Adoption and Foster Care

AFCARS

Analysis and Reporting System

**Technical Bulletin #3
Footnote Guidance**

REVISED: March, 2000[1,2,3]

States may include footnotes regarding AFCARS data with each submission. This technical bulletin suggests the types of information that States may wish to include in explaining their AFCARS data, and provides the format for submitting footnotes.

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[1] Initial issuance date July 26, 1994, as Technical Bulleting #3, Optional Explanatory Footnotes and May 15, 1995, as Technical Bulletin #11, Questions to Guide Footnote Preparation.

[2] Technical Bulletin #3, Optional Explanatory Footnotes, revised for century date format August 21, 1996, see ACYF-IM-CB-96-08, issued April 17, 1996.

[3] Revised for change in race categories, see ACYF-CB-99-01, issued January 27, 1999 and 65 FR 4019.

I. OVERVIEW

States may include "footnotes" which comment or clarify the AFCARS data in any submission. This technical bulletin (TB) suggests the types of subject matter that may be covered in a footnote and provides the format for submitting footnotes.

ACF will include the footnotes in any distribution of the data set. The intent of these footnotes is to provide additional information for understanding the State's child welfare data.

I. FOOTNOTE GUIDANCE

Footnotes can take one of two forms: a general comment, or a specific clarification related to the State's data for an AFCARS element. Footnotes with general comments are not related to a specific data element, but are applicable to all data elements. A clarification footnote relates to a specific data element. In deciding what to footnote, States should follow a rule of reason, and identify and discuss significant issues that may lead to misinterpretation of the data.

Footnotes should not give the appearance of being a research finding, or report a possible explanation for an occurrence in the data. For instance, a general footnote should <u>not</u> simply comment that "Numbers of children in care may be off because the State went on line with a new information system." The footnote should instead provide more definitive information such as "State began information system conversion one month into the AFCARS reporting period, therefore, the substitute care population reported represents an estimated 85% of children in care."

A. Listed in this section are examples of the two types of footnotes. THE EXAMPLES BELOW ARE FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY:

1. Examples of General Comment Footnotes:

* Approximately 5% of the State's substitute care population includes children in the juvenile justice system.

* State's data was extracted from an information system that is under development.

* State's adoption data represents approximately 90% of all adoptions finalized during the reporting period as all information from the court system has not been received at the time of data submission.

*2. Examples of Specific Data Element Footnotes for Foster Care***:**

Data element #06 (Child's Date of Birth)

- All children identified as 18 years or older are participating in an independent living program or are still in school.

Data element #41 (Child's Current Placement Setting)

- Of the children identified as residing in institutional placements, approximately 80% are in emergency shelters.

Data element #43 (Child's Current Case Plan Goal)

- State does not have a guardianship program in place.

*3. Examples of Specific Data Element Footnotes for Adoption***:**

Data element #04 (State Agency Involvement in Adoption)

- Any record answered as a "no", is one in which the State agency completed a home study only.

B. Footnotes On Race Data Changes:

Beginning with the data submission for the period ending March 31, 2000, States' will be required to submit data utilizing the new race format (see ACYF-CB-PI-99-01, issued January 27, 1999 and 65 FR 4019). One of the new requirements is the separate reporting of "Asian/Pacific Islander" into "Asian" and "Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander". States are encouraged to footnote the changes necessary to meet the new "race" requirements. FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY, here are two examples of footnotes on race data changes:

- Data includes 300 records formerly categorized as "Asian/Pacific Islander" which have all been mapped to the new "Asian" category.

- Data includes 300 records formerly categorized as "Asian/Pacific Islander". State has determined that 270 of these children were Asian and the remaining 30 Pacific Islander, therefore 270 of these records were mapped to the new "Asian" category, and the remaining 30 were mapped to the new "Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander" category. All new entrants during the report period were categorized according to the new categories.

II. FOOTNOTE RECORD TRANSMISSION AND LAYOUT

The explanatory footnotes may be appended to the end of the required AFCARS file, or be submitted separately from the data file as an ASCII file. This file may contain one or more footnotes with general comments on adoption, general comments on foster care, specific comments on the adoption detailed data elements, and specific comments on the foster care detailed data elements. States may submit multiple footnotes in each category.

EVERY FOOTNOTE IN THE FILE MUST BEGIN WITH:

> A two character header of two percent signs "%%" and

> An eleven character identifier:
>> - Characters 1-2: State two digit FIPS code.
>> - Characters 3-8: Report period ending date in the format: ccyymm
>> - Character 9: "A" for Adoption footnotes.
>>> "F" for Foster Care footnotes.
>>> "G" for Adoption Aggregate footnotes.
>> - Characters 10-11: The two-digit data element number reference to the detailed submission file ("00" is designated for general comments).

> *Examples*:

> "%%44199803A00" indicates that this footnote:
> - is from Rhode Island ("44"),
> - for the reporting period ending in March 1998 ("199803"), and
> - refers to an adoption ("A") general comment ("00").

> "%%56199909F08" indicates that this footnote:
> - is from Wyoming ("56"),
> - for the reporting period ending in September 1999 ("199909"), and
> - refers to the foster care ("F") race data element #08 ("08").

NOTE: The body or text of the footnote may not exceed 240 characters.

EVERY FOOTNOTE IN THE FILE MUST END WITH A CARRIAGE RETURN/LINE FEED.

Explanatory Footnote File Format Summary Table

Each record in the footnote file should be formatted as follows:

Data Element Description	Number of Characters	Allowable Values/ Format
Header	2	%%
State FIPS Code	2	Valid FIPS Code for State
Report Period Ending Date	6	CCYYMM
File Reference	1	"A" for Adoption "F" for Foster Care "G" for Adoption Aggregate
Data Element Number	2	00-37 for Adoption 00-66 for Foster Care 00-24 for Adoption Aggregate
Footnote Text	Not to exceed 240	Alphanumeric
End of Record Marker	1	Carriage Return/Line Feed (CR/LF)
NOTE: Including CR/LR, each footnote record may NOT exceed a total of 254 characters.		

Here is an example of a formatted footnote for foster care data element #58: Reason for Discharge:

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