



Office of Children and Family Services

Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor

52 WASHINGTON STREET
RENSSELAER, NY 12144

Sheila J. Poole
Commissioner

Local Commissioners Memorandum

Transmittal:	21-OCFS-LCM-16
To:	Commissioners of Social Services Directors of Service
Issuing Division/Office:	Child Welfare and Community Services
Date:	June 11, 2021
Subject:	First-Level SCR Clearance Process
Suggested Distribution:	Directors of Social Services Child Protective Services Supervisors Foster Care Supervisors Adoption Supervisors LDSS Homefinders
Contact Person(s):	See section IV.
Attachments:	None

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	NYS Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
	96-LCM-29		SSL §424-a		18-OCFS-ADM-08

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Local Commissioners Memorandum (LCM) is to inform local departments of social services (LDSSs) of the procedures for conducting first-level database checks or clearances under section 424-a of the Social Services Law (SSL) through the New York Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR). The SCR is the only entity authorized to process first-level clearances.

II. Background

In 96-LCM-29, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) informed LDSSs that they could choose to assume responsibility of screening prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, or child care employees via a first-level clearance to determine whether they were subjects of an indicated report of child abuse or neglect.

In 2010, OCFS began a phased implementation of the Online Clearance System (OCS) and subsequently advised LDSSs that all required database checks conducted pursuant to section 424-a of the SSL were to be processed through that system going forward. The OCS is a web-based application that supports the mandate under section 424-a of the SSL to ask the SCR about the existence of any reports of child abuse/maltreatment indicated against an applicant prior to employment, or approval as foster/adoptive parents for licensure. The OCS process also provides for the proper initiation of all required due process rights for persons subject to such database checks. All notifications or response letters to the LDSS from the SCR regarding the requested clearance are transmitted through the OCS as well.

OCFS has become aware that some LDSSs have continued to process first-level SCR clearances without using the OCS. This LCM is to remind LDSSs that this is not an allowed practice. This LCM cancels 96-LCM-29 and any associated memoranda of understanding giving LDSSs authority to conduct such clearances, including but not limited to conducting a person search through CONNECTIONS.

This LCM removes the authority for the LDSSs to process first-level SCR clearances without using the OCS.

III. Program Implications

LDSSs must submit all SCR clearances to the SCR utilizing the OCS. Use of the OCS does not substitute for any other required tracking or documenting of database check submissions and the SCR response letters under statutory or regulatory standards for employment, approval, certification, or licensing. LDSSs continue to be required to retain copies of response letters in personnel files and foster/adoptive parent files.

To obtain additional information about the OCS, LDSS staff can send an email to the user assistance mailbox at: ocfs.sm.ocs.user.assistance@ocfs.ny.gov.

IV. Contacts

OCFS Statewide Clearance Unit – Cliff Pelton (518) 474-1567

Cliff.Pelton@ocfs.ny.gov

Buffalo Regional Office – Amanda Darling (716) 847-3145

Amanda.Darling@ocfs.ny.gov

Rochester Regional Office – Chris Bruno (585) 238-8201

Christopher.Bruno@ocfs.ny.gov

Syracuse Regional Office – Sara Simon (315) 423-1200

Sara.Simon@ocfs.ny.gov

Albany Regional Office – John Lockwood (518) 486-7078

John.Lockwood@ocfs.ny.gov

Westchester Regional Office – Sheletha Chang (845) 708-2498

Sheletha.Chang@ocfs.ny.gov

New York City Regional Office – Ronni Fuchs (212) 383-1788

Ronni.Fuchs@ocfs.ny.gov

Native American Services – Heather LaForme (716) 847-3123

Heather.LaForme@ocfs.ny.gov

/s/ Lisa Ghartey Ogundimu

Issued by:

Name: Lisa Ghartey Ogundimu

Title: Deputy Commissioner

Name of Office/Division: Division of Child Welfare and Community Services