

Section 8.0: Technical Support for States

8.0 TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR STATES

The end user support (EUS), network, and software teams work in tandem to provide a wide range of technical and functional support to all 50 states, three territories (Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam), and the District of Columbia. This section briefly discusses the various areas of support including the Service Desk (1-800-258-2736) and suggests ways in which the nationwide child support user community may use the resources available.

8.1 Technical Support Services

Network and software engineers provide technical support to ensure reliable transmission of child support information over the OCSE Network. To maintain an efficient telecommunications network, staff developed utility tracking and management tools to monitor the daily performance of the network and its applications. Using these tools the teams are able to proactively detect and diagnose problems or issues that may occur with the OCSE Network or the CSENet 2000 Application Suite. Detailed information about the network can be found in Section 2.0: *OCSE Network Architecture*. Detailed information about the application can be found in Section 3.0: *CSENet 2000 Application Suite*.

8.1.1 NETWORK TEAM

To ensure sustained network connectivity, the network team is involved in monitoring, testing, and troubleshooting on a daily basis.

8.1.1.1 Monitoring

The team monitors the network by observing and reviewing:

- critical activity such as circuit status, access, and availability of state child support enforcement (CSE) systems;
- access and availability of analog lines for back-up communications;
- data transmission rates;
- traffic volume; and
- unauthorized router access attempts.

Unusual activity is investigated, particularly activities that could indicate imminent loss of connectivity with a state, e.g. an unstable frame-relay circuit.

8.1.1.2 Testing

Network testing is an automated process that verifies connectivity to states five times daily. Occasionally, the state host does not respond to this query, indicating an apparent break in communications between the remote host and the remote router. State communications coordinators are notified when communications cannot be established between these two devices.

8.1.1.3 Troubleshooting

Network troubleshooting often requires the use of operating system embedded utilities, such as Traceroute, which can highlight state devices that are not responding to network queries. Additional effort and expertise is applied when more subtle or complex issues prevent the immediate reestablishment of network connectivity. The team has the ability to produce customized reports to aid in troubleshooting and establishing trends. Simulations may need to be set up to emulate the environment from which the problem emerged. In these cases, a considerable degree of analysis is employed before probable causes can be identified and resolutions reached.

8.1.2 SOFTWARE TEAM

The software team performs various activities to ensure that the CSENet 2000 Application Suite is operational on a daily basis. The team is responsible for monitoring and managing the application and providing additional support to meet states' needs.

8.1.2.1 Monitoring

The team monitors the daily data exchange activities of the CSENet Application Suite, Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) Application, and Interstate Case Reconciliation (ICR) Application to ensure there are no unusual occurrences between CSE systems and the OCSE server. An unusual activity can be low-impact – affecting only one state – or high impact – affecting more than one state. Low-impact activities include state interface errors, which are resolved by the software team. High-impact activities, e.g., several states not receiving their files, are identified and resolved.

8.1.2.2 Management

The team manages several components of the CSENet Application Suite by updating and ensuring data integrity. The components include:

- State Profiles;
- automated test interfaces;
- Exchange Agreement communications matrix; and

- ICR communications matrix.

8.1.2.3 Additional Software Support

The team provides additional support to the states by:

- performing manual test interfaces;
- modifying the Test Deck to meet a state's particular need;
- customizing a special test per a state's specific request;
- creating ad hoc reports;
- responding to states' programming needs; and
- answering various applications questions.

8.1.3 END USER SUPPORT (EUS) TEAM

The EUS team is the states' contact for the OCSE Network and CSENet 2000 questions and issues. The team works in concert with the engineers to provide technical and functional support. Support by this team is varied and includes, for example:

- analyzing transaction files, identifying errors, and informing states of interface issues;
- coordinating testing for states;
- assisting states in their development efforts;
- enabling communications between states to exchange specified Function codes; and
- providing expertise, analysis, and information in a wide range of technical and business usage areas.

8.1.3.1 File Analysis, Error Identification, and Interface Issues

A variety of internal utilities are available to assist EUS in performing file analysis, identifying errors, and detecting interface issues. These tools are used by the team to provide timely and detailed information to states in production and development.

8.1.3.1.1 FILE ANALYSIS AND ERROR IDENTIFICATION

The Transaction Management Application (TMA) is a group of functions in the CSENet suite used for validating the Retrieve-From-State transaction file, database loading, and routing CSENet transactions. The transaction validation process enforces data integrity and promotes standardization throughout the CSENet user community. The TMA verifies each transaction received from a state system against the rules, constraints, and data formation standards

specified in Appendix C: *Data Block Record Layout*. Two reports are generated daily and sent to states:

- **Validation Report** shows error statistics for a state's transaction file that has been through the validation process. *In the event that a transaction file is not completely processed, the report contains a message to notify the state;* and,
- **Transaction Error Report** (or the Error Report) contains error messages for each transaction error detected during the transaction file validation process.

The team also analyzes these reports on a daily basis. The Transaction Error Report is an invaluable tool used to identify the validity rate of transactions sent by each state and to target transactions that merit further review and analysis. A sample of the Validation Report and Transaction Error Report can be found in Appendix G.

8.1.3.1.2 INTERFACE ISSUES

The State Interface Application generates the following reports that are useful in detecting interface issues:

- **Interface Logs** detail output about the pings, logons, and file transfers during the interface session;
- **Interface Reports** provide summary information concerning the interface file transfers and any errors encountered during the interface session; and
- **Interface Summary**, plus any interface errors, is written to a Server Interface Report for use by the CSENet team for system management.

The team also reviews the Interface logs and reports daily. If ping, logon, or data set errors are found, the state is contacted and informed that an interface issue occurred and that their file most likely was not retrieved or delivered. (For additional information, refer to Appendix J: *File Transfer Frequently Asked Questions* and Appendix O: *State Interface Errors and Resolutions*).

8.1.3.2 State Testing

States have the option of testing with the OCSE server using loopback testing or testing with other states. Review of the testing errors, providing clarification regarding transaction rules, and Transaction Functional Matrix (TFM) information found in Appendix D is typical support provided on a daily basis. Additional information on testing may be found in Section 3.0: *CSENet 2000 Application Suite* and Section 4.0: *Integrating CSENet 2000 in a State CSE System*.

8.1.3.3 States' Functional Development

Over half of the 54 states and territories are fully functional; the remaining jurisdictions are progressing toward full functionality. EUS works closely with the states, assisting the user community in their development efforts by:

- coordinating testing for states' new Function codes, analyzing test files, and providing feedback concerning errors;
- clarifying the use of valid data blocks and elements in the Data Record Layout;
- providing guidance and information concerning transaction business usage and interpreting the TFM;
- responding to questions concerning the Valid Transactions Table and explaining allowable valid transaction combinations; and
- monitoring new Function codes once they are moved into production.

8.1.3.4 Communications and Exchange Agreements

Once states implement new Function codes into production, they contact other states to expand their exchange agreements. Both states then contact their technical representative or Service Desk to enable communications for the new Function code. The database is updated and the states are notified once communications have been enabled.

8.1.3.5 Informational

In addition to the daily tasks surrounding testing, transaction usage, errors, and interface issues, the team is actively involved in developing and disseminating technical and functional information to the states by:

- maintaining and providing statistics to assist states in their planning and development efforts;
- conducting data analysis for software modifications and enhancements;
- providing information to states as they undergo the certification review process;
- coordinating teleconferencing and compiling information for new site installation and equipment moves; and
- providing information as states move into production.

8.2 Service Desk

Service Desk support is available during the business hours of 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM (Eastern) and may be reached at 1-800-258-2736 or CSENet.2000@lmco.com. When a state requests assistance through the Service Desk, a Service Request is initiated detailing the issue or request. Often the CSENet teams combine their efforts to resolve a state's issue.

Teleconferences may be coordinated with the end user community to obtain additional information and provide support that is more readily addressed in a two-way dialog. Most Service Requests are resolved within a 24-hour period. Service requests are closed after a response is provided to the initiating state. Figure 8-1: Service Desk and Technical Support Staff provides a visual summary of technical support.

Figure 8-1: Service Desk and Technical Support Staff

