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              ¦      LOCAL COMMISSIONERS MEMORANDUM        ¦
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                   DSS-4037EL (Rev. 9/89)
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TO: Local District Commissioners

SUBJECT: Survey: Improving Automated Support for Child Welfare

ATTACHMENTS: Attachment A: SACWIS Survey Transmittal available on-line
              Attachment B: SACWIS Survey Instrument available on-line

As you know we have been discussing the automation needs of child welfare
staff with casework and supervisory child welfare staff throughout New York
State.   The survey described herein will add to the information on user
needs which we have collected in regional "child welfare technology days"
and at "focus group" meetings recently held throughout the State.   Our
purpose is to take advantage of the opportunity to design a Statewide
Automated Child Welfare System supported by the federal funding described in
94 INF-20 and enhance the automated capabilities of your child welfare
staff.

Our child welfare technology demonstrations were very successful.   Sessions
held in New York City, Albany, Syracuse and Buffalo demonstrated state of
the art technology and prototype systems to district and agency staff. More
than 300 people attended and were able to see first hand the opportunities
technology can provide for improving automated support.

Our SACWIS Focus Groups were very favorably received by districts and
agencies.   These groups provided the opportunity for input from caseworkers
and supervisors in the field of Child Welfare.   Sixteen sessions were held
throughout the state (Buffalo, Dunkirk, Hopewell, Syracuse, Albany, Lake
George, Mid-Hudson and NYC).

The input received from these focus groups has been used to develop the
survey accompanying this letter.   This survey allows us to hear from a much
larger and broader population than our focus groups allowed.   We are
requesting that it be completed by all district and agency staff who
provide, supervise or are otherwise directly involved in the administration

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of Child Welfare services.   The principle purpose of the survey is to
affirm,   quantify and rank the results of the input received from districts
and agencies during the focus groups.   The survey will also be used as an
opportunity for districts and agencies to target critical areas to be
considered in the development of a comprehensive statewide system.   We will
share the results of this survey after we complete our analysis.

An additional survey component will also be forthcoming.   It will ask for
factual data concerning AFCARS data elements and we will be requesting one
response from each district or agency.

We are also planning a series of Regional Forums this fall specifically to
address the needs and concerns of Commissioners of Social Services,
Directors of Service of local districts and Executive Directors of Voluntary
Child Caring Agencies.   The input gathered at these forums should
effectively build upon the information we receive through our survey.   Your
staff should be encouraged to bring to you any additional ideas or
considerations they have that may not have been covered in the survey, so
that you may bring these forward at the fall forums.

The following instructions should be helpful in completing and returning
your district/agency surveys.

   1)   A supply of the survey instrument is being sent to districts in a
        separate mailing. A supply is included for voluntary agencies. If
        you need additional copies, you may reproduce your own or call Ms.
        Terri Mahar at 1-800-342-3727 or on-line at 0fl140 to order
        additional copies.

   2)   Please have all professional staff who supervise or provide direct
        child welfare services (i.e., protective, preventive, foster care or
        adoption services) complete the survey.

   3)   Please collect all the completed surveys for your district/agency,
        complete the attached transmittal and mail with all of the surveys
        to:

             New York State Department of Social Services
             40 North Pearl Street
             PMA Unit 10th floor
             Attention: Larry Brown
             Albany, New York 12243

   4)   Completed surveys should be mailed no later than October 21, 1994.

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If you have any questions regarding the survey, please contact Ms. Michelle
Rafael on-line at 0FD030 or Mr. Gerald Seeley on-line at 0FL130. Either can
also be reached 1-800-342-3727.

Thank you for your cooperation.

_____

                                   Frank Puig
                                   Deputy Commissioner
                                   Division of Services and Community
                                   Development

SACWIS SURVEY TRANSMITTAL

DATE MAILED: _____

DISTRICT/AGENCY NAME: _____

Staff Providing Child Welfare Services

 Total Number Supervisory/Administrative _____
 Total Number Caseworkers _____

 Total Number Surveys Distributed _____
 Total Number Surveys Completed, Returned _____

 District/Agency Contact Person _____
                Telephone Number _____

Mail Completed Surveys To:

 New York State Department of Social Services
 40 North Pearl Street
 PMA Unit 10th Floor
 Attention: Larry Brown
 Albany, New York 12243

A note to the survey taker:

This survey will be used to help identify how New York state should proceed with improved automation to provide better casework and management tools for child welfare service delivery, such as:
- improved case decision-making and planning;
- better overall tracking of cases;
- increased accuracy and timeliness of information available;
- an opportunity to integrate across all services systems;
- ready access to case file and resource information;
- supervisory and management assistance in monitoring and evaluating casework;
- more efficient case management at all levels.

New York State has a unique opportunity now due to the availability of enhanced federal funding for developing and implementing a comprehensive Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS).

Thank you for your participation!!

Local Social Services District Name:_____
or
Voluntary Agency Name:_____

Position: () check one)

_____(1) caseworker   _____(2) senior caseworker

_____(3) supervisor   _____(4) administrator

_____(5) staff development _____(6) other

Program Area: () check one or more, if applicable)

_____(1) preventive   _____(2) child protective

_____(3) foster care   _____(4) adoption

Experience: () check one)

_____(1) up to one year   _____(2) one to three years

_____(3) three to five years   _____(4) five to ten years

_____(5) over ten years

Have you attended a SACWIS demonstration day or focus group? () check one)

_____(1) demo day   _____(2) focus group

_____(3) both   _____(4) neither

8 1) To support you in your work, appropriate and adequate equipment is
needed. Computer workstations to which workers have immediate access and
availability can promote an efficient and effective work environment.

    The SACWIS system should provide each worker with computer
    workstations.

        ( ) 5 Strongly Agree
        ( ) 4 Agree
        ( ) 3 No Opinion
        ( ) 2 Disagree
        ( ) 1 Strongly Disagree

8 2) Portable devices are lighter weight, smaller computers that can be
readily carried away from the main workstation to other sites outside the
agency.

    SACWIS should provide the agency with the option of using portable
    devices for workers when they are away from their main workstation.

        ( ) 5 Strongly Agree
        ( ) 4 Agree
        ( ) 3 No Opinion
        ( ) 2 Disagree
        ( ) 1 Strongly Disagree

8 3) A customized case record contains UCR questions and documentation
requirements specifically tailored to the program choice (preventive, child
protective, foster care, adoption) and other case characteristics (i.e.
siblings, independent living case).

    The SACWIS system should generate only customized UCR questions or
    documentation requirements that pertain to the specific case.

        ( ) 5 Strongly Agree
        ( ) 4 Agree
        ( ) 3 No Opinion
        ( ) 2 Disagree
        ( ) 1 Strongly Disagree

8 4) An electronic case record contains all information about a case
including but not limited to, UCR forms, progress notes, court documents,
correspondence and documents received from sources outside the agency
(i.e., schools, medical).

    The SACWIS system should allow for entry and inquiry access to all
    case information.

        ( ) 5 Strongly Agree
        ( ) 4 Agree
        ( ) 3 No Opinion
        ( ) 2 Disagree
        ( ) 1 Strongly Disagree

8 5) Single point of entry means that information concerning a person or case is entered once in a standard area and the information is moved or copied by the system to each area that needs the reference information.

    The SACWIS system should require single point of entry for a core group of data.

        ( ) 5 Strongly Agree
        ( ) 4 Agree
        ( ) 3 No Opinion
        ( ) 2 Disagree
        ( ) 1 Strongly Disagree

8 6) Accessibility of on-line case information for entering, updating or correcting data, promotes timely reporting of data.

    The SACWIS system should allow service providers to enter, update and correct case data under appropriate and/or prescribed circumstances.

        ( ) 5 Strongly Agree
        ( ) 4 Agree
        ( ) 3 No Opinion
        ( ) 2 Disagree
        ( ) 1 Strongly Disagree

8 7) Electronic data exchange or transfer can facilitate both intra- and inter- departmental referrals or referrals to other agencies, and allow for easy data retrieval and information sharing.

    The SACWIS system should promote computerized data exchanges with appropriate entities wherever possible.

        ( ) 5 Strongly Agree
        ( ) 4 Agree
        ( ) 3 No Opinion
        ( ) 2 Disagree
        ( ) 1 Strongly Disagree

8 8) Electronic forms are the equivalent of paper forms. They are available on computer screens, allow for entry of information, printing of blank or completed forms, and can be electronically mailed.

    The SACWIS system should contain all local and State required forms and allow for the creation of new forms, as needed.

        ( ) 5 Strongly Agree
        ( ) 4 Agree
        ( ) 3 No Opinion
        ( ) 2 Disagree
        ( ) 1 Strongly Disagree

8 9) On-line resource directories are computerized lists of district, agency, and community resources, including basic demographic information and information about the type of client served. The directory needs to be locally up-dated.

    The SACWIS system should allow districts or agencies to develop and update resource directories in a format most useful to them.

        ( ) 5 Strongly Agree
        ( ) 4 Agree
        ( ) 3 No Opinion
        ( ) 2 Disagree
        ( ) 1 Strongly Disagree

8 10) Resource allocation or vacancy control provides automatic up-to-date information on program vacancies, i.e. openings in a foster boarding home.

    The SACWIS system should provide a means for resource allocation or vacancy control for those programs that are part of the SACWIS system.

        ( ) 5 Strongly Agree
        ( ) 4 Agree
        ( ) 3 No Opinion
        ( ) 2 Disagree
        ( ) 1 Strongly Disagree

8 11) Computerized statistics provide a standard aggregated data set available in various sorts (by caseload, unit, district, etc.) which provide valuable information, useful for further analysis, trend projection, and historical comparisons.

    The SACWIS system should produce a standardized set of child welfare related statistics.

        ( ) 5 Strongly Agree
        ( ) 4 Agree
        ( ) 3 No Opinion
        ( ) 2 Disagree
        ( ) 1 Strongly Disagree

8 12) Ad Hoc reports are on demand reports easily customized as to format and data by an individual user, as long as the data is entered into the system, or can be derived from other data in the system. Charting, diagramming and graphic depiction are associated features.

    The SACWIS system should contain the capability of user created Ad Hoc on demand reports.

        ( ) 5 Strongly Agree
        ( ) 4 Agree
        ( ) 3 No Opinion
        ( ) 2 Disagree
        ( ) 1 Strongly Disagree

8 13) Reminders (aka flags, warnings, ticklers) may be system generated about a variety of tasks, activities, and/or requirements that are coming due, or are overdue, based on information already known to the system. They are generated on-line on a daily basis.

    The SACWIS system should automatically provide reminders in an easily accessible format for requirements, and, as an option, for worker identified tasks and activities.

        (   ) 5 Strongly Agree
        (   ) 4 Agree
        (   ) 3 No Opinion
        (   ) 2 Disagree
        (   ) 1 Strongly Disagree

8 14) Policy alerts are system generated informational descriptions, prompts, or considerations a worker should be aware of that pertain to specific case circumstances known to the system. Unlike reminders, they are not necessarily linked to a particular date.

    The SACWIS system should automatically provide policy alerts tailored to the specific case circumstances, and guide workers as to where more detailed information about such policy can be obtained.

        (   ) 5 Strongly Agree
        (   ) 4 Agree
        (   ) 3 No Opinion
        (   ) 2 Disagree
        (   ) 1 Strongly Disagree

8 15) Automated checklists provide a consistent means to ensure that a worker is complying with or considering all necessary tasks and activities related to a specific requirement or set of requirements or recommended actions.

    The SACWIS system should produce automatic checklists of relevant topics at worker request.

        (   ) 5 Strongly Agree
        (   ) 4 Agree
        (   ) 3 No Opinion
        (   ) 2 Disagree
        (   ) 1 Strongly Disagree

8 16) On-line references (electronic reference library) are statutes, regulations, manuals, directives etc. available on the work station, with subject or topic or word search capacity.

    The SACWIS system should have available a full assortment of references pertaining to child welfare.

        (   ) 5 Strongly Agree
        (   ) 4 Agree
        (   ) 3 No Opinion
        (   ) 2 Disagree
        (   ) 1 Strongly Disagree

8   17) Nightly batches refer to the system gathering information entered during the day, referencing it against previously recorded data for inconsistencies and making it available on inquiry or for modification the next day.

The SACWIS system should make all entered information immediately available to the worker, including errors, warnings and inconsistencies, and avoid overnight batches whenever possible.

(   ) 5 Strongly Agree
(   ) 4 Agree
(   ) 3 No Opinion
(   ) 2 Disagree
(   ) 1 Strongly Disagree

8   18) Paper case records are not easily accessible, not accessible to multiple users simultaneously and require large amounts of storage space. Electronic storage of paper records (including documents, photographs, etc.) using imaging/scanning technology can eliminate these problems.

The SACWIS system should provide for the imaging/scanning of paper records.

(   ) 5 Strongly Agree
(   ) 4 Agree
(   ) 3 No Opinion
(   ) 2 Disagree
(   ) 1 Strongly Disagree

8   19) Office automation functions, such as word processing, electronic mail, faxing, electronic calendaring and scheduling, are effective and efficient capabilities to support direct worker entry of case material, enhanced communication ability and both system generated and worker input on-line notices and schedules of many sorts.

The SACWIS system should provide for a comprehensive assortment of office automation functions.

(   ) 5 Strongly Agree
(   ) 4 Agree
(   ) 3 No Opinion
(   ) 2 Disagree
(   ) 1 Strongly Disagree

8   20) To implement a SACWIS system extensive training will be required. Delivery of this training can be either at regional training sessions utilizing "train the trainer" techniques or delivered on-site at each district and agency.

Training for the SACWIS system should be provided on-site at each district and agency.

(   ) 5 Strongly Agree
(   ) 4 Agree
(   ) 3 No Opinion
(   ) 2 Disagree
(   ) 1 Strongly Disagree

8 21) Computer assisted instruction (CAI) allows for individualized self instruction using a computer.

SACWIS training should be complemented by CAI.

( ) 5 Strongly Agree
( ) 4 Agree
( ) 3 No Opinion
( ) 2 Disagree
( ) 1 Strongly Disagree