

**FEDERAL PARENT LOCATOR SERVICE**

# **SOFTWARE CHANGE**

**RELEASE METHODOLOGY**

Oct 22, 2001

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## **1.0 RELEASE METHODOLOGY**

### **1.1 Objective**

The Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS) Release Methodology is a process to schedule and implement consolidated changes to all of the Federal location and collection existing systems, as well as new systems. OCSE works with States and Federal Agencies, via workgroups and periodic meetings to identify and prioritize changes and enhancements to systems. The process, which incorporates the planning, design, development, testing and implementation of software maintenance and enhancements across systems, allows OCSE and its trading partners to manage the impact of Federal system changes to their respective programs. It incorporates the necessary notification process to ensure all interface points, including States and other Federal Agencies, have adequate lead-time to prepare for, and implement required changes. This Software Release Methodology incorporates the implementation phase of the planning process.

### **1.2 Background**

OCSE currently manages the maintenance and enhancement of the following systems through the operation of its Change Control Board:

- Federal Parent Locator Service Legacy System
- Federal Offset Program
- National Directory of New Hires
- Federal Case Registry
- CSENet 2000
- Interstate Referral Guide
- IRS1099 Locate
- Multistate Financial Institution Data Match
- OCSE Network (Frame Relay)

While the above systems are generally independent systems, there are interface points for each of them with the State Child Support Enforcement Agencies (CSEA). Historically, FPLS planning for changes to one system does not consider the impact on States for changes being made to another system. OCSE recognizes that State resources needed to respond to changes are often the same regardless of the OCSE system being changed. Incorporating all of its maintenance and enhancement planning into a single process will allow OCSE to better manage its own resources and to consider State impact.

### **1.3 Release Approach Proposal**

OCSE proposes to implement a standardized release process. This process would provide for two types of releases.

### **1.3.1 MINOR RELEASE**

A minor release includes those items that should have little impact on OCSE's trading partners. Examples of items that may be included in a minor release are:

- additional values to, or modified definition of, an existing field in an interface record that does not mandate immediate processing changes by the States;
- modification to allow for additional, non-mandatory, data in an area of an interface record that had been previously defined as filler; and
- optional new interface records.

### **1.3.2 MAJOR RELEASE**

A major release includes those items that have potential for significant impact on OCSE's trading partners. Examples of items that may have the biggest impacts are:

- revised interface records that include mandatory new fields or changes in record size;
- new interface records that the external entity is mandated to submit or accept and process;
- interface changes that require major changes to the State business rules for processing the data, e.g., elimination of the FPLS system requiring mandatory implementation of the FCR Locate process;
- mandatory implementation of a new interface protocol; and
- modifications to the existing State business rules that must be implemented on the release date.

A major release that may also include items that have little impact on the State as described above in Minor Release.

## **1.4 Release Guidelines**

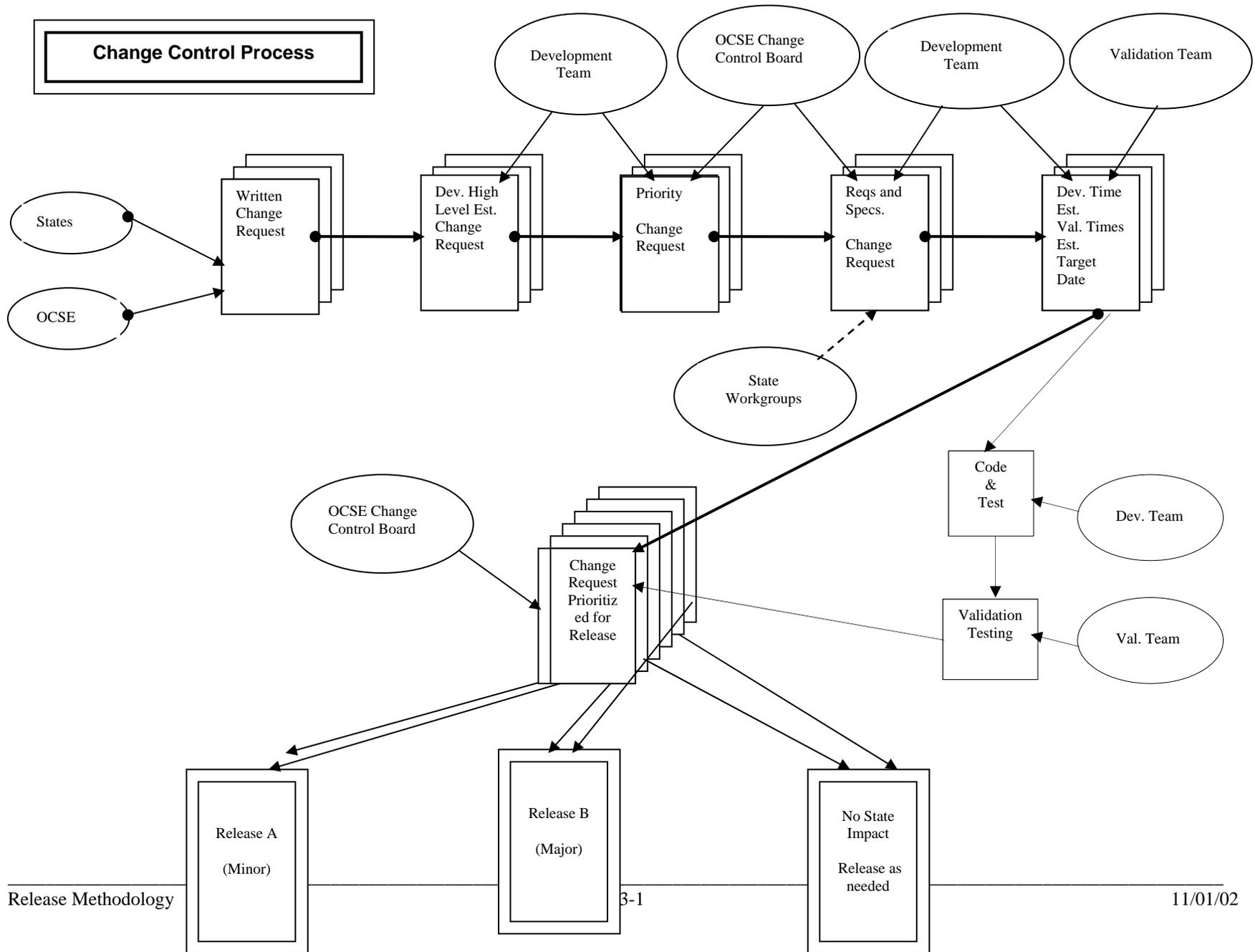
Under normal circumstances, OCSE will adhere to the following guidelines regarding releases:

- A new release will not start until the prior release cycle has ended.
- A release cycle will begin with the publication of a release manifest that includes a brief summary of all changes planned for the release. The manifest will include the State business requirements added or impacted by the proposed change. System contacts within the States will be notified of the publication of a release manifest using E-Flash. The release manifest will then be available on the OCSE website 30 days before the release specifications are published. During this period a technical teleconference will be conducted to brief States on items included in the manifest and to answer questions and accept comments.

- Specifications for each item in a release will be published 90 days before the implementation date of a minor release and 180 days in advance of implementation of major releases. Release specifications will also be published on the OCSE website. State contacts will be notified of the release of the specifications using E-Flash.
- Releases will not be governed by periodic fixed calendar dates.
- Legislatively mandated program changes will be incorporated into a normal release cycle, **if feasible**. However, emergency fixes or urgent program changes may require an emergency release.
- While OCSE intends to adhere to the schedules published for all releases, it does reserve the right to **delay** a release implementation, when necessary, to ensure successful implementation.

<b>CHART 2-1: MINOR RELEASE – SAMPLE SCHEDULE OF STATE ACTIVITIES</b>	
Relative Day	Activities
<b>Pre-release Activity</b>	State/OCSE workgroup analyzes business requirements, specifications, record layouts, etc., to determine system requirements for release to end-users.
Day 1	End Users receive E-Flash that the Release Manifest is now on the OCSE’s website: <a href="http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/newhire/library/library.htm">http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/newhire/library/library.htm</a>
Day 1- Day 21	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Comments and Question Period</li> <li>2. Conference Call with State Technical Support.</li> </ol>
Day 30	Receive E-Flash that the Release Specifications are now on the OCSE’s website: <a href="http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/newhire/library/library.htm">http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/newhire/library/library.htm</a>
Day 30 – Day 120	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Code, test and prepare for Implementation</li> <li>2. Multistate conference calls with State Technical Support if nature of changes warrant.</li> <li>3. Continue contact with Technical Support for comments or updates.</li> <li>4. Provide test files if necessary/applicable.</li> </ol>
Day 80 – Day 90	Notify your State Technical Support Liaison (when requested) of your implementation readiness.
Day 95 – Day 119	Pilot test CSENet 2000 and OCSE Network changes if applicable.
Day 110	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. OCSE’s last opportunity to change implementation date.</li> <li>2. Receive E-Flash reminder of implementation date.</li> </ol>
Day 120	Implementation

<b>CHART 2-2: MAJOR RELEASE – SAMPLE SCHEDULE OF STATE ACTIVITIES</b>	
Relative Day	Activities
<b>Pre-release Activity</b>	State/OCSE workgroup analyzes business requirements, specifications, record layouts, etc., to determine system requirements for release to end-users.
Day 1	End Users receive E-Flash that the Release Manifest is now on the OCSE’s website: <a href="http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/newhire/library/library.htm">http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/newhire/library/library.htm</a>
Day1- Day 21	1. Comments and Question Period 2. Conference Call with State Technical Support.
Day 30	End Users receive E-Flash that Specifications are now on the OCSE’s website: <a href="http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/newhire/library/library.htm">http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/newhire/library/library.htm</a>
Day 30 – Day 210	1. Code, test and prepare for Implementation 2. Multistate conference call with State Technical Support if nature of changes warrant. 3. Continue contact with Technical Support for comments or updates. 4. Provide test files as necessary/applicable
Day 150 - Day 160	Notify your State Technical Support Liaison (when requested) of implementation readiness.
Day 190 – Day 209	Pilot Test CSENet 2000 and OCSE Network changes if applicable.
Day 200	1. OCSE’s last opportunity to change implementation date. 2. End Users receive E-Flash reminder of implementation date.
Day 210	Implementation





**APPENDIX B: MINOR RELEASE MANIFEST**

[SAMPLE–NOT ACTUAL!!]

<b>CHART B-1: MINOR RELEASE 1 – AUGUST 27, 2001</b>	
<b>FPLS RELEASE SCHEDULE</b>	
<b>Dates</b>	<b>Activities</b>
April 16, 2001	Receive Manifest
April 30	Conference Call with State Technical Support
May 21	Receive Release Specifications
May 30	Multistate Conference Call with State Technical Support (if needed)
June 15	Need to respond back to your State Technical Support Liaison with answers to the following questions: Will you need to make changes to your system? What are your questions, comments and/or concerns? Do you have any issues with the Release Implementation Date? Do you need Technical Support?
April 16 – Aug 27	Technical Support Team works with State to facilitate readiness
August 27, 2001	Implementation

[SAMPLE–NOT ACTUAL!!]

<b>CHART B-2: MINOR RELEASE 1 – AUGUST 27, 2001</b>					
<b>FPLS RELEASE MANIFEST</b>					
<b>System</b>	<b>OCSE Ref #</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Proposed Changes</b>	<b>Business Requirements</b>	<b>Status</b>
FCR	222	Provide SSA Death information for person registered on the FCR	OCSE has obtained a copy of the SSA Death Master File and receives monthly updates to the file. The monthly file includes additional death information, changes to previously reported information, and deletions of incorrect information. The FCR Person/Locate Request Acknowledgment and FCR Query/Proactive Match Response records will be modified to provide States with this information proactively.	The State system must accept and store the death information. It must be able to accept changes or a delete to previously received information.	

## APPENDIX C: MAJOR RELEASE MANIFEST

[SAMPLE–NOT ACTUAL!!]

<b>CHART C-1: MAJOR RELEASE 1 – APRIL 1, 2002</b>	
<b>FPLS RELEASE SCHEDULE</b>	
<b>Dates</b>	<b>Activities</b>
September 4, 2001	Receive Manifest
September 11	Conference Call with State Technical Support
October 1	Receive Release Specifications
October 9	Multistate Conference Call with State Technical Support
November 1	Need to respond back to your State Technical Support Liaison with answers to the following questions: Will you need to make changes to your system? What are your questions, comments and/or concerns? Do you have any issues with the Release Implementation Date? Do you need Technical Support?
Sept 4 – Mar 31	Technical Support Team works with State to facilitate readiness
April 1, 2001	Implementation

[SAMPLE–NOT ACTUAL!!]

<b>CHART C-2: MAJOR RELEASE 1 – APRIL 1, 2002</b>						
<b>FPLS RELEASE MANIFEST</b>						
<b>System</b>	<b>OCSE Ref #</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Proposed Changes</b>	<b>Business Requirements</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Status</b>
FCR	370	Provide SSA Title II and SSI information as an additional locate source.	OCSE will implement a daily interface with the SSA SVES system. This interface will provide access to information on people eligible for SSA Title II retirement and SSI benefits. States will be given the option of requesting this information on locate requests submitted via the FCR. The match information will be returned in a new locate response record.	The State system must be modified to request this additional locate source when appropriate and accept the response information.	Full	

## APPENDIX D: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Question 1:** Who will be notified of the release of a manifest and how will they be notified?  
Will the manifest contain changes to more than one system?

**Answer:** The purpose for the release methodology is to consolidate all changes across all federal systems into a single release. As part of our “E-Flash” notification process, the Office of Automation and Program Operations Division of Federal Systems maintains contact lists for the following systems:

- FCR
- NDNH
- Federal Offset
- IRG
- CSENet

In addition, the Division of State and Tribal Systems maintains a contact list of State System Project Managers that is also used for release notification.

With the exception of the NDNH list<sup>1</sup>, **the manifest with a schedule and the detailed technical requirements (specifications) will be released via an E-Flash to all of the contact lists** mentioned above. In addition, the OCSE web site at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/newhire/relmgnt/relmgnt.htm> will contain the manifest and detailed requirements as they are released. E-Flashes will also be used to announce multi-state teleconferences that support the release and updates to the manifest or schedule.

**Question 2:** Who are the points of contact at the federal systems level on the various changes contained in the manifest?

**Answer:** Each item in the manifest will contain the system point of contact for that item. Additionally, the State Technical Support Liaison team will be responsible for questions relating to the overall release methodology or to the manifest in general and manifest schedule. This team will also be the single point of contact for States if there are any doubts regarding what to do about the manifest. In some cases the Technical Support Liaisons may also be the system point of contact for a specific item in the manifest, e.g., FCR. The Technical Liaisons will also be responsible for scheduling and conducting the State conference calls relating to the manifest and subsequent conference calls regarding the specifications. System points of contact for each system included in the manifest will be represented during the call. If a State requires technical assistance, States may request assistance from their Technical Support Liaison or from the system point of contact noted in the manifest. To determine your Technical Support Liaison, go to [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/newhire/contacts/contacts.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/newhire/contacts/contacts.htm) click on **Federal Case**

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<sup>1</sup> Because the NDNH contact list includes a significant number of State Employment Security Administrations and Federal agencies, who are not involved with other Federal Child Support Systems, NDNH only releases will be sent to them under separate cover.

## **Registry (FCR) Technical Support Contacts.**

**Question 3:** Will changes to the manifest and schedule be allowed?

**Answer:** The purpose in developing this release methodology was to make change release predictable and to make planning for changes easier at the State level. While there is no intention of adding items to the manifest after it is released, it is always conceivable that new legislation or emergency fixes may require an out of schedule release. After manifest or specifications are released, there is an opportunity for comment by States. While every effort is made to research the need and feasibility of the required change, it is conceivable that at these junctures there may be a need for a change to the schedule, specifications, or deletion of an item from the manifest. As part of this comment process, if it is found that the impact on States is greater than originally anticipated, or the business need has changed, the item in question will be re-evaluated. If changes become necessary, E-Flashes will be used to communicate the information, and will refer contacts to the OCSE FPLS Web site for details.

**Question 4:** Will there be technical briefings for the States, who will be included and how will they be notified?

**Answer:** After the manifest is released, the Technical Support Liaison Team will schedule Multi-State conference calls to walk-through the manifest. There will also be a walk-through of the detailed specifications. The same contacts receiving the release notice will be notified of the teleconferences via E-Flash.

**Question 5:** On Chart 2-1 and 2-2 what is meant by “implementation readiness”?

**Answer:** Implementation readiness is an assessment of whether the State is on schedule to make the necessary change to accommodate the release. If a State is not ready, technical assistance will be offered.

**Question 6:** Why was not more time given States to respond to the Release Manifest?

**Answer:** The original concept of a manifest preceding the specifications was to alert States about upcoming changes and give them an opportunity to become familiar with new business requirements so that they might have an opportunity for comment before the specifications are finalized. During this period, it is helpful to have all States on board with the planned change, but not absolutely necessary since it is only with the release of the detailed requirements that the release process is fully placed in motion.

**Question 7:** Why are there gaps in the sample timelines shown in Charts 2-1 and 2-2 between days 21 to 29?

**Answer:** This is a period that will allow the FPLS, based on the comments and discussions with States, to adjust the manifest or specifications if necessary.

**Question 8:** Four months to code a major change seems short. Is there a way to increase that timeframe?

**Answer:** The period of time available to the State to code for a major change is at a minimum six months from the time the detailed requirements (specifications) are released. This is in addition to the month that the manifest will be released prior to the release of the specifications for a minimum total of seven months. We expect that there will be major changes

that may take more than seven months to implement and schedules will be adjusted to accommodate those greater needs. The timeframe for minor changes is four months (one month manifest release, three months after the specifications are released). Anything that takes longer than four months to complete will be included in a major release.

**Question 9:** Can the manifest contain a clear and precise

- Description of the Change at the Federal level,
- Indication of the required changes at the State level,
- Indication of the optional changes at the State level, and
- Description of the difference between what the State systems were required to do before, and what they are required to do now?

**Answer:** The manifest is a “heads up” tool. It is not meant to replace the detailed specifications that will be issued after the manifest. We expect that the Manifest and the specifications will provide all of the information requested.

**Question 10:** Please provide a legend for the Change Control Process flow chart, an explanation of dotted versus solid lines and who organizationally on the chart are the entities involved in this process, and is there documentation of pre-release activities elsewhere?

**Answer:** This chart is intended to provide a high level description of the Federal change control process. The circles represent teams or groups of people. The unframed rectangular boxes represent change requests, and the framed rectangular boxes represent a consolidation of those changes into a release. The square boxes represent development functions. The single instance of a dotted line represents when a workgroup with State participants provides input into a review of requirements or specifications for a specific change. Not all changes impact States, so the dotted line attempts to show that not every change request has State involvement. All entities not shown as “State” are part of the FPLS team. We have very detailed internal documentation of the Federal change control process.

**Question 11:** Does this release methodology apply to Federal Tax Offset.

**Answer:** Yes, this process applies to Administrative and Tax Offset as well as Passport Denial and MSFIDM.

**Question 12:** Even prior to the manifest, is it possible that an early warning of major changes be issued?

**Answer:** This is a good suggestion, and we will work on it.

**Question 13:** Are the days listed in the manifest schedule calendar or workdays?

**Answer:** Calendar days.

**Question 14:** Will releases happen at the same time each year?

**Answer:** No. The process allows for no overlapping releases and a four month period for a minor release and a “minimum” time of seven months for a major release. There could be two minor releases or two major releases in a row. So, under these circumstances, there is no way to fix a specific calendar month schedule to releases.

## **APPENDIX E: SPECIFICATION CONFERENCE CALLS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **FCR SSA Date of Death Match Information**

**Question 1:** At what point, during the month, will States receive their monthly matches from the SSA Date of Death file?

**Answer:** In order to allow States to run their end of month processing, the Death Match information will be sent to States sometime during the second or third week of each month, starting in December. The initial load will start on November 19 and end about ten days later. We will send out an E-Flash to notify States when the information will be sent.

**Question 2:** How often does SSA change or delete the Date of Death of participants?

**Answer:** The answer is indeterminate. However, approximately 1.5% of each month's updates will be changes and approximately 1.8% of each month's updates will be deletes.

**Question 3:** How Reliable Is The SSA Date Of Death Information?

**Answer:** SSA's numbering system has evolved over the years; unfortunately, we cannot guarantee the accuracy of the data that is received from SSA. The information received from the SSA database is the most reliable system we currently have available. The Date of Death information comes from many sources and each source must have a different level of reliability. In some cases the information is used to begin a benefit for a dependent; whereas, in other cases the information comes into SSA to cancel a benefit. We have no way of assessing each individual case for reliability. Further enforcement or collection action on the case will require further verification of death, assets or estates. The Death information only provides a lead to that end. In the majority of cases, it should be a good indication to take steps toward case closure.

**Question 4:** What sources provide SSA with the Death information?

**Answer:** According to SSA, Death information is received from funeral directors, SSA district offices, and family members.

**Question 5:** Why will States not receive SSA Death information on verified multiple SSNs?

**Answer:** It was decided that it would not be cost effective based upon the fact that the FCR stores only the Date of Death for the Primary SSN and the logic necessary to extract the "other" verified SSNs Date of Death, for the small percent of times this situation would occur, did not seem cost effective.

**Question 6:** Will States receive proactive SSA Death matches on their Legacy systems?

**Answer:** No, Date of Death information will only be returned to States via the FCR.

**Question 7:** A large percentage of the Date of Death matches received from the SSA Death Master file have the day of death with a value of 00. When the value of 00 is received from SSA, what will the FCR send back to the States? Will it be in the same format that is sent by SSA (00), or will it be converted to a valid value - 01 - as the default value?

**Answer:** A decision has been reached to return to the States the day of death of 01 when a day of death of 00 is received from SSA. This decision was reached in part because many States and the FCR require a valid date value in date fields.

**Question 8:** When a State sends an “add person” record and the FCR finds death information for the participant, will the participant be added to the FCR or rejected?

**Answer:** The participant will be added to the FCR.

### **FCR Proactive Match for Case Closure/Person Delete**

**Question 1:** Will the FCR proactively close participants as death information is received from SSA?

**Answer:** No, if the State decides to delete a participant due to the information that is received from the SSA Death match file, it must send a delete participant or case transaction.

**Question 2:** Will States be notified if a Non IV-D case is closed/participant is deleted on the FCR?

**Answer:** Yes, IV-D agencies will be notified of closure/delete transactions of non IV-D cases/participants. This approach is consistent with the way the FCR currently handles proactive matching.

### **FCR General**

**Question 1:** In the SSA Date of Death narrative overview, it says the match is performed regardless of the family violence indicator. Answer 9 of the Release Manifest Conference Call Q&A, says that "no proactive match data can be sent to the State for a person with a family violence indicator (FVI)." This seems contradictory. Please clarify the difference.

**Answer:** SSA Date of Death matches are sent to you regardless of the family violence indicator because the match is done with

the State and SSA. The State is aware of the FVI on the participant because the State submitted the person with the FVI. For the FCR proactive match on case closure or delete a person, proactive matching will not occur on a participant with the FVI because this is sharing information between States.

**Question 2:** How soon will FCR test data be available to the States?

**Answer:** The test data will be available the middle of October. Because of ongoing ACF changes to Web Posting Policy there is a temporary suspension of web postings. Initially, test data will be emailed or sent to contacts, and a later web posting will be considered if it is necessary.

### **CSENet & IRG**

**Question 1:** Is statistical data, specifically the number of wage withholdings to DFAS, available?

**Answer:** This information has been requested from Bonnie Walters of DFAS, and it will be made available to States once received.

**Question 2:** What do States need to do to resolve discrepancies in the State-to-State Enabled Communications Report that will be disseminated on September 17, 2001?

**Answer:** States will need to contact their colleagues if S (Send) or R (Receive) is found on the report for a specific State. States will also need to contact their CSENet 2000 technical representative with updated information for database updates.

**Question 3:** The CSENet 2000 closure codes do not reflect up-to-date closure codes. Will these closure codes be updated?

**Answer:** Changes to the closure codes to support Federal regulations were scheduled for implementation in October 2000 but the moratorium on changes was imposed prior to implementation. The changes to the closure codes are still open but they are not part of this release manifest because States would need to make programming changes that would be considered a major release. We will be evaluating options to lessen the programming impact on States so that it could meet the criteria for a minor release.

**Question 4:** The IRG and CSENet field lengths remain inconsistent. When will this be considered for a change?

**Answer:** We recognize that States have previously raised this issue and this change will be considered for a major release.

**Question 5:** States may need to enter their State in the NCP field of the ICR record layout. Are field definitions available or do States need to agree on what to put in that field?

**Answer:** The ICR file layout has not changed since it was first introduced to States and the work group did not address definitions for the fields.

**Question 6:** What are the Non IV-D case types used for?

**Answer:** CSI Transactions

**Question 7:** When will the CSENet 2000 case types and values that are no longer valid on the UIFSA forms be removed?

**Answer:** This change would require State programming and will be considered for a major release.

**Question 8:** What definitions are used for Former Assistance and Never Assistance?

**Answer:** The definitions are based on the UIFSA forms.

**Question 9:** Are there plans to use the OCSE Network for communication with SSA?

**Answer:** No, not at this time, however, it may be taken into consideration.

**Question 10:** Does OCSE have a definition for Regional offices?

**Answer:** The IRG team will be developing this definition in conjunction with the States during upcoming conference calls.

**Question 11:** How should States resolve the discrepancy on the CSENet 2000 State-to-State Communications Report if State A has sent a specific Function code to State B but State B has not sent that Function code to State A? Will State A be notified if State B contacts their CSENet 2000 technical representative to disable communications for that Function code?

**Answer:** States will need to contact their colleagues to resolve discrepancies, then the States contact their CSENet 2000 technical representative. If the CSENet technical representative receives contact from State B but no contact from State A, State A will be notified of State B's request.

**Question 12:** Should the version number field in the ICR Header Record Layout read 10000 or 00001?

**Answer:** 1 and four spaces or four spaces and 1.

**Question 13:** Why are Superior Courts not an option for the IRG drop down box?

**Answer:** This option has been added to the IRG Drop down box. This function will be on the County side of the address listing with the code of (SUP) Superior Court.

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**Question 1:** Has the Interface Guidance Document (IGD) been updated to reflect the November releases?

**Answer:** The most recent version of the IGD to be released in November will not reflect the new changes. The new release information will be in the subsequent version of the IGD with a probable release date in 2002.