

Michael J. Willden
Director
Nevada Department of Health and Human Services
505 East King Street, Room 600
Carson City, NV 89701-3708

Dear Mr. Willden:

From March 6 – 10, 2006, staff of the Children’s Bureau, ACF Region IX, and the Office of Information Services (OIS) conducted an Assessment Review of Nevada’s Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). The AFCARS data used for the review was from the report period April 1 - September 30, 2006 (2005B). 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 zero (the system is not collecting the AFCARS data elements and the data are not transmitted) to four (fully meets AFCARS standards) is used to assign a factor to each element.

The review team found the State to be mostly in compliance with the AFCARS standards. The team identified some technical changes/modifications that are needed to the data entry screens and the program code that extracts the data. The most significant finding is in the area of improved data quality and timely entry of the information into the information system so that it represents 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. The breakdown of the rating factors for the general requirements and the foster care and adoption elements is listed in the tables below.

General Requirements

Rating Factor	Foster Care Population (8)	Adoption Population (3)	Technical Requirements (16)
4	5	2	13
3	1	0	2
2	1	1	1
1	0	0	0

Data Elements

Rating Factor	Foster Care (66)	Adoption (37)	Total
4	12 (18%)	7 (19%)	19 (19%)
3	36 (55%)	21 (57%)	57 (55%)
2	16 (24%)	9 (24%)	25 (24%)
1	2 (5%)	0	2 (2%)

There are two significant areas that the State needs to place on a high priority status: 1) the completion of the interfaces with the titles IV-A and IV-D information systems; and 2) the inclusion of the entire population under the responsibility of the designated single State titles IV-B and IV-E agency. The State is not currently reporting the complete juvenile justice population placed in its responsibility for care and placement once the child is in a community-based placement setting. Additionally, these children must be provided the protections required under title IV-B, section 422(b)(10) of the Social Security Act. It appears that this is not currently happening.

You should note that as a result of 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 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 dues dates for completing 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.

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).

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: Fernando Serrano, Division Administrator, Division of Child and Family Services
Diane Comeaux, Deputy Administrator, Division of Child and Family Services
Teresa Anderson, Deputy Administrator, Division of Child and Family Services
Sharon Fujii, Regional Administrator, ACF Region IX
Angelina M. Palmiero, M.S.W., AFCARS
Terry Watt, Director, Division of State Systems
Jerry Milner, National Child and Family Services Review Team