

Richard Anderson, Director  
Division of Child and Family Services  
Utah Department of Human Services  
120 North 200 West, Suite 225  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84103

Dear Mr. Anderson:

From July 11 - 15, 2005, staff of the Children's Bureau, ACF Region VIII, and the Office of Information Services (OIS) conducted an Assessment Review of Utah's Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). The AFCARS data used for the review was from the report period October 1, 2004 - March 31, 2005 (2005A). I have summarized the major findings from the AFCARS review in this letter. Enclosed please find the full report.

The AFCARS assessment review evaluates two areas: the AFCARS general requirements (reporting populations and technical standards) and the data elements. Information collected on these areas is combined and a rating factor is assigned to the general requirements and each data element. A scale of one (does not meet AFCARS standards) to four (fully meets AFCARS standards) is used to assign a factor to each element.

The State was found to be in full compliance with the technical standards. The State is not in full compliance with two foster care population standards and one of the adoption population standards. The team identified some technical changes/modifications that are needed to the data entry screens and the program code that extracts the data.

Most of the technical corrections are relatively minor and in the case of one area, conditions associated with removal, one correction affects 15 foster care elements. This requires a change to the screen that collects this data. Your staff shared during the on-site review this correction was already being addressed. Another area that affects several data elements (seven) is in regard to the demographic information on foster parents. The staff indicated that while they are able to track the placements of children placed with foster parents in private agencies that have multiple types of settings (foster homes, group homes, etc.), the system is not able to accurately collect these foster parents demographic data. This is another change the staff shared is in the development/implementation stage. The third area that requires more than minor corrections is in the area of case plan goals. There were State goal options that were incorrectly mapped to the AFCARS values. The staff also shared that this module is being improved and should provide for more accurate collection of permanency goals.

The federal team also reviewed the program code used by the Division of Juvenile Justice Services during the post site – visit phase. There are several areas identified for correction. These findings are incorporated into the finding matrices and the improvement plans.

Many of the other findings pertain to the timely and accurate entry of the data into the system in order for it to be extracted and represent an accurate picture of the State's child welfare practice. In order to achieve improved data quality, additional training for caseworkers and monitoring by supervisors to ensure accurate data entry may be necessary.

I want to acknowledge the proactive approach your staff have taken to correcting both technical and data entry issues as a result of this review and prior technical assistance provided to the State by the National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data and Technology (NRC-CWDT). We have incorporated into the final report the changes made by your staff after the on-site review.

You should note that as a result of the technical corrections made to the system, the State's semi-annual data submission may fail to meet the missing data standard. In order to ensure that the data are complete and accurate, the agency must require workers to enter the data and assess its validity prior to submitting it to ACF. To do so, the State may utilize the management reports created by the agency, as well as the Data Quality Utility and the Frequency Utility posted on the Children's Bureau's website.

The enclosed documents include the final report of the on-site review, the final findings of the general requirements and data elements, and the AFCARS Improvement Plan for the general requirements and the data elements. Within 30 calendar days after the receipt of this report and the attached AFCARS Improvement Plan, the State staff must submit the Improvement Plan electronically to the ACF Regional Office and the Children's Bureau with estimated completion dates for the tasks identified in the Improvement Plan. An electronic copy of the final matrices will be e-mailed to your staff. The State should provide electronic quarterly updates of its progress to the Regional Office.

Test cases will be provided to the State once all of the required modifications are completed. Dates for the submission of the extracted test data file will be arranged with the ACF Regional Office and OIS. Once ACF and the State agree that the quality of the data is acceptable, the AFCARS Improvement Plan will be considered finished, and a letter will be sent to the State from the Children's Bureau confirming this fact. The letter will include a summary of the actions taken by the State and the completed AFCARS Improvement Plan.

Additionally, the State's plan for implementing the changes to the system and for caseworker training must be included in the State's title IV-B Annual Progress and Services Report as part of the information required in 45 CFR 1357.15(t) and 45 CFR 1357.16(a)(5). Also, the State's Annual Planning Document must be updated as applicable and submitted to the Division of State Systems.

The ACF Regional Office will work with the State to determine if technical assistance is needed, and available, to implement the AFCARS Improvement Plan. The State may obtain technical

assistance from the Children's Bureau's NRC-CWDT. If you wish to request on-site technical assistance from the NRC-CWDT, please contact your ACF Regional Office.

In closing, I would like to thank the staff who participated in the review for their hard work and commitment to collecting accurate and reliable AFCARS data. If you have any questions regarding the report, please contact Angelina Palmiero at (202) 205-7240.

Sincerely,

Susan Orr, Ph.D.  
Associate Commissioner  
Children's Bureau

Enclosures

cc: Navina Forsyth, Supervisor Data & Research Unit, UT DCFS  
Jack Green, SACWIS Administrator, UT DCFS  
Thomas Sullivan, Regional Administrator, ACF Region VIII  
Paul Hasz, ACF Office of Information Services  
Angelina M. Palmiero, M.S.W, AFCARS  
Terry Watt, Director, Division of State Systems  
Jerry Milner, National Child and Family Services Review Team