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        |      INFORMATIONAL LETTER        |    TRANSMITTAL:  96 INF-7
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                                                DIVISION:  Services and
          TO:            Commissioners of                  Community
                         Social Services                   Development
                         Executive Directors of
                         Voluntary Agencies       DATE:  February 7, 1996


          SUBJECT:       Update on CONNECTIONS Project




                         Directors of Services
          SUGGESTED      SACWIS Liaisons
          DISTRIBUTION:  Administrative Directors
                         Staff Development Coordinators
                         Systems Coordinators
                         Child Welfare Staff
                         Fiscal Staff


          CONTACT PERSON:  Carol Van Kloberg, Director, BSIS
                           1-800-342-3727 or (518) 432-2911  USER ID: 0FL040


          ATTACHMENTS:   A.  Questions and Responses about CONNECTIONS
                         B.  Draft Description of LAN Administrator's
                             Responsibilities
                         C.  Scalable Site Prep Model
                         (All attachments are available on-line)


                              FILING REFERENCES
        ----------------------------------------------------------------------
         Previous    | Releases  |Dept. Regs. |Soc. Serv.  |Manual Ref.|Misc. Ref.
         ADMs/INFs    | Cancelled |            |Law & Other |           |
                     |           |            |Legal Ref.  |           |
                     |           |            |            |           |
         95 INF-42   |           |            |            |           |94 LCM-114
         95 INF-21   |           |            |            |           |
         95 INF-25   |           |            |            |           |
         94 INF-20   |           |            |            |           |
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          DSS-329EL (Rev. 9/89)
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Date   February 7, 1996

Trans. No. 96 INF-7   Page No. 2

This INF is intended to provide you with information on the most recent developments in CONNECTIONS, provide responses to questions received as a result of the CONNECTIONS teleconference, and advise of forthcoming correspondence which will confirm CONNECTIONS site information.

CONTRACTOR SELECTION: Each of the prospective contractors for this project, who submitted proposals in response to the CONNECTIONS RFP, has been asked to submit a "Best and Final Proposal". These proposals will reflect modest changes in the scope of the project and will address the need for some additional flexibility.

SCHEDULE: The selection of the CONNECTIONS contractor will be made at the end of February, 1996. Since this is later than originally stated, we have requested schedules from the CONNECTIONS vendors that will maximize federal funding and still plan for the CONNECTIONS infrastructure to be installed statewide by September 1996.

Although the start up date has changed, our goal remains the same and work on the CONNECTIONS project continues to progress aggressively.

TELECONFERENCE FOLLOW-UP: In response to questions received during and after the December 20, 1995 teleconference, a "Question and Answer" package has been developed and is attached to this INF. Another CONNECTIONS teleconference is being planned for March 1996, to keep local districts and voluntary agencies up to date on all project developments. Further information about the next teleconference will be forthcoming soon.

CHILD WELFARE ON-LINE: The workgroups are making significant progress on developing recommendations in key areas. We will be sharing draft material for your review and comment. As you receive materials from the Child Welfare On-Line workgroups, please have them reviewed by the broadest audience of users possible and return comments as requested in each mailing. Your input is very important in shaping CONNECTIONS to meet your needs.

CONNECTIONS SITE INFORMATION: Under separate cover, you will receive a copy of CONNECTIONS site information for your locations. We will be asking your Directors of Services to verify all information that is pertinent. This includes; address, phone numbers, number and location of satellite offices, number of CONNECTIONS staff at each site, contact person and phone number. Please verify that all locations (main office, satellites, etc.) are included and clearly identified.

A LAN survey form will also be included with the site information to be completed by your Systems Coordinators. The purpose of this survey is to obtain information about current and prospective LAN's located at CONNECTIONS sites. During the CONNECTIONS teleconference several Districts and Agencies indicated a preference to employ existing LAN's in the

Date   February 7, 1996

Trans. No. 96 INF-7   Page No.   3

CONNECTIONS process.   While the Department does not envision local LAN's becoming part of the initial CONNECTIONS implementation, it does understand the business needs behind these requests.   Through this survey the Department will gather information to develop a solution to this challenge.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS: The attached questions were received as a result of the CONNECTIONS Teleconference. The responses are organized as follows:

   I.   Program

       A.   User Related
       B.   Integration/Interface Related
       C.   Process Related
       D.   Schedule Related
       E.   System Function Related
       F.   Confidentiality Related
       G.   Training Related
       H.   Other

  II.   Financial

 III.   Technical

                         _____
                             Rose M. Pandozy
                         Deputy Commissioner
                     Division of Services and
                       Community Development

ATTACHMENT A

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

I. PROGRAM

  A. USER RELATED

    1. Question

       The local departments of social services were asked to identify
       the users that needed access to the CONNECTIONS system.   What
       users should be identified?

       Answer

       Child welfare staff who deliver, supervise or manage adoption,
       foster care, preventive or protective services will need access to
       the CONNECTIONS system. The specific case processes which will be
       supported are intake, case management, resource management,
       including all processes connected with certifying and/or approving
       foster and adoptive parents and ongoing contacts with them,
       eligibility, financial management, and court processing.

    2. Question

       Which district and agency staff will be included in the equipment
       allocation?

       Answer

       CONNECTIONS equipment is to be allocated at the enhanced federal
       funding level to child welfare staff who have full time
       responsibilities for the management or provision of foster care,
       protective, preventive or adoption services, but CONNECTIONS
       equipment may be used by other supportive staff in the district or
       agency who have been designated as having the need to know.

    3. Question

       What is the make up of the Advisory Committee and the On-line
       Workgroup and what are their functions?

       Answer

       The Advisory Committee will be established to conform with the
       requirements of Section 446 of the Social Services Law and will
       include representation from social services districts, their
       contracted agencies and other persons with expertise in child
       welfare.   Other state agencies will also be represented such as
       the Office of Court Administration and the Division for Youth.

We are in the process of forming the group now and expect it to
meet quarterly beginning in the Spring of 1996.   The committee
will provide oversight assistance and general direction for the
project.

The Child Welfare On-Line Workgroup consists of six task teams:
Intake, Eligibility, Case Management, Foster and Adoptive Home,
Facility Support, and Financial Management.   The teams are
developing the content of the functionality in each of these key
areas.   The teams are made up of participants from local
districts, voluntary agencies and State staff.   A description of
each team's function was provided in the handout packet at the
teleconference.   Please contact us if you did not receive one.
Also see Attachment 1 in 95 INF-42.

We are planning to add additional workgroups in the future.

4. Question

   Will family courts receive CONNECTIONS equipment?

   Answer

   Initially only local departments of social services and voluntary
   authorized agencies will receive CONNECTIONS equipment.   However,
   court processing will be supported, such as the ability to produce
   petitions on-line and the capability of receiving notifications of
   court actions coming due and overdue.

5. Question

   It is recognized Family Court may be a point of intake. Will that
   impact on the availability of equipment?

   Answer

   Many times, particularly in PINS cases, a referral comes to a
   local district or voluntary agency from the family court.   We are
   unable to provide family courts with CONNECTIONS equipment as part
   of the enhanced federal funding.   A workgroup on court processing
   will be formed with the Office of Court Administration, local
   family courts and local districts to assist in establishing the
   processes among local districts, agencies and the courts.

6. Question

   Which voluntary agencies will be part of CONNECTIONS?

   Answer

   All New York State voluntary agencies which provide foster care,
   adoption and/or preventive services under contract to a local
   social services district or the Child Welfare Administration in
   New York City should be part of CONNECTIONS if they perform the
   caseworker processes described in question 1.

B. INTEGRATION/INTERFACE RELATED

   7. Question

      Will managed care be supported by CONNECTIONS?

      Answer

      Yes.   CONNECTIONS is being developed to integrate all aspects of the child welfare system including managed care.

   8. Question

      Will CONNECTIONS provide for the input of information and interface to WMS/BICS for a services case or will WMS/BICS require additional input and maintenance such as application and clearance processing?

      Answer

      CONNECTIONS will collect all of the data necessary and provide for an interface to WMS/BICS.

   9. Question

      What is the status of SCR/CCRS with CONNECTIONS?

      Answer

      The functionality provided in CONNECTIONS will replace the current SCR and CCRS systems.

  10. Question

      What is the status of WMS and BICS with respect to CONNECTIONS?

      Answer

      CONNECTIONS will interface with WMS as appropriate.   Workers will have to record data once in CONNECTIONS and the required information will be sent to BICS.

  11. Question

      Will adoption photolisting be supported?

      Answer

      The bluebook photos will be electronically scanned and imaged; however, the first phase of CONNECTIONS will not provide access to this photo database. All workstations will be upgradable so that at a later time this capability can be added.

12. Question

How, if at all, will this interact with MAPP/GPS? What assumptions will be made about files? Will files be largely electronic?

Answer

A training component related to MAPP/GPS or local equivalent is part of the foster and adoptive home module and will be included as part of the foster and adoptive task team report from the On-Line Workgroup. All files will be electronic except for paper documents that come in from a source who is not a CONNECTIONS user. Those will need to be retained in a paper file. All documents generated by CONNECTIONS users will be retained electronically. Of course, any of those can be printed or faxed as the need occurs.

13. Question

Although there have been contractual relations between the public and private sector for many years, there has never been sharing of records, the sharing of systems, or the ability to communicate to the extent that's anticipated under Connections. This new relationship will require coordination and guidance to realize its potential. Who will be responsible for coordinating this relationship - the state or the local district?

Answer

The standards and protocols for sharing information in accordance with federal, and state statute and department regulations will be incorporated in CONNECTIONS. Input from all users will be an integral part of this process wherever sharing may be discretionary. Local districts and their contract agencies will need to coordinate and plan for specific workflow procedures. A suggested district/agency action plan was provided in the teleconference and as a handout. Please contact us if you did not receive one.

14. Question

An automated linkage to child support is planned. What does that mean?

Answer

Federal rules require each state's SACWIS system to interface with the state's IV-D Child Support system. For CONNECTIONS users this means that referrals can be sent from CONNECTIONS to the child support enforcement unit (CSEU). Information the CSEU needs will be generated for the most part from information already entered in CONNECTIONS while the worker can add additional information prior to sending the referral. Child welfare workers will also have access to the CSMS system (New York's child support system) through their workstations. However, they will not be allowed to directly alter CSMS information.

15. Question

If WMS, CCRS and the SCR will be incorporated in the CONNECTIONS
system, will the State still monitor for sanctionable items, and
how will the level of accountability be handled relative to
existing guidelines?

Answer

Although Article VII in the 1995 budget suspends the taking of
sanctions (denial of state reimbursement) until March 31,   1996,
the CONNECTIONS system will be designed to ensure documentation,
monitoring and compliance tracking of those items.   State   law
still requires this to take place, and in fact, the Department may
recommend to the Governor and Legislature whether reimbursement
should be denied to any social services district based on the
district's actions during the suspension period.

16. Question

To what extent will CONNECTIONS absorb and make accessible a large
local library of non-provider (and provider) resources, for
example, preventive and substance abuse agencies.

Answer

CONNECTIONS will have available a resource directory which will
include two types of service provider information. Foster family
and adoptive providers and congregate foster care providers will
be listed and have available vacancy information that is directly
tied to capacity and placements.

Other service providers in the community (or even around the
State) as would be necessary, for example, preventive and domestic
violence service providers, can be listed.   These would require
your district or agency to maintain the data and we will be
exploring that issue more thoroughly with users as we enter the
development phase.

It is envisioned that for any provider/client a search capability
will be available so matches can be called up on-line.   For
example,   these may include geographical characteristics, client
characteristics, or agency services.

C. PROCESS RELATED

17. Question

Will paper authorizations with original signature requirements
still be required?

Answer

No.   The CONNECTIONS system will meet the need for approval and
for approved authorizations by on-line, electronic processes.

18.   Question

Will agencies be able to pull up adoption home studies if families
come up on PAPR as meeting a freed child's needs?

Answer

This could be a feature in CONNECTIONS, or the request for the
homestudy may be made electronically. We need to hear more from
system users as to the level and amount of information they wish
to have available about their foster and adoptive homes on-line
for any other district or agency to view.   The Child Welfare On-
Line Foster and Adoptive Task Team is in the process of defining
processes such as the homestudy and how CONNECTIONS will support
these processes.   The process proposed by the workgroup has been
sent out to all districts and selected voluntary agencies for
their comment.

19. Question

Will we be able to send adoption home studies to placing agencies
electronically?

Answer

As noted in the previous answer if the placing agency is a New
York State agency and is part of the CONNECTIONS system,   home
studies can be electronically mailed; they also could be faxed
from the computer directly to sites that are not part of the
CONNECTIONS network.

20. Question

Will home studies be written on the system?

Answer

The homestudy process will be supported by the CONNECTIONS system.

21. Question

Will homefinders be entering turnarounds from their desks?   If
not, how will it work?

Answer

Turnaround   forms   will   vanish   with   the   implementation of
CONNECTIONS.   Data about foster and adoptive families will be
directly entered on to newly developed screens designed for that
purpose. The Child Welfare On-Line workgroup, foster and adoptive
task team is in the process of defining the content of that
process as noted in a previous question.

22. Question

Will progress notes be included in on-line forms?

Answer

Yes they will.   If specific notes are needed for other documents, the content can be easily copied to that document without re-entry.

23. Question

Will the current practice of progress notes be maintained?   How will documentation of specific chronological events be recorded?

Answer

Yes, it will.   However, progress notes will be enhanced by technology and automation in ways that respond to user needs. For example: Progress notes may be tagged as applying to legal, movement, or medical activities, or contacts, and thus allow for categorization of these events in chronological order.   Since all progress notes are always associated with a date, they always can be viewed in date order, or reverse date order for that matter. The important thing is your input will help provide the features most useful to you and your colleagues.

24. Question

How do managers sign-off on SCR determinations, closings, updates, etc.?   Do you need to print out a hardcopy or can the manager approve documents from the system?

Answer

In most situations, approvals, where required, will be recorded on the system.   The system, will reflect unapproved situations and prevent other inappropriate case activity based on the lack of approval.   Supervisors or managers will be alerted when work is awaiting their approval and alert workers to the approval (or disapproval).

D. SCHEDULE RELATED

25. Question

When will the full CONNECTIONS system be available?

Answer

The CONNECTIONS design should be completed by December of 1996 with implementation extending into January 1998.

26. Question

What is the new time table set once a vendor is chosen? According to the hand out we are already a month behind schedule. What is the long term effect on the federal funding in this regard?

Answer

Each of the four vendors who originally submitted proposals in response to the CONNECTIONS RFP has been asked to submit a "Best and Final Proposal." These proposals will reflect modest changes in the scope of the project and will address the need for some additional flexibility. The selection announcement is anticipated in February 1996.

Although we will have a later start date, we have requested schedules from the CONNECTIONS vendors which maximize the installation of the PCs, LANs, etc. We are hopeful that most of this CONNECTIONS infrastructure will be in place throughout the State by September 1996.

E. SYSTEM FUNCTION RELATED

27. Question

What help will be available after CONNECTIONS is implemented?

Answer

There are a number of ways help will be available to CONNECTIONS users.   There will be a help desk, which will be operational in nature and available through an 800 number to address questions on operating the system. Help will be available 24 hours a day for sites that support critical functions for protective services, and from 7:30AM to 6:30PM for all other functions.

On-line help will also be available in several ways. Computer based training (CBT) will allow an individual to review how to operate CONNECTIONS and practice as little or as much as desired. Policy and procedure manuals and guidelines will be available on-line, and help screens will assist users on using the system, will provide assistance with error correction, explain alerts, and provide other necessary information.

28. Question

Can we have voice activated systems - be able to dictate our progress notes into the computer instead of typing?

Answer

While voice activated text recording could be a future enhancement, the CONNECTIONS system will not include this functionality in Components I or II. Voice activated systems were specifically precluded from the enhanced federal funding.

29. Question

    We anticipate that the majority of case information will be
    electronic. Will the records be stored electronically? Current
    record retention is governed by the NYS Education Department. Has
    the State Education Department approved electronic storage?   Is
    there a plan for record retention and how will the files be purged
    in the future?

    Will electronic records be acceptable documentation to the federal
    government?   Will federal auditors accept this record on case
    audits?

    Answer

    We will work with SED and the federal government on ensuring that
    their retention requirements, as well as our own, will be met by
    CONNECTIONS. We have also asked for the capability to expunge and
    seal records.

30. Question

    Will the WMS system be extended in hours that are compatible with
    the SCR system which is available 24 hours a day?

    Answer

    We do not intend to extend access to WMS.   However, most
    CONNECTIONS functions do not require access to host-based systems,
    such as WMS. Critical functions will be available 24 hours per
    day.

31. Question

    Is personal scheduling available (calendar feature)?

    Answer

    Yes, calendaring and scheduling will be available features. The
    system will also provide for automatic reminders for scheduled
    activities. The system will have both system generated reminders
    (or cues) for required activities (for example, a CPS
    determination report is due or a UCR is due), and individual entry
    by worker for self-generated reminders or cues (for example
    conferences or meetings).

F. CONFIDENTIALITY RELATED

32. Question

    Confidentiality issues need clarification. What information will
    be protected? What won't be? Who will have access? What about
    the advocate's settlement regarding preventive?

Answer

Access will be controlled through user ID's and passwords.   In
that way access to specific records or specific parts of all or
groups of records can be designated.   This assures that those who
have the "need to know" receive complete and readily available
information and those who should be precluded from information
they do not need or are not entitled to can not have access.

The Department has begun meeting with the advocates to discuss the
CONNECTIONS initiative.

33. Question

What portions of the automated case record are legally able to be
made available to the client (parent and/or child)?   Will
information on client access be built into the system itself?

Answer

There is no plan for client access to the system itself.   The
current statutory and regulatory provisions govern the rights of
clients to information.   These rights are somewhat different for
the four program areas.   We will explore the possibility of
legislative reform with regard to access, as well as regulatory
amendments that can be accomplished within the existing laws.

G. TRAINING RELATED

34. Question

Will there be on-site trainers?

Answer

Hands-on training will be provided within each of the regional
areas as close to each district as possible.   We have requested
the vendor to provide 22 sites throughout the state.

35. Question

What considerations or training will be given to assist casework
staff not proficient in typing or keyboarding?

Answer

Component I training will include an orientation and introduction
to PC equipment, and how to use a mouse and Windows. Typing or
keyboarding skills will not be part of this training.   Local
districts or voluntary agencies may wish to obtain a self help
tutorial for staff to assist in developing keyboard skills for
staff who need this.

H. OTHER

36. Question

    What is the expected return on the investment for the state in
    terms of dollars and where are the savings expected to come from?

    Answer

    The savings are expected from the increased efficiency gained
    through the application of office automation, the reduction of
    need for manual forms and the elimination of unnecessary or
    duplicative processes.

    By freeing caseworkers from administrative burdens, CONNECTIONS
    will achieve savings resulting from improved service delivery and
    outcomes.

37. Question

    Increased efficiency can allow more client contacts per worker.
    Will these increased contacts be allocated to the existing
    caseload or to an increased caseload distributed among fewer
    workers?

    Answer

    We expect that increased time to work with current caseloads will
    result in better service outcomes.

38. Question

    We expect changes in our contracts with voluntary agencies.   How
    will this be accommodated?

    Answer

    We will develop a mechanism for you to inform us on a regular
    basis of these changes.

39. Question

    How many laptops are being provided?

    Answer

    The allocation of laptops has not been determined yet.

40. Question

    If a contract relationship between a local district and a private
    agency is terminated after the installation of CONNECTIONS
    equipment, will either the local district or the state have the
    right to retrieve that equipment? Could that equipment be
    reallocated to a new contract agency?

Answer

A standard agreement between voluntary agencies and the Department will be developed which will define the responsibility of all parties for the CONNECTIONS equipment.

The equipment will remain the property of the State Department of Social Services and will be returned to the State if the agency no longer has contractual responsibility for child welfare services with any local social services districts.

41. Question

Are the voluntary agencies responsible for their own site surveys, floor plans, etc.?

Answer

Site surveys will be completed by the vendor. The voluntary agency should submit floor plans for each of their CONNECTIONS sites.

II. FINANCIAL

1. Question

   If we need to add equipment after the initial CONNECTIONS
   installation, due to staff or site changes, who pays for the
   equipment?

   Answer

   If this occurs after the enhanced federal funding period, the
   reimbursement rate will be under the normal Block Grant allocation
   for administration with the available federal funding at that
   time.

2. Question

   Who will be responsible for providing and paying for ongoing
   equipment maintenance? Who will be responsible for providing and
   paying for system upgrades as improvements are available, such as
   upgrading operating systems to a new version?

   Answer

   The Department will be responsible for all hardware and software
   upgrades as well as maintenance.

3. Question

   Will phone lines be needed for CONNECTIONS? If so, who will pay
   for the ongoing use of the lines and what type will be needed?

   Answer

   Phone lines may be required which will be determined during the
   site survey process and specifically described. The ongoing
   requirements for phones lines cannot be determined at this time.
   Payments will be dependent upon a number of variables included in
   the selected Offeror's systems architecture.

4. Question

   It is our understanding that the contractor will be responsible
   for the necessary computer cabling work? Is this understanding
   correct?

   Answer

   Yes.

5. Question

   When we need to move equipment after the initial CONNECTIONS
   installation, who is responsible for paying the cabling and
   electrical costs?

   Answer

   This becomes the responsibility of the district or agency.

6. Question

   Will the state regulations which support the current claiming and
   payment process need to be changed and can they be changed in time
   for the implementation of CONNECTIONS?

   Answer

   As the detailed design of CONNECTIONS moves forward, consideration
   will be given to the impact on current regulations and financial
   processes. Any changes required in regulation, claiming or
   payment processing will be made as necessary.

7. Question

   How will voluntary agencies be reimbursed for enhanced federal
   funding for site preparation?

   Answer

   The State Department of Social Services will enter into an
   agreement with local voluntary agencies to approve site
   preparation costs. The agreement will specify the voucher process
   and guidelines.

8. Question

   Will local districts pay and then claim for reimbursement for site
   preparation?

   Answer

   For administrative expenditures other than site preparation costs,
   social services salary and non-salary costs incurred for
   CONNECTIONS should be reported in the F-17 sub-function on the
   Schedule D and reported in a separate sub-function entitled
   "CONN. Other" on the Schedule D-17.   The D-17 will in turn
   support a DSS-3922.   The title of the project on the DSS-3922
   should be "CONN. OTHER". The costs reported on the DSS-3922
   should be reimbursed at the rate of 75% Federal and 25% State
   shares. The State shares will be paid from an appropriation
   separate from the Family and Children's Services Block Grant. See
   95 INF-42, which covers reimbursement of site preparation costs.

9. Question

   Can the State or the CONNECTIONS vendor enter into a contract with
   a local subcontractor or landlord to pay and bill for equipment,
   electrical installations and/or other site improvements based on
   site survey and local district sign off?   Contractor would pay
   local contractor 100% and receive 100% from state.   State would
   receive 75% via federal claim; local share of 25% would be charged
   back to local district as claims settlement adjustment.   Local
   district would not be a party to subcontractor/vendor contract.

   Answer

   No, we will be unable to have either the State Department of
   Social Services or the vendor enter into a subcontract at the
   local level.

10. Question

   Is there a local cost for training which takes place after
   September 30, 1996?

   Answer

   There will be no local costs, with the exception of travel,   for
   training   during   the   initial   implementation of CONNECTIONS.
   Ongoing training will be reimbursed at the normal rate.

III. TECHNICAL

1. Question

   Will modems be located at the local district?

   Answer

   Modems will be available to support dial-in functionality from field laptops. They may be located in the district or at a regional location. Their physical location will depend on the actual infrastructure proposed by the contractor and may vary according to specific site needs.

2. Question

   Will CONNECTIONS templates be in Microsoft WORD?

   Answer

      Yes.

3. Question

   What software will the full CONNECTIONS functionality be written in?

   Answer

   This will depend on the vendor selected.

4. Question

   What kind of computers will CONNECTIONS use?

   Answer

   The workstation specification is a Pentium, 75 Mhz,16MB RAM, 1GB hard drive, with a 15" SVGA monitor. The laptop will have a color display and at least a 340MB hard drive.

5. Question

   Can we add our own PCs to the CONNECTIONS network?

   Answer

   At this time, the Department does not envision local district or voluntary agency owned equipment being added to the CONNECTIONS network prior to the completion of the initial implementation effort. We are preparing the previously mentioned LAN survey, which, with your assistance, will allow the Department to determine the scope of this issue.

6. Question

   Can we purchase additional CONNECTIONS PCs through the contract
   for staff who will not be allocated equipment but who need access
   to the system?

   Answer

   Yes, however the enhanced funding may not be available and there
   will be a local cost.   Where appropriate, we will help districts
   to secure the enhanced federal funding. However, districts should
   be aware that additional costs may be incurred beyond the cost of
   the PC.   For example, larger servers, telephone lines, hubs,
   software licensing fees, and additional maintenance may be
   necessary to support the PCs and would be charged back to the
   district.

7. Question

   Can we substitute laptops for workstations?

   Answer

   Yes, but there will be an additional local cost.   As noted
   previously, the allocation of laptops has not yet been determined.

8. Question

   Can you describe the type of floor plan you need?

   Answer

   We want to identify the location of workers who are delivering
   child welfare services.   As was done for WMS site surveys, the
   plan should identify the site, floor, office partitions, desk
   location where PCs are desired, electrical outlets. Current
   telephone line drops supporting state systems should be
   identified. Please mark desk locations where new equipment should
   be placed. If any existing State equipment requires relocation or
   deinstallation to accomplish the CONNECTIONS installation, please
   indicate the PID and site ID of those devices, as well as their
   new location on the floor plans.

9. Question

   We currently have a local network.   Will the CONNECTIONS Network
   be able to link to it?   When would or could that occur?   We want
   to ensure that we can communicate throughout our own department.

   Answer

   At this time, the Department does not envision local district or
   voluntary agency owned equipment being added to the CONNECTIONS
   network prior to the completion of the initial implementation
   effort.   We are preparing the previously mentioned LAN survey,
   which, with your assistance, will allow the Department to
   determine the scope of this issue.

10. Question

     We understand that there will be no equipment for scanning
     documents into the system. Can local districts purchase scanners
     that can be bought for very reasonable prices and scan court
     orders, medical information, etc. into image files that can be
     included in the case record and printed on demand? Most word
     processing software today supports the use of image files (tif,
     gif, etc.).

     Answer

     The Department understands the business need for the requested
     functionality, however, this requirement was not stipulated for
     the initial CONNECTIONS implementation as it was not eligible for
     enhanced federal funding. Our analysis indicates that the storage
     capacity to support scanning capabilities is not contained in the
     systems bid by the four Offerors. However, this could be a future
     enhancement and we should further explore this need jointly.

11. Question

     Are there plans to remove or reallocate the WMS equipment
     currently in services teams when CONNECTIONS is implemented? Will
     there be WMS availability during a transitional period?

     Answer

     To the extent that the CONNECTIONS equipment duplicates and/or
     renders obsolete existing State provided equipment, the Department
     wishes to redeploy devices to maximize the utility of that
     equipment. If a district or voluntary agency has access to
     WMS/CCRS/SCR today, they will continue to do so during the
     CONNECTIONS transition period.

12. Question

     What would it take to be able to connect a CONNECTIONS PC to our
     existing LAN of over 100 users. We use Novell Netware v. 3.12 to
     manage our LAN, and we use WordPerfect Office 4.0 for electronic
     office functions. Our LAN is also tied into a County WAN
     connecting four sites. We have connections to the State OFIS Link
     system too. What would be necessary to access all of these
     systems from one PC?

     Answer

     Initially the CONNECTIONS PCs will be able to access any system
     that they are allowed to now, and have the capability to exchange
     mail with the Department's OFIS Link system. The CONNECTIONS
     system will have the future capacity to interface with external or
     local systems but this capability will not exist during the
     initial implementation.

     Please refer to the preceding answer related to LAN CONNECTIONS.

13. Question

    Our experience has been that computer systems periodically fail -
    sometimes very briefly - sometimes for extended periods of time.
    It appears that casework staff will become very dependent on
    having CONNECTIONS available. In case of a system failure, will
    there be a way for workers to complete their paperwork or will we
    be unable to access the system until it is up again.

    Answer

    CONNECTIONS will operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for
    critical work and have appropriate recovery, back up and
    redundancy features to assure its availability for Child Welfare
    staff.

14. Question

    What are the site preparation requirements necessary to support
    the CONNECTIONS equipment in terms of power and space?

    Answer

    As was stated during the teleconference, the CONNECTIONS vendor
    has yet to be determined, therefore, the Department is unable to
    provide information relative to specific equipment types and
    quantities. However, we can provide a "scalable site preparation
    model," that may be employed for planning purposes. (See
    Attachment C)

15. Question

    What are the Amps which these devices will need for electrical
    support?

    Answer

    Please refer to the attached scalable site preparation model.

16. Question

    Are we bound to the Department's contract with the chosen vendor
    for equipment or can we upgrade through other suppliers and would
    this affect any warranty or serviceability?

    Answer

    For the initial implementation period through April 15, 1998, all
    equipment must be supplied by the CONNECTIONS contractor.
    Subsequent to that term, the Department will provide equipment and
    will also review "outside CONNECTIONS" equipment requests to
    determine their compatibility with the overall architecture. The
    issues identified in the question are two of many which must be
    resolved prior to allowing non-CONNECTIONS provided equipment to
    become part of the system.

17. Question

    What happens to the system when State DSS has a holiday - will the
    system be down?

    Answer

    Access to CONNECTIONS and the Department's legacy systems (WMS and
    BICS) will continue to be governed by the holiday schedule which
    is developed with input from the local districts. Access to the
    local CONNECTIONS LAN will not be restricted. We do not intend to
    extend access to WMS. However, most CONNECTIONS functions do not
    require access to host-based systems, such as WMS. Critical
    functions will be available 24 hours per day.

18. Question

    Define the administration of the LAN. Is this one of the local
    district duties?

    Answer

    Attached is a description of the LAN administration
    responsibilities. However, it should be noted that the level of
    effort varies based upon the Offerors' proposed solutions. This
    will be further clarified subsequent to the selection of an
    Offeror.

19. Question

    Given the remote access to the laptop as described during the
    teleconference, will workers be able to access the system from
    their home PC?

    Answer

    Due to the CONNECTIONS software requirements that will reside on
    the laptops, workers will be unable to access the system via their
    PCs at home initially. The number of incoming phone lines is also
    limited. However, the Department will evaluate this suggestion in
    the future.

20. Question

    Who will be responsible for maintenance?

    Answer

    The contractor will be responsible for maintenance until the end
    of the contract. Then the Department will assume the
    responsibility.

21. Question

How many printers will be allocated?

Answer

Printers will be allocated on a one to six ratio generally, but each site will have a minimum of one printer.

22. Question

Is the CONNECTIONS e-mail system that you spoke of OFIS Link or a separate e-mail system?

Answer

CONNECTIONS will use MS Mail which will have the capability of exchanging mail with OFIS Link.

23. Question

What steps have you, or are you going to be taking, to prevent theft of these PCs?

Answer

Local districts and voluntary agencies will be responsible for theft prevention.

24. Question

Will agencies be permitted to "bridge" their existing systems and networks to the CONNECTIONS system to facilitate access for staff with appropriate security access?

Answer

Our focus is to install a CONNECTIONS system which will support the needs of child welfare staff.   The contractor has the responsibility to install an infrastructure which is based on common industry standards and which will facilitate integrations with other systems but must first support CONNECTIONS processing within specific operational parameters.

25. Question

When will we be notified of site surveys? When will we be able to make site prep and furniture requests of our Boards?

Answer

We envision that the CONNECTIONS contractor will begin March 8, 1996, with the site surveys commencing early in the second quarter.   You may begin to plan for site prep work based upon the previously mentioned site prep model.   Please ensure that your district or agency has forwarded your confirmation and floor plans to Richard Pryor by March 1, 1996 so that we may schedule your survey.

26. Question

If petitions are being done on this system, can we get a machine for legal staff?

Answer

Only preventive, foster care, adoption, and protective services staff, including caseworkers, supervisors, and management will be allocated equipment at full State cost.   Additional equipment may be added for legal staff, but there will be a local share.

27. Question

Has a firm decision been made regarding the operating system and software for CONNECTIONS?

Answer

The workstation software will be Windows NT,   Windows 95,   or Windows for Work Groups.   The network operating system has not been determined.

ATTACHMENT B

DRAFT DESCRIPTION OF THE
CONNECTIONS LOCAL AREA NETWORK ADMINISTRATOR

SPECIFIC   JOB DESCRIPTION FOR THE CONNECTIONS ADMINISTRATOR WILL
BE   DEFINED   BY   THE   INFRASTRUCTURE   INSTALLED   BY   THE   SUCCESSFUL
CONNECTIONS   CONTRACTOR.   THIS   DRAFT   DESCRIPTION   IS   PROVIDED IN
ADVANCE   OF   CONTRACTOR   SELECTION   TO   ASSIST   LOCAL   DISTRICTS   AND
VOLUNTARY AGENCIES TO ANTICIPATE THE TYPES OF FUNCTIONS A LAN
ADMINISTRATOR WILL NEED TO PERFORM.

A.   Description of Position

CONNECTIONS Network Administrators will assist in the installation,
operation and maintenance of the Local Area Network.   They will
provide   technical   assistance   to   local district or agency users
regarding LAN use. The Network Administrator must always be notified
of any hardware or software problem or changes occurring within the
LAN. He/she either solves the problem or refers it to the Hotline or
Help Desk that will be established by the CONNECTIONS contractor.

B.   Prerequisite Training

1.   Attend CONNECTIONS Component One (OA, spreadsheet, word
processing)   and   Network   Administrator   Training.   Attend
CONNECTIONS Component Two (CONNECTIONS Application) Training.

C.   Responsibilities

1.   General

a.   Receive and review all technical correspondence related to
CONNECTIONS LAN operation.

2.   Network Design

a.   Participate in site surveys to be aware of and assist in
the   establishment   of   the   location   and   function   of
equipment.

b.   Maintain LAN directory structure for the LAN file server(s)
based upon the needs of the user group.

c.   Responsible for new equipment requests and justification
for installations and relocations.

3.   Operational Responsibilities

a.   Act as the primary point of contact for resolution of user
problems with the CONNECTIONS system.

b.   Become familiar with CONNECTIONS applications.

c.   Become familiar with CONNECTIONS documentation.

d.   Monitor network performance and utilization.

e.   Maintain support of LAN Backup, which may include loading
     of tape cartridges for backup.

f.   Maintain files of tape cartridges used for backup in
     accordance with CONNECTIONS backup procedures.

g.   Follow CONNECTIONS procedures for restoration of data from
     backup tape cartridges in event of system crash.

h.   Monitor the system for fault detection and take appropriate
     corrective action as required.

i.   Procure CONNECTIONS access   identification   codes   and
     passwords for new users.

j.   Act as the primary initiator of problem calls to the
     technical Help Desk and/or CONNECTIONS Hotline   for
     resolution of problems occurring at the local site.

k.   Monitor consumables and order replacements as required
     (paper, toner, floppy disks,   tapes,   etc.) to ensure
     availability.

l.   Disseminate   information   to   users   about system
     unavailability. When contacted by CONNECTIONS Technical
     Help Desk staff concerning system unavailability (down-
     time), convey the information in a timely manner to all LAN
     users within purview.

m.   Become familiar with the CONNECTIONS hardware/software at
     the local site to be able   to   assist   in   problem
     identification and resolution.

n.   Maintain LAN file structure which was developed in the
     design phase.

o.   Maintain LAN security system developed in the design phase.

p.   Upgrade LAN Software as directed by Central   Systems
     Management as necessary. Central Systems Management should
     perform most upgrades.

4. LAN Environment

a.   Disseminate   information   regarding   updates   of   the
     hardware/software.

b.   Implement procedures in conjunction with CONNECTIONS.

c.   Maintain Reference Library of related manuals.

ATTACHMENT C

SCALABLE SITE PREP MODEL

CONNECTIONS staff have reviewed the technical information included in the
proposals received for the four offerors. Based upon that analysis, a model
was constructed using the maximum site preparation requirement proposed by
any of the four offerors.   For example, if the PC electrical draw ranged
from 3 to 7 amps among the 4 offerors, for purposes of this planning model,
we   chose 7 amps.   By taking this conservative approach, we felt that all
CONNECTIONS planners statewide would have a "worst case" view of the costs,
level of effort,   and impact upon the agencies.   Chart "A" depicts the
various maximum requirements for PCs, servers, printers, routers, and hubs.

Chart "A" also includes the equipment, by device type,   projected to be
required in a CONNECTIONS configuration. So, for example, if your site has
1-9 CONNECTIONS staff, all equipment types with a "Y" will be required for
your location.   Other simple assumptions to be employed in using this model
are:

    1)   PCs   - One per CONNECTIONS staff
    2)   Printer - One high end per six CONNECTIONS staff
                 - Minimum one low end per site
    3)   Router - Minimum of one per building
                 - 100+ staff sites could have more than 1 router
    4)   Hub   - Minimum of one per site
                 - 50+ staff sites will have 1 per floor

In completing the analysis for a site with 15 CONNECTIONS staff, we can now
determine the following site preparation requirements using Chart "A" and
the above assumptions.

    1)   Personal Computers: (One per CONNECTIONS staff = 15)

             Space Requirements = 15 PCs X 3.7 sq ft per PC = 55.5 sq ft.
                                  (If placed on desk top, then no
                                  additional office space will be
                                  necessary)

             Electrical = 15 PCs X 7 Amps = 105 Amps for PCs

             Heat Displacement - Not applicable - Will operate in the
             typical office environment.

    2)   Printers (2 high end, 1 low end based upon one printer per six
         CONNECTIONS staff)

             Space Requirements = 3 printers X 3 sq ft = 9 sq ft.

             Electrical = 3 printers X 9.4 Amps = 28.2 Amps for printers

             Heat Displacement - Same as PC

3) Router/Hub (1 of each based upon site size of 15)

        Space Requirements = 1 Router + 1 Hub X 3 sq ft = 6 sq ft.

        Electrical = 1 dedicated 20 Amp circuit

        Heat Displacement - Same as PC

4) Servers (1 regular OA + 1 dial in server + 1 UPS)

        Space Requirements = 4.7 sq ft + 4.7 sq ft + 4.0 = 13.7 sq ft.

        Electrical = 20 Amp dedicated circuit for regular server
                     10 Amp dedicated circuit for dial in server
                     20 Amp dedicated circuit for UPS
                     50 Amps Total

        Heat Displacement – 2300 BTU - Regular OA server
                            2300 BTU - Dial In server
                            2000 BTU – UPS
                            6600 BTUs/Hour

In completing this exercise, we now can provide the following site preparation needs assessment to the landlord, County General Services, etc., for their review in determining how the CONNECTIONS equipment installation will impact the site. We suggest that this planning exercise be completed ASAP.

Please note that it may be useful to consider the PCs and printers as a planning unit and the router/hub, and server as a planning unit due to their general installation proximity.

    o   Space – PC   55.5 sq ft
                Printers   9.0 sq ft
              Router/Hub   6.0 sq ft
              Servers   13.7 sq ft
                TOTAL   84.2 sq ft

    o   Electrical – PC   105   Amps
                  Printers   28.2 Amps
                Router/Hub   20.0 Amps
                Servers   50.0 Amps
                   TOTAL   203.2 Amps

    o   Heat Displacement – PC   N/A
                        Printers   N/A
                        Router/Hub   N/A
                        Servers   6600 BTUs/Hour
                           TOTAL   6600 BTUs/Hour

Please keep in mind that all information presented here is for advanced planning purposes. The actual number of devices and associated site preparation requirements will be determined later this year at your technical site survey.