

DCL-03-16

DATE: June 12, 2003

TO: STATE IV-D DIRECTORS

RE: Guidance on Closing Out a Child Support State Systems Project

Dear Colleague:

The purpose of this letter is to transmit guidance to states regarding submission of a final or "Close-out" Advance Planning Document (APD) upon completion, including federal certification of a statewide Automated Child Support Enforcement System (ACSES). The vast majority of states have indicated that they are compliant with the ACSES automation requirements of both the Family Support Act of 1988 (FSA) and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). The Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) has received numerous questions from state staff regarding whether an annual update of the APD for an ACSES project is still required after PRWORA certification, what needs to be submitted to close out the APD for the project, and what the requirements are for submitting an APD for systems expenditures after certification.

The guidance in this Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) answers questions that OCSE has received from state staff. Specifically, it provides guidance to help determine whether to continue, or close, APD for statewide ACSES, as well as the conditions that must be met for submission of a final or "close-out" APD. I am pleased that this guidance contains policy changes that address many of the recommendations from state staff related to updating the APD process. For example, our response to question # 12 eliminates the previous interpretation that "once an enhanced project, always an enhanced project" and thus raises the submission threshold for contracts from \$100,000 to \$5 million if competitively procured. Our response to question #10 provides a mechanism for states that are in maintenance and operation mode to close their projects even if the maintenance costs exceed \$5 million. The policy changes that are contained in this Dear Colleague letter are a first step in updating the APD process and achieving balanced oversight that reflects changes in technology. I am actively pursuing additional APD reforms that require regulatory revisions and hope to have further discussions with state officials on these reforms later this year.

I hope that you find the information helpful. If you have any questions about the close-out APD process, please contact the OCSE Information Technology Specialist assigned to your state, or Robin Rushton, Director, Division of State and Tribal Systems, at (202) 690-1244 or RRushton@acf.hhs.gov.

Sincerely,

Sherril Z. Heller, Ed. D.
Commissioner
Office of Child Support Enforcement

Guidance on Closing Out a Child Support State Systems Project (56KB MS Word
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