SPECIAL EDITION

CHILDREN'S REGISTRY & INFORMATION SYSTEM

C·H·R·I·S plus

COMMENTS

You Thought of Everything!

This is a special edition of *CHRIS Comments*. We have included an interview with Susana Cossio which explains the capabilities of the new version of CHRIS - CHRIS Plus. Susana is a child find specialist at FDLRS South Associate Center. She has been there for 13 years, 3 of them as a school psychologist and 10 as a child find specialist. She has survived 4 major CHRIS upgrades. FDLRS South was selected to be the first test site for CHRIS Plus. Recently our CHRIS Comments field reporter caught up with Susana to see how she felt about the new program.

What were your first impressions of CHRIS Plus?

Awesome! It is obvious that it has taken a tremendous amount of careful planning and very hard work to create this program. I like the fact that, although it has some significant changes, it still has some of the features of CHRIS 2000. This will make it easier to learn to use the new program and to benefit from its

Do you feel this program will better meet your needs?

Yes, because it allows us to enter and to obtain a lot of additional useful information. For example, the bottom section of the Tracking Screen is split in half longitudinally so that we may see two lists of events: on the left side of the screen those which are Timeline Events (Transition

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Susana Cossio
Child Find Specialist
FDLRS/South Associate Center

You Thought of Everything!

Interview with Susana Cossio

Meeting, Screening Referral, Evaluation Referral, ESE Eligibility, FSP/IEP, and End Timeline) and on the right side of the screen those which are Service Coordination Events (all other events). This allows us to use the program for case management and service coordination as well as for becoming aware of the time that it takes to provide the services (the number of days between consecutive Timeline Events appears on the screen automatically). Moreover, improved Tracking Reports allow us to run a greater variety of reports, including some that contain more than one event, which makes it possible for us to extract a lot more information from the database.

When you move to the new program, will you change how your staff is doing data entry?

The actual mechanics of data entry are basically the same. In other words, moving from screen to screen and typing data in free text fields or selecting items from pull down menus in other fields will remain essentially the same. This is good because it will make it easier to use the new program. On the other hand, some events are new and some of the current events have been re-named and modified, so in this respect, data entry will have to be different. For example, there are now several "Referral" events which are used at different times. "Referral First Contact" is used only to enter information when the child is initially referred. Additional referrals are entered as "Referral In" events. The General Contact event has been re-named Contact Log and has been modified to include a pull-down menu field called Contact Reason. Additional reasons can be included in the menu by staff at individual FDLRS sites to meet their needs.

Do you think it will be a smooth transition for your staff?

I believe that with proper training the transition will be a smooth one. It will be very important to fully understand the similarities and differences between the current program and the new one. For example, an important difference is that events in the Tracking Screen are now displayed in two columns (Timeline and Service Coordination) and in descending order, with the most recent event on top. This will make it easier to find the latest information about the status of a case, but at the same time we will have to get used to reconstructing the sequence of events by scrolling upward from the bottom of the screen, rather than downward from the top of the screen, and by looking at the right and left sides of the screen.

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You Thought of Everything!

I think that getting used to these differences in the layout of the Tracking Screen may be the most difficult aspect of making the transition. And if this were to be the case, it would be great, because I don't think that it will be too difficult to get used to this different layout. A difference that will definitely help to make the transition easier is that the new program has many built-in "safety" features that make it impossible or very difficult to make some mistakes, such as entering in the Name field certain characters that do not belong in a person's name (ex: ,?>) or entering the same child in the database twice by mistake. These and other improvements will save a great amount of time, confusion and frustration and will help to make the transition to this system a very positive experience.

How do you feel so far about the conversion process?

All major conversion processes are painful, and we have just started the testing phase of this one. I know from my experience with previous conversions that it takes many hours of intense concentration to carefully check converted data. What makes it a positive experience is that the CHRIS support staff is excellent, very competent and receptive to all questions and suggestions. So in spite of the hard work and long hours that all of us put in, I feel good about the conversion process because we work together, in a very cooperative and pleasant atmosphere, and we see progress as a result of our efforts.

Why were you selected to be a test site?

The fact that FDLRS/South is located in Miami, where the CHRIS support staff is also located, facilitates access and communication throughout the piloting phase of the project. Moreover, I have been told that the FDLRS/South Child Find staff is well-known for being very thorough and careful in entering and checking data. We have always requested to be the last site to upgrade, because our database is very large. But we were asked to be the first ones to convert this time precisely because we have many different types of cases and scenarios which make converting our data a great "challenge" (or more accurately a great""nightmare"). The CHRIS support staff feels that if they are able to convert our data properly, they will run into fewer problems when they try to convert the data of other sites. We hope that they are right!

Would you add or change anything?

Nothing other than things that may become evident as we check the converted data. CHRIS Plus does have a tremendous number of improvements over CHRIS 2000 and it should make our work a lot easier. It gives us timeline data and a lot more flexibility in case management and in producing reports that can help direct our efforts towards improving our services. The CHRIS support staff and Technical Assistance Work Group (TAWG) seem to have thought of everything when designing CHRIS Plus! We are certainly eager to finish the conversion process and to begin using the new CHRIS!

New CHRIS New Name

Introducing: CHRIS Plus

We received several responses to our request for a new name for the new version of CHRIS. The winning name selected by TAWG was: CHRIS Plus. Gail Brown from FDLRS Crown submitted this name. He will receive five CHRIS points. Thank you for all the other submissions. Two CHRIS points will be awarded to each CHRIS user that made a submission.

Have You Registered Yet?

Don't Miss the Statewide Child Find Meeting 2003

FDLRS Managers, Child Find Specialists and CHRIS users.

To register and for more information go to www.chris.miami.edu

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660313

University of Miami
Department of Psychology
5665 Ponce de Leon Blvd.
Flipse Building Room #250
Coral Gables, Florida 33146-0721