In-care, Admission, and Discharge Summary -- provide descriptive data, by status, on the population on children in the care/custody of local districts or voluntary agencies, and are updated monthly. In addition to counts on average months in care, number of admissions, and discharges to adoption, data is also available on age, permanency-planning goal, previous admissions, gender and current facility.

Recurrence of Indicated Reports; Number of Reentries

Using the federal CFSR definition of recurrence of maltreatment and re-entry into foster care, reports are available to support local districts in identifying potential factors related to safety and permanency for

children in care. These reports are available in summary or detail form. For each local district, a detailed report is available which lists each of the district's children included in the universe. Details of the CPS reports and periods in foster care are available in CONNECTIONS and/or the local case records. Details of foster care outcomes are available in the local case records.

Additional Reports

In a continuing effort to meet the on-going needs of local district, voluntary agency, and regional and central office OCFS Data Warehouse users, new reports were created in the areas of:

Foster Children and Associated Casework Contacts

OCFS continues to use a specialized datamart to generate reports that are regularly used by OCFS, local district, and voluntary agency personnel. OCFS continues to send quarterly letters to local district commissioners and voluntary agency directors reporting the year-to-date contact rate and emphasizing the importance of regular foster children contacts. OCFS regional office personnel have been meeting with upper management of voluntary agencies to emphasize the importance of accountability for casework contacts. As a result, compliance with casework contact requirements has improved dramatically and we have met the Federal reporting thresholds. We were able to meet the higher 95% threshold Federal reporting requirement for FFY 2015 and in FFY 2016.

Indicators for Juvenile Delinquents and Persons In Need of Supervision

Data Warehouse development staff have created a new indicator for children with a status of juvenile delinquent or person in need of supervision based on legal events in CCRS. This indicator has been implemented in the Data Warehouse, allowing users to identify trends in such cases.

3.	RECENT	DEVELOPMENTS
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OCFS during this second half of 2016 continued the modernization of the CONNECTIONS modules written in Visual Basic 6.0. This initiative enhances the capability of OCFS to provide improvements for the local district and voluntary agency workers using CONNECTIONS and related components as well as provide users with a single interface and consistent navigation across the entire application. The enhancements to functionality, technology, navigation and usability have been well received by the caseworker community.

A. CONNECTIONS Modernization

As noted in previous reports, the State successfully removed the FCP code base from the user interface and business tier portions of CONNECTIONS, providing users with a more intuitive experience in working with the system. The new technical architecture is in a web-like environment that satisfies the federal requirement for the removal of all FCP components from CONNECTIONS. The migration to a new architecture has also allowed for the maturity of the CONNECTIONS application to be preserved while incorporating enhanced functionality, such as improved usability and easier navigation available through the use of newer technology. OCFS has nearly completed the process of modernizing the CONNECTIONS modules written in VB. The phased implementation of this modernization effort was expected to be completed during the current reporting period, however some work was deferred in order to address a higher priority development effort. The last module that requires modernization is expected to be completed at the early part of the next report period.

B. Casework Contact Improvement Project

In order to improve the documentation of caseworker visits/casework contacts with children in foster care, OCFS continues to provide the technical support, training and oversight plan that addresses the following areas:

- **Monitoring/Reporting:** OCFS Regional Office staff continue to monitor and support, as necessary, local district and voluntary agency performance regarding casework contacts from month to month by using the Data Warehouse as well as *ad hoc* reports. Those local districts and voluntary agencies performing below the federal benchmark are contacted for purposes of identifying the reasons for the performance concern and offering assistance to improve performance. OCFS attained higher than the required 95% benchmark Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2015 and 2016.

C. CCRS Transfer into CONNECTIONS:

The transfer of the CCRS functions into the CONNECTIONS Activities window in the fourth quarter of 2014 established CONNECTIONS as the system of record for legal, placement, movement and adoption functions. It has also provided casework staff more immediate access to the data for inquiry and/or data entry purposes. The Data Warehouse has successfully made essential changes that were necessary as a result of movement of CCRS to the CONNECTIONS and continue to explore other potential issues such as those related to household composition. Changes related to race/ethnicity have already been incorporated.

D. Modernization of Family Services Stage

The Family Services Stage (FSS) is the CONNECTIONS component in which casework staff document their work for ongoing preventive services, foster care and adoption services cases, including such modules as the family assessment and services plan (FASP), service plan review, progress notes, health and education as well as person demographics. Because it is so large, the modernization was conducted in several phases. During the current report period, the remaining FSS component (Health) was completed. The Local Data Maintenance window, in which designated staff can correct erroneous data, was also completed. The remaining VB window - the Foster Home Record Summary - will be modernized at the beginning of the next report period.

D. Additional CONNECTIONS Development Activities

Based on programmatic priorities, CONNECTIONS development staff developed and built new functionality to more readily identify person in reports of child abuse and maltreatment that are a foster parent. The enhancements: support staff at the State Central Register to help identify if any person in the home involved in a CPS report is a foster parent; expands staff who will be alerted to the existence of the report; and provides additional supports to learn about foster children who are placed in the home.

In addition OCFS worked with users from ACS and from across the state to define requirements for foster care placement functionality. Based on these requirements, window designs are currently being drafted. A particular challenge is meeting the highly varied needs of New York's decentralized child welfare organizations across all cities and counties within the state.

E. Initial Implementation of an Interoperability Model

In January, 2016, OCFS implemented the data transfer from the NYS Education Department for children in foster care. Comprehensive data from foster children's' educational history and in-depth data from the previous school term is included in the data package.

4. PLANNING THE FUTURE OF NEW YORK'S CHILD WELFARE INFORMATION SYSTEM

A. State Funding of CONNECTIONS

Paragraph 22 of the State Settlement Agreement requires OCFS to “use reasonable efforts and the means available to it to develop and implement in New York State, at the earliest practicable date, an accurate and reliable statewide computer system...”

The means available to OCFS through State funding for a statewide child welfare computer system are established by the New York State Budget for each state fiscal year (SFY). The SFY 2016-17 general fund budget remains unchanged since the July 2016 report. The general fund budget provided \$9.81 million in appropriation authority for the non-personal services portion of the operational expenses for CONNECTIONS. This is in addition to the \$7.8 million in appropriation authority that was transferred to the State Office of Information and Technology Services (ITS) for non-personal services in SFY 2015-16, and the \$5.7 million in appropriation authority for Network, Data Center, and Enterprise Help Desks related costs for CONNECTIONS users and system that have been transferred to ITS in 2014-15. As noted in previous reports, OCFS has received the following additional support in the form of Personal Income Tax (PIT) bond funds as part of the plan to continue the transformation of CONNECTIONS (CAMP): \$17.4 million in the SFY 2008-2009 budget; \$19 million in SFY 2010-2011; and finally, during SFY 2013-14 \$11.030 million was paid for CAMP principal and interest. The financing of CAMP with State PIT bonds funds has been discontinued and now the State is using Pay-As-You-Go financing to fund any ongoing CAMP activities.

The on-going maintenance and upgrade by OCFS of CONNECTIONS’ software and hardware and the funding of CONNECTIONS’ operational expenses in an environment of continued fiscal challenges for the state serves as tangible evidence of New York State’s continued commitment to the CONNECTIONS system and related components. The State through the joint efforts of OGS Strategic Sourcing and ITS has been moving towards an enterprise approach regarding the procurement and ongoing maintenance of necessary software and hardware support to maintain the CONNECTIONS application in an optimal manner. This new approach will make this process more efficient and will result in cost savings to the State.

B. Federal Funding of CONNECTIONS

Other means available to OCFS for the development and implementation of a statewide child welfare computer system are potentially available through the federal ACF. Federal financial participation (FFP) to OCFS for CONNECTIONS has been described in prior reports, including copies of OCFS submissions and the federal ACF responses. These OCFS submissions include an Annual Advance Planning Document Update (AAPDU), which is submitted annually to request continued federal funding, and an As Needed Advance Planning Document Update (AN-APDU), which is submitted in case of significant changes to milestones related to CONNECTIONS. The 2016 AAPDU was submitted to ACF on September 2, 2016 and was approved by ACF on September 30, 2016.

As noted in prior reports, federal approval to claim further reimbursement for CONNECTIONS developmental costs remains on hold. OCFS continues to believe that ACF’s restoration of FFP

through the AN-APDUs is an important part of restoring the full federal partnership with CONNECTIONS and would facilitate movement forward on CONNECTIONS. However, OCFS would like to restore the traditional 50 percent FFP level for development activities and the 25 percent FFP level for operational activities, rather than the current FFP level of 15-17 percent for only operational expenditures.

The federal regulations that govern state child welfare systems changed during the current report period. The function-driven Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) requirements no longer exist. Instead states have been given the option to implement more data collection and a data quality-driven Comprehensive Child Welfare Information Systems (CCWIS) in accordance with regulations which became effective August 1, 2016. New York has two years to determine if it will seek to comply with these optional requirements for which enhanced federal fiscal participation is available. OCFS continues to maintain a working relationship with the federal ACF through regularly scheduled conference calls and meetings between ACF Regional staff and OCFS senior management.

C. CONNECTIONS Infrastructure Upgrades

The consolidation of information technology operations, including the infrastructure, makes it increasingly difficult to isolate technical changes specific to OCFS applications, including CONNECTIONS. Reported here are any changes that OCFS expects will have an impact on resources from the standpoint of testing or other support activities:

Citrix XenApp Upgrade Project

New York State is building a single platform to support all Citrix users statewide. Citrix controls the interface between the user and the application. The previous attempt to upgrade Citrix failed due to incompatibilities between Visual Basic 6.0 and the newest Citrix version. Therefore, it is imperative to complete the VB 6.0 rewrite before the migration of the OCFS Citrix environment to the enterprise environment, which is why OCFS has afforded such a high priority to completing the CONNECTIONS modernization.

5.	IMPLEMENTATION	SUPPORT	ACTIVITIES
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A major focus for OCFS implementation staff during the first half of 2016 was to: assist case workers successfully adjust to the modernized VB 6.0 windows and the newly implemented Preventing Sex Trafficking windows, including the development of training materials and user support tools and the provision of on-site support to assist staff with the application changes. The staff also conducted reviews of the physical and information security practices of local districts and voluntary agencies in compliance with State requirements. Implementation activities also focused on projects to improve the reporting of required data (AFCARS, NYTD) to the Federal government and assisting districts to maximize

reimbursement.

6. CONCLUSION

New York State has continued to make significant progress in the development and implementation of CONNECTIONS and the related components that comprise the child welfare information system. CONNECTIONS is the system of record for child protective, preventive, adoption and foster care case initiation, assessment and service planning. In all 58 local districts and over 250 voluntary agencies, caseworkers and supervisors access CONNECTIONS to review and document demographics, investigations, safety and risk assessments, progress notes, family assessments and service plans, and health and education information.

Additional resources such as the Data Warehouse, Operational Data Store, and SharePoint reporting facility provide capabilities that did not exist when data resided only on mainframe data bases. These resources provide workers from local districts, voluntary agencies and OCFS with the capability to generate pre-defined summary and detail reports as well as ad hoc (user-generated, on demand) reporting capability directly from their desk computers. These reports can be used for point in time and historical trend analysis of child welfare services in New York State.

OCFS continues to transform both the business and technical approaches to its child welfare information system so that it will be capable of supporting the needs of supervisors, caseworkers, and OCFS staff in the years to come. Having successfully completed the CAMP initiative, the state is currently completing the project to modernize the windows, written in VB 6.0 to VB .NET, providing users with a single, intuitive interface and consistent navigation across the entire application. Progress was also made in the design of functionality to support foster care placements. Development staff also quickly responded to the programmatic priority to identify situations in which a person in a CPS report is a foster parent and to notify all staff with a person on their caseload in any way connected to that person.

OCFS has used reasonable efforts and the means available to it to develop and implement, through CONNECTIONS and other interfacing components, an accurate and reliable statewide computer system that achieves the tasks set forth in paragraph 22 of the Marisol A. State Settlement Agreement. OCFS also continues to work with its business partners - other New York State agencies, the federal ACF, local districts and voluntary agencies - in the on-going improvement of the child welfare information system in New York.



Office of Children and Family Services

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

SHEILA J. POOLE
Acting Commissioner

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December 27, 2016

Honorable Kevin T. Duffy
United States District Judge
Southern District of New York State
Daniel Patrick Moynihan
United States Courthouse
500 Pearl Street, Courtroom 26A
New York, NY 10007-1312

RE: Marisol A., et al. v. Giuliani, et al.
95-Civ- 10533(KTD)

Dear Judge Duffy:

Enclosed please find OCFS' semi- annual report, due January 2017, as required by the Court's order dated August 29, 2001. This report provides in detail OFCS' efforts in complying with paragraph 22 of the Settlement Agreement.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sonia Meyer", written over a horizontal line.

Sonia Meyer
Senior Attorney

Enclosure

cc: Children's Right, Inc.
Lawyers for Children
Linda Fang, Assistant Attorney General
William Bristow, Esq.

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