

ACF

Administration
for Children
and Families

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Administration on Children, Youth and Families

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4. Key Words: Caseworker Visits; Data Collection and Reporting

PROGRAM INSTRUCTION

TO: State Agencies and Territories administering or supervising the administration of title IV-B, subpart 1 of the Social Security Act; Children's Bureau Regional Program Managers

SUBJECT: Monthly caseworker visits data for Fiscal Year (FY) 2007.

**LEGAL AND
RELATED:**

The Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (Public Law (P.L.) 109-288); title IV-B, subpart 1, sections 422 and 424 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 622 and 624); ACYF-CB-IM-06-05, issued December 7, 2006; ACYF-CB-PI-07-05, issued February 28, 2007.

PURPOSE: This Program Instruction (PI) provides additional guidance to States regarding the collection and reporting of data on monthly visits to foster children conducted by caseworkers.

INFORMATION: In passing the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-288), Congress noted in its findings that "...CFSRs also found a strong correlation between frequent caseworker visits with children and positive outcomes for these children, such as timely adherence of permanency and other indicators of child well-being." P.L. 109-288 was signed into law on September 28, 2006, and included both requirements and funding for caseworker visits in title IV-B of the Social Security Act (the Act).

Under Section 424(e) (1) of the Act, a State cannot receive FY 2008 title IV-B, subpart 1 funds unless it has provided fiscal year 2007 data which shows:

- the percentage of children in foster care under the responsibility of the State who were visited on a monthly basis by the caseworker handling the case of the child; and
- the percentage of visits that occurred in the residence of the child.

As required by ACF-CB-PI-07-05, States must report final, actual data on children (or results based on a sample) who were visited each month they were in foster care to ACF by October 31, 2007. Although P.L. 109-288 was passed two days before the beginning of the Federal Fiscal Year for which data was required, States were expected to be aware of and begin planning to implement this and other requirements under the law.

As also noted in ACYF-CB-PI-07-05, visits must be made by the child's caseworker on a monthly basis, which is defined as one visit per calendar month. Only those months in which a child has been placed in foster care (as defined in 45 CFR 1355.20) for the entire month should be reviewed to determine if a visit had been made during that month. If a State considers a child who has gone home for a trial home visit as being in foster care, then the time the child is at home must be included when determining if visits had been made each month. Months during which a child or youth have run away should not be counted.

A State can define who a caseworker is for the purposes of the title IV-B caseworker provisions with the caveat that the person must in some way be responsible for either the case or for visitation of the child. States may find further policy guidance in the title IV-B section of the Child Welfare Policy Manual at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/j2ee/programs/cb/laws_policies/laws/cwpm/index.jsp

A "child's residence" is defined as the home where the child is residing, whether in-state or out-of-state, and can include the foster home, child care institution, or the home from which the child was removed if the child is on a trial home visit.

INSTRUCTIONS: Reporting Monthly Caseworker Visit Data for FY 2007

The State agency must collect the following data for the 12-month period beginning October 1, 2006 through September 30, 2007, and use this data to calculate the required percentages:

- 1) the aggregate number of children served in foster care,
- 2) the number of children visited *each and every* calendar month¹ that they were in foster care,
- 3) the total number of visit months² for children who were visited *each and every* month that they were in foster care, and
- 4) the total number of visit months in which at least one child visit occurred in the child's residence³.

¹ Children with more than one episode are considered as one child.

² The following simplified example describes how to calculate visit months:

If 5 children were visited *each and every* calendar month they were in foster care during the period and 1 child was in foster care 12 calendar months, 2 children were in foster care 11 calendar months, and 2 children were in foster care 9 calendar months, the total visit months is calculated as: (1 child*12 months) + (2 children*11 months)+ (2 children*9 months) = 52 visit months. We emphasize that months and not individual visits are totaled; therefore, if a child has more than one visit in a calendar month, that is considered one visit month.

³ In other words, if a child had three visits in one month, the visit month is added to this total if at least one of the three visits occurred in the child's residence.

States should perform the following calculations to obtain:

- The percentage of children in foster care who were visited during *each and every* calendar month -- determined by dividing the number of children who were visited *each and every* full calendar month that they were in care as reported by the State by the number of children served in foster care during FY 2007. The quotient is multiplied by 100.
- The percentage of visits that occurred in the residence of the child -- determined by dividing the number of visit months that occurred in the child residences by the total number of visit months for children visited *each and every* full calendar month they were in care as reported by the State. This quotient is multiplied by 100.

The percentages must be submitted in either electronic or hard copy to the Children's Bureau's Regional Program Managers (see attachment A) by October 31, 2007. They will serve as the baseline data for States to develop their yearly improvement target percentages (benchmarks) and as a guide to develop what steps a State will take in order to achieve a 90% threshold of children in foster care being visited monthly by their caseworker and ensure that the majority of the visits will be in the child's residence by October 1, 2011. The yearly benchmarks must be developed in consultation with ACF, for each of the fiscal years through FY 2010 and presented to ACF by June 30, 2008.

Note that in accordance with ACYF-CB-PI-07-05, States are required to:

- 1) describe the information collection method that the State has developed to track and report monthly caseworker visit data (i.e., how the data is to be obtained – through SACWIS, case review, or a sample of cases reviewed (describe the sampling plan); spreadsheets or other specialized tracking systems sent to caseworkers at the beginning of the fiscal year for specific visitation recording, etc). States will have to collect each subsequent year's data in the same way they collect the baseline data for FY 2007, unless a proposed alternative methodology is expected to improve the accuracy of the data. Said proposal is subject to the approval of ACF; and
- 2) describe State standards for the content and frequency of caseworker visits for children in foster care which assure that children are visited on a monthly basis.

These descriptions must be included as part of the Annual Progress and Services Report that is due by June 30, 2007, and are subject to the approval of ACF.

INQUIRIES: Children's Bureau Regional Program Managers



Joan E. Ohl
Commissioner

Attachment
Children's Bureau Regional Program Managers

Children's Bureau Regional Program Managers

Attachment A

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Region X - Seattle

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States

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