

Federal Parent Locator Service

# **Software Changes**

## **Release Methodology**

Version: 2.0  
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Administration for Children and Families  
Office of Child Support Enforcement  
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## 1. RELEASE METHODOLOGY

Note: [Opening and closing brackets] surrounding text signify changed material.

### 1.1 Objective

The Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS) Release Methodology is a process that is used to schedule and implement consolidated changes to all of the federal systems. The Office of Child Support Enforcement (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 exchange partners to manage the impact of federal system changes to their respective programs. It incorporates the necessary notification process to ensure that all interface points, including states and other federal agencies, have adequate lead-time to prepare for, and implement required changes.

### 1.2 Background

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

- Child Support Enforcement Network (CSENet)
- [Electronic Income Withholding Orders (e-IWO)]
- Federal Case Registry (FCR)
- Federal Offset Program (FO)
- FPLS Legacy System
- [FPLS Portal]
- [Insurance Match (IM)]
- Intergovernmental Referral Guide (IRG)
- [Multistate Financial Institution Data Match (MSFIDM)]
- National Directory of New Hires (NDNH)
- [OCSE Network (OCSENet)]
- [Query Interstate Cases for Kids (QUICK)]

While the above systems are generally independent systems, there are interface points for each of them with the state Child Support Enforcement agencies (CSEA). Incorporating all of its maintenance and enhancement planning into a single process allows OCSE and states to better manage their own resources.

## 1.3 Release Types

OCSE has implemented a standardized release process. This process provides for two types of releases.

### 1.3.2 MINOR RELEASE

A minor release includes those items that should have little impact on OCSE's exchange 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
- Optional new elements, interface records, modules or functions

States may opt to postpone implementation of a minor release item until they are ready.

### 1.3.3 MAJOR RELEASE

A major release includes those items that have significant impact on OCSE's exchange partners, or must be done to ensure that processing continues. 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
- Mandatory implementation of a new interface protocol, and modifications to the existing state business rules that must be implemented on the release date

### 1.3.4 [NO IMPACT RELEASE ITEMS]

No impact releases are those that have no impact on state programming. They are shared as potential items of interest to states that do not require any changes on the states' part. No impact release items may be included in minor or major release cycles. Examples of no impact release items are:

- Adding new QUICK modules
- Enhancements to the *IRG Guide* to include Tribal contract information]

## 1.4 Release Guidelines

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

- A new release does not start until the prior release cycle has ended.
- A release cycle begins with the publication of a release manifest that includes a brief summary of all changes planned for the release. The manifest includes the state business requirements that are added or impacted by the proposed change. System contacts within the states are notified of the publication of a release manifest using an e-Flash. The release manifest is then available on the OCSE website within 30 days before the release specifications are published. During this period a technical teleconference will be conducted to brief the states on items that are included in the manifest, and to answer questions and accept comments.
- Specifications for each item in a release are published 90 days before the implementation date of a minor release, and 180 days in advance of implementation of a major release. Release specifications are also published on the OCSE website. State contacts are notified of the web posting of the specifications using an e-Flash.
- Releases are not governed by periodic, fixed calendar dates.
- Legislatively mandated program changes are incorporated into a normal release cycle, **if feasible**. However, emergency fixes or urgent program changes may require an emergency implementation.
- 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.

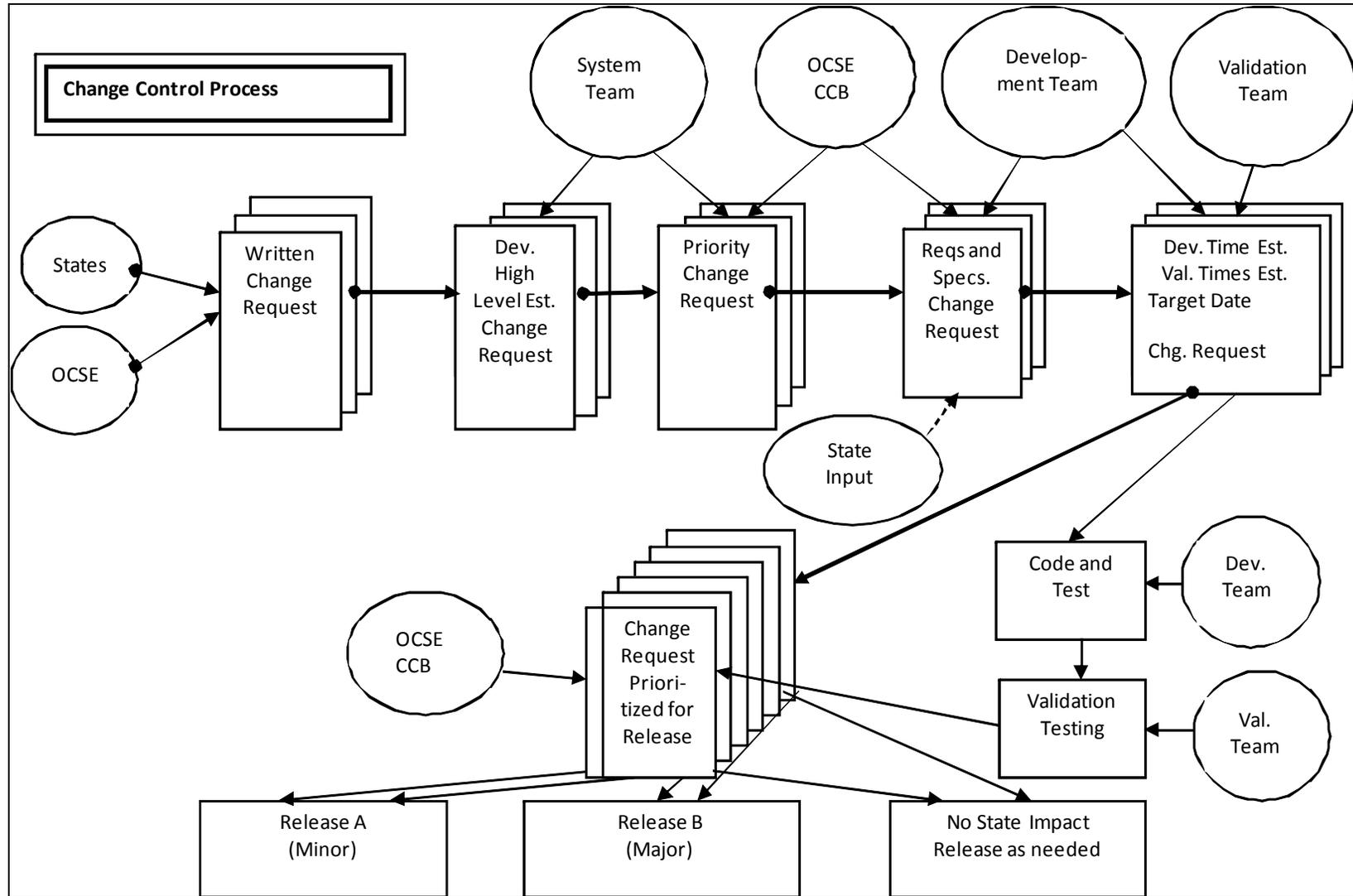
## 2. RELEASE SAMPLE SCHEDULES

<b>CHART 2-1: MINOR RELEASE – SAMPLE SCHEDULE OF STATE ACTIVITIES</b>	
Relative Day	Activities
<b>Pre-release Activity</b>	A state/OCSE workgroup analyzes the business requirements, specifications, record layouts, etc., to determine the system requirements for the release to the end-users.
Day 1	An e-Flash is disseminated that the <i>Release Manifest</i> is now on the OCSE's website.
Day1–Day 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comments and Question Period</li> <li>• Conference Call with state Technical Support</li> </ul>
Day 30	An e-Flash is disseminated that the <i>Release Specifications</i> are now on the OCSE's website.
Day 30–Day 120	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code, test and prepare for implementation.</li> <li>• Multistate conference calls with state Technical Support teams are held, if the nature of changes warrant.</li> <li>• Continue contact with Technical Support for comments or updates.</li> <li>• Provide test files if necessary/applicable.</li> </ul>
Day 80–Day 90	Notify your state Technical Support Liaison (when requested) about your implementation readiness.
Day 95–Day 119	Pilot test CSENet and OCSENet changes, if applicable.
Day 110	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OCSE's last opportunity to change the implementation date.</li> <li>• Receive an e-Flash reminder of implementation date.</li> </ul>
Day 120	Implementation

<b>CHART 2-2: MAJOR RELEASE – SAMPLE SCHEDULE OF STATE ACTIVITIES</b>	
Relative Day	Activities
<b>Pre-release Activity</b>	A state/OCSE workgroup analyzes the business requirements, specifications, record layouts, etc., to determine the system requirements for release to the end-users.
Day 1	An e-Flash is disseminated that the <i>Release Manifest</i> is now on the OCSE’s website.
Day1–Day 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comments and Question Period</li> <li>• Conference Call with State Technical Support</li> </ul>
Day 30	An e-Flash is disseminated that the <i>Release Specifications</i> are now on the OCSE’s website.
Day 30–Day 210	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code, test and prepare for implementation</li> <li>• Multistate conference call with the state Technical Support are held, if nature of changes warrant.</li> <li>• Continue contact with Technical Support for comments or updates.</li> <li>• Provide test files as necessary/applicable</li> </ul>
Day 150–Day 160	Notify your state Technical Support Liaison (when requested) about your implementation readiness.
Day 190–Day 209	Pilot test CSENet and OCSENet changes, if applicable.
Day 200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OCSE’s last opportunity to change the implementation date.</li> <li>• End Users receive an e-Flash reminder of implementation date.</li> </ul>
Day 210	Implementation

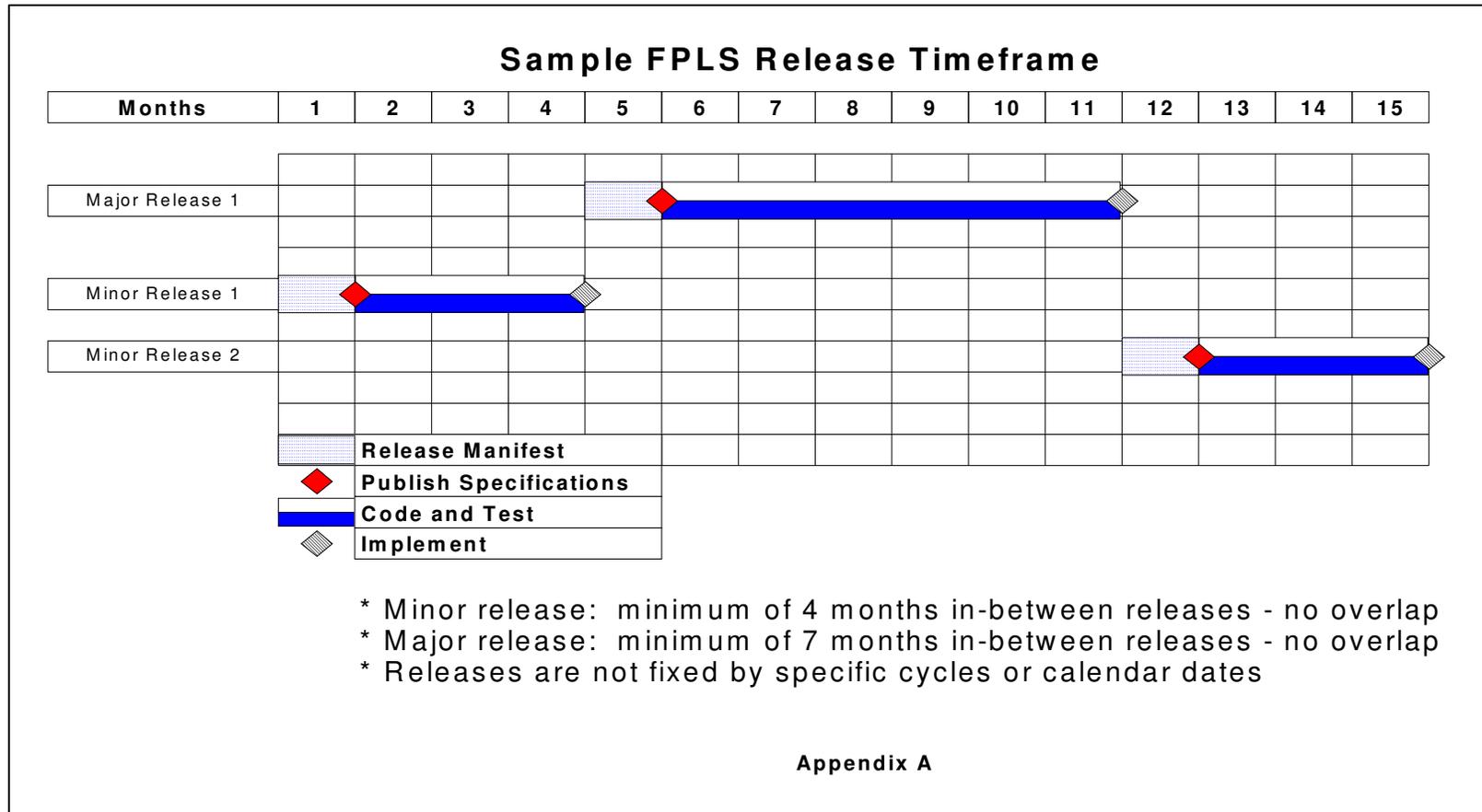
## **A. CHANGE CONTROL PROCESS**

**Figure A-1: The Change Control Process**



## B. RELEASE TIMEFRAME SAMPLE

Figure B-1: Release Timeframe Sample



## **C. MINOR RELEASE MANIFEST**

Note: [Opening and closing brackets] surrounding text signify changed material.

[Examples of a *Minor Release Manifest* can be found on the OCSE website.]

## **D. MAJOR RELEASE MANIFEST**

Note: [Opening and closing brackets] surrounding text signify changed material.

[Examples of a *Major Release Manifest* can be found on the OCSE website.]

## E. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Note: [Opening and closing brackets] surrounding text signify changed material.

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

Answer: The purpose of 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 (OAPO) Division of Federal Systems (DFS) maintains contact lists for the following systems:

- CSENet
- FCR
- Federal Offset
- [Insurance Match]
- IRG
- [MSFIDM]
- NDNH
- [QUICK]

With the exception of the NDNH list<sup>1</sup>, the announcement of the manifest, with a schedule and the detailed technical requirements (specifications), is released via an e-Flash to all of the contact lists mentioned above. In addition, the OCSE website contains the manifest and detailed requirements as they are released. E-Flashes are also used to announce multistate 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 that are contained in the manifest?

Answer: Each item in the manifest contains the system point of contact for that item. [Those system points of contact accept any questions from states. All questions and responses are published in one consolidated list. Also, your state's technical support liaison or end user support representative is always available to discuss any release questions you may have.]

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

Answer: The purpose of developing this release methodology is to make change releases 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 the 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

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<sup>1</sup> Because the NDNH contact list includes a significant number of CSEA and federal agencies, who are not involved with other federal Child Support Systems, NDNH-only releases are sent to them under separate cover.

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 is re-evaluated. If changes become necessary, e-Flashes are used to communicate the information, and refer contacts to the OCSE FPLS website 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, multistate conference calls are scheduled to walk through the manifest. There is also a walkthrough of the detailed specifications. The same contacts that receive the release notice are 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 to give them an opportunity to become familiar with new business requirements so 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 because 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: 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 9: 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 10: Are the days listed in the manifest schedule calendar or workdays?

Answer: Calendar days.

[Question 11: 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.]

## **F. SPECIFICATIONS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

Note: [Opening and closing brackets] surrounding text signify changed material.

[Examples of Questions and Answers that states raised at the state conference calls that relate to a Release can be found on the OCSE website.]

## G. [VERSION HISTORY]

Note: [Opening and closing brackets] surrounding text signify changed material.

[This chart presents a log of the changes that have been made to this document since its creation.]

<b>[CHART G-1: VERSION 2.0 REVISIONS</b>	
Revision Date	08/15/11
Implemented By	
Approved By	
Approval Date	
Part/Section/Chart/Figure	Description of Change
Section 1.2	The list of systems was updated.
Section 1.3.4	No Impact Release Items section was added.
Appendix C	A website was provided, rather than a sample.
Appendix D	A website was provided, rather than a sample.
Appendix E	The list of systems in Question 1's answer was updated. The answer to Question 2 was re-written. Question 11 and its Answer were added.
Appendix F	A website was provided, rather than a sample.]