



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

# **Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS)**

## **GUIDE TO AN AFCARS ASSESSMENT REVIEW**

5<sup>th</sup> Edition

December, 2012

## **PREFACE**

The Children's Bureau is committed to the collection of quality data to be used for policy development, program management and evaluation at the State, Tribal and Federal levels. The use of the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data is legislatively and programmatically significant for the administration and oversight of programs under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act.

The Children's Bureau created the AFCARS Assessment Review process to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the foster care and adoption data. During these reviews, the Federal review team assesses the efficiency and effectiveness of a title IV-E agency's data collection, extraction, and reporting processes, and provides intensive technical assistance to title IV-E agency staff responsible for those processes.

The Children's Bureau produced this *Guide to an AFCARS Assessment Review* to provide guidance to title IV-E agency child welfare program and technology staff regarding the AFCARS Assessment Review process. Revisions in this edition are based on the Children's Bureau's experience in conducting AFCARS Assessment Reviews since the Guide was first issued in April 2002. This edition was also modified to incorporate changes made by the publication of the Interim Final Rule (IFR)<sup>1</sup> that implemented statutory provisions related to the Tribal title IV-E program.

While the Guide is designed to provide guidance on an AFCARS Assessment Review, its contents is also helpful for those developing new information systems or other processes to collect the AFCARS data. It can be used as a technical assistance document that title IV-E agencies can use with their information technology staff or contractors. We encourage all agencies to use the information in the Guide as well as in the Appendices as a self-assessment tool and to support the development of the business requirements for developing an AFCARS data collection methodology.

The Children's Bureau welcomes comments and suggestions from those using this guide. Comments may be sent to:

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The *Guide to an AFCARS Assessment Review* is available for download on the Children's Bureau's web site.

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<sup>1</sup> 77 FR 896 (January 6, 2012)

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### A. OVERVIEW

The Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, Children's Bureau provides national leadership and direction in planning, managing, and coordinating the administration and financing of a broad range of comprehensive and supportive programs for children and families, including child welfare programs. These programs are, in large part, carried out by State, Tribal and local agencies. The Children's Bureau retains responsibility to monitor and evaluate the programs to ensure they are being operated consistent with Federal law and regulation. This includes the assessment of statutorily required data and automated information systems operated by title IV-E child welfare agencies that support the programs under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act (the Act).

Title IV-E agencies are required by Federal law and regulation to collect data on children in foster care and those who have been adopted with title IV-E agency involvement. The Federal information system that collects and processes this data is known as the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). Title IV-E agencies that fail to meet any of the standards set forth in 45 CFR 1355.40(a-d) are considered not to be in substantial compliance (i.e., are lacking in substantial conformity) with the requirements of the title IV-E plan, and are notified in writing of their noncompliance<sup>2</sup>.

The Children's Bureau is committed to providing assistance to title IV-E agencies to support the collection of quality adoption and foster care data. To this end, the AFCARS Assessment Review (AAR) was developed to evaluate the accuracy and reliability of the foster care and adoption data. The title IV-E agency's methodology for collecting and reporting of the AFCARS data is assessed against the AFCARS requirements in the Federal regulation, policy issuances, and the AFCARS Technical Bulletins. A second focus of the AAR is to assess timeliness, accuracy, and quality of data entry by caseworkers.

The Children's Bureau has produced the *Guide to an AFCARS Assessment Review* (the Guide) to provide information to child welfare program and system staff regarding the AAR process. The Children's Bureau continues to evaluate and improve the review process. As such, this is the fifth edition of the Guide. The revisions in it are based on the Children's Bureau's experience conducting AARs and implementing AFCARS Improvement Plans (AIP) since the Guide was first issued in April 2002. Revisions were made in this edition to incorporate changes made by the publication of the Interim Final Rule (IFR) published January 6, 2012. The IFR implemented statutory provisions related to the Tribal title IV-E program. One of the changes was to the Federal regulations at 45 CFR 1355.40, which were amended to apply the same regulatory requirements for data collection and reporting to a Tribal title IV-E agency as are applied to a State title IV-E agency.

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<sup>2</sup> The Administration for Children and Families is not assessing AFCARS penalties at this time (see ACYF-CB-IM-02-03) and will not take penalties until new, final AFCARS regulations are issued implementing P.L. 108-145 (The Adoption Promotion Act of 2003).

The Guide can also be used by title IV-E agencies as a self-assessment tool. The appendices contain the general requirements and data element standards that are required in order for a title IV-E agency's AFCARS data to be compliant. Additionally, the charts contain questions that are used during the review to assess whether the title IV-E agency is collecting and reporting the correct information. Title IV-E agencies are encouraged to review this information against their own data collection processes to ascertain whether the AFCARS data accurately reflect the title IV-E agency's child welfare business process and meet the AFCARS standards. This guide can be used at any stage in the development of the title IV-E agency's process for collecting the AFCARS data. The title IV-E agency may want to contact the National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data and Technology (NRC-CWDT) for assistance in conducting a self-assessment.

Finally, the Guide ensures that the same criteria are applied equally to all title IV-E agencies, that Federal AARs are conducted in a consistent manner, and that they are well-documented and substantiated.

## **B. AUDIENCE**

The Guide is intended to assist title IV-E agency staff to prepare, plan, and participate in the AAR. Title IV-E agency staff who are involved with the assessment review include both information technology and program staff. Additionally, individuals who represent other divisions or agencies during the AAR may also find the information in this Guide helpful.

## **C. BACKGROUND**

### **1. Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS)**

AFCARS is a data collection system that was created, in part, to make available national information on children in foster care, their families, the types of foster care settings, and adopted children. In 1986, Congress amended title IV-E of the Social Security Act (the Act) by adding section 479, which required the Federal government to institute a foster care and adoption data collection system. In response to the law, requirements for title IV-E agencies to report adoption and foster care data to a Federal system were implemented under Federal regulations at 45 CFR 1355.40. AFCARS was created to meet the requirements of these regulations. Under AFCARS, title IV-E agencies collect case-level information on all children in foster care for whom the title IV-E child welfare agency has responsibility for placement, care, or supervision and those who have been adopted with title IV-E agency involvement. Title IV-E agencies are required to submit AFCARS data semi-annually to the Children's Bureau in accordance with 45 CFR 1355.40<sup>3</sup>.

Effective October 1, 2009, section 479B(b) of the Act authorizes direct Federal funding of Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations, and Tribal consortia that choose to operate a foster care, adoption assistance and, at Tribal option, a kinship guardianship assistance program under title IV-E of the Act. The Federal regulations at 45 CFR 1355.40 were amended to apply the same regulatory

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<sup>3</sup> AFCARS report periods are based on the Federal fiscal year. Report periods are October 1 – March 31 (data are due by May 15) and April 1 – September 30 (data are due by November 14).

requirements for data collection and reporting to a Tribal title IV-E agency as are applied to a State title IV-E agency.

The Children's Bureau uses AFCARS data for a number of reasons, including:

- determining and assessing outcomes for children and families;
- responding to Congressional requests for current data on children in foster care or those who have been adopted;
- responding to questions and requests from other Federal departments and agencies, including the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the DHHS Office of Inspector General (OIG), national advocacy organizations, States, Tribes, and other interested organizations;
- short- and long-term budget projections;
- trend analyses and short- and long-term planning; and
- targeting areas for greater or potential technical assistance efforts, for discretionary service grants, research and evaluation, and regulatory change.

Additionally, the AFCARS data are used specifically in the:

- Adoption Incentives Program;
- Child Welfare Outcomes Report;
- Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR);
- Title IV-E Eligibility Reviews; and
- Allotment of funds in the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP).

## 2. Data Quality

The AFCARS data submissions are subject to a minimal number of edit checks, as listed in Appendix E of 45 CFR 1355. These edit checks are able to determine substantial compliance only for:

- the timely submission of the data files;
- the timeliness of data entry of certain data elements; and
- whether the data meets a 90% level of tolerance for missing data and internal consistency.

These edit checks are an important first step to ensuring the collection of quality data. While a title IV-E agency may be in compliance with the semi-annual data submissions, there may still be a need to improve its AFCARS data for accuracy, reliability, and validity. The edit checks are not able to determine whether a title IV-E agency is submitting accurate and reliable data to the Children's Bureau that meet all of the AFCARS requirements. For example, the edit checks cannot assess the AFCARS data files to determine whether the title IV-E agency submitted data on the correct foster care population for the correct time period required by the regulations. Also, the edit checks cannot determine whether the title IV-E agency has correctly collected the necessary data and mapped it to the appropriate AFCARS values.

A State's Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) must include a description of the quality assurance system (QA) it will use to regularly assess the quality of the services under the CFSP and assure that there will be measures to address identified problems (45 CFR 1357.15(u)). In addition to the CFSP requirement, title IV-E requires title IV-E agencies to monitor and conduct periodic evaluations of activities conducted under the title IV-E program and to implement standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of such children (sections 471(a)(7) and 471(a)(22) of the Act), respectively. As outlined in regulations at 45 CFR 1355.34(c)(3), the first two rounds of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process have assessed whether a State is in substantial conformity with these requirements to implement standards to ensure that children in foster care placements are provided quality services (section 471(a)(22)) and to operate an identifiable and well functioning quality assurance system, as described in the CFS.

On August 27, 2012, the Children's Bureau issued an Information Memorandum on Continuous Quality Improvement in title IV-B and IV-E programs (ACYF-CB-IM-12-07). The purpose of this IM is to provide State title IV-B and IV-E child welfare agencies with information on Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) systems. While the Children's Bureau considers how to revise the CFSR process, States are advised to maintain their QA systems and enhance them through a continuous quality improvement approach. A continuous quality improvement approach allows States to measure the quality of services provided by determining the impact those services have on child and family level outcomes and functioning and the effectiveness of processes and systems in operation in the State and/or required by Federal law.

One functional component to a CQI system that the IM addresses is quality data collection. While the IM is specifically addressed to States in the context of establishing and maintaining a CQI system, the data quality component is applicable to all title IV-E and IV-B agencies. In order to demonstrate quality data collection, the agency needs to ensure it has accurate, complete, and timely data that is consistent in definition and usage across the agency. Some steps that an agency can incorporate as part of quality data collection include, but are not limited to:

- Fully review and utilize the appendices to this Guide, which include detailed information on the AFCARS elements and requirements.
- Correct data collection and reporting based on the findings from the AAR.
- Integrate the data quality findings from the AAR into the agency's data quality assurance process.
- Implement ongoing training and supervisory and administrative oversight to improve the accuracy, timeliness, and completion of the data.
- Ensure that the agency's training and written policies include expectations for documentation in the data collection system.
- Regularly use federal data utilities to proactively monitor data quality and completeness,
- Regularly use agency management reports that include AFCARS, NYTD, and NCANDS data as well as other information from its management information system.
- Incorporate continuous review of the AFCARS, NYTD, and NCANDS data both at the case level and in the aggregate.



### 3. Statewide or Tribal Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS/TACWIS)

In December 1993, HHS/ACF published regulations at 45 CFR 1355.50-56 implementing section 474(a)(3)(C) and (D) [42 U.S.C. 674(a)(3)(C) and (D)] of title IV-E of the Act. Section 474(a)(3)(C) (now revised) provided enhanced Federal financial participation (FFP) at the 75 percent match rate for Federal fiscal years (FFY) 1994 – 1996<sup>4</sup> for planning, design, development, or installation of a SACWIS to support the States' programs under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act. Additionally, section 474(c) [42 USC 674(c)] of the Act indicates that States do not have to allocate expenditures between title IV-E and non-title IV-E clients for SACWIS-related costs.

As noted in the above section, section 479B(b) of the Act authorizes direct Federal funding of Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations, and Tribal consortia that choose to operate a foster care, adoption assistance and, at Tribal option, a kinship guardianship assistance program under title IV-E of the Act. The regulations at 45 CFR 1355.50-56 addressing automated child welfare information systems were amended to include Tribes as well as States.

The Federal regulations at 45 CFR 1355.53 provide the conditions for approval of funding for a SACWIS/TACWIS. As a condition of funding, the SACWIS/TACWIS must be designed, developed (or an existing system enhanced), and when implemented, produce a comprehensive, effective, and efficient system to improve the program management and administration of the State and Tribal plans for titles IV-B and IV-E. At a minimum, the system must provide for effective management, tracking, and reporting by providing automated procedures and processes to, among other things, meet the adoption and foster care reporting requirements through the collection, maintenance, integrity checking, and electronic transmission of the data elements specified by the AFCARS requirements mandated under section 479(b) of the Act and 45 CFR 1355.40. As a result, title IV-E agencies that receive FFP to develop a SACWIS/TACWIS must not collect and maintain the AFCARS data in a separate automated information system after the SACWIS/TACWIS is operational. A title IV-E agency found out of compliance with 45 CFR 1355.53(b)(1) by the use, or continued use, of an external system in addition to the use of a SACWIS/TACWIS can lead to a final finding of non-compliance with the SACWIS/TACWIS functional requirements, and may result in a disallowance of some of the Federal incentive funds used by the title IV-E agency to develop and/or operate its SACWIS/TACWIS.

Since a SACWIS/TACWIS is intended to support a variety of child welfare programmatic purposes, it should be considered to serve as the official case file and as such, contain much of the same type of information that would have been documented by the caseworker and kept in the paper record. This does not mean that documents that are generated by agencies outside of the child welfare agency must be stored in the SACWIS/TACWIS. These documents may be part of a hard copy record. However, information entered by caseworkers should be maintained in the system and not overwritten by new occurrences. This allows the title IV-E agency to evaluate the status of a case at any point in time based on information that was known at that time.

<sup>4</sup> The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-193) extended enhanced funding through FFY 1997.

## D. INFORMATION SYSTEM REVIEWS

The Children's Bureau conducts separate assessment reviews to evaluate the development, implementation, and operations of SACWIS/TACWIS and AFCARS.

The SACWIS/TACWIS Assessment Review (SAR), conducted by the Children's Bureau's Division of State Systems (DSS), focuses on automated child welfare systems for which States or Tribes have received SACWIS/TACWIS funding. DSS assesses a title IV-E agency's SACWIS/TACWIS for its compliance with Federal statutory and regulatory programmatic and system requirements, as well as functional, technical, and operational specifications approved in a title IV-E agency's Advance Planning Document (APD).

As part of this review, DSS identifies whether or not the title IV-E agency is using the SACWIS/TACWIS to collect and submit the AFCARS data. Once a title IV-E agency has an operational automated system identified as a SACWIS/TACWIS, or its case management module is operational, the Children's Bureau expects that the title IV-E agency's system be used to collect and submit the AFCARS data. If an AFCARS data file has not been submitted by the time of the review, DSS assesses the title IV-E agency's system's capability to submit it. Additionally, DSS transmits any on-site title IV-E agency questions and findings regarding AFCARS to the Children's Bureau's AFCARS project leader who will follow up with the title IV-E agency.

The AFCARS Assessment Review (AAR) is a comprehensive evaluation of the title IV-E agency's methodology for collecting and reporting the AFCARS data. The AAR process goes beyond the edit checks that must be met in order for a title IV-E agency to pass the AFCARS compliance error standards that are assessed on each six-month submission. The AAR assesses the extent to which a title IV-E agency is meeting all of the AFCARS requirements and has sustained a high level of quality data. This may also include a verification of the title IV-E agency's information system's capability to collect, extract, and transmit the AFCARS data accurately to the Children's Bureau. Additionally, the AAR provides assurance to the Children's Bureau that the data being collected are reliable and consistent across all title IV-E agencies.

AARs will be conducted in every title IV-E agency, regardless of whether or not a title IV-E agency operates a SACWIS/TACWIS. Title IV-E agencies that have not developed a SACWIS/TACWIS, and are not planning to do so, are considered ready for an AAR at any time. For title IV-E agencies with an operational SACWIS/TACWIS, an AAR may occur either prior to or following a SAR. It is possible for AFCARS and SACWIS/TACWIS reviews to be conducted concurrently. To be considered ready for an AAR, title IV-E agencies that have developed, or are in the process of developing, a SACWIS/TACWIS must be:

- operating all modules related to the collection of AFCARS data;
- operating these components Statewide and throughout the Tribal service area; and,
- collecting, extracting, and submitting both the foster care and the adoption data files from the SACWIS/TACWIS.

The Children’s Bureau’s SACWIS/TACWIS and AFCARS review teams share the results and documentation of their reviews with each other as well as with the CFSR Team and the ACYF Office of Data, Analysis, Research and Evaluation.

## **E. AUTHORITY**

The statutory basis for AFCARS and SACWIS/TACWIS is the Social Security Act (the Act). The following lists the specific statutory and regulatory requirements that govern information systems, data collection, and the Children’s Bureau review of the AFCARS requirements:

- Section 422(b)(8)(A)(i) of the Act: Requires title IV-B/IV-E agencies to have an operating “statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care.”
- Sections 471(a)(6) and 476(a) of the Act: Establishes ACF’s responsibility to verify the correctness and reliability of title IV-E agency reports and to exercise oversight of foster care and adoption data.
- Section 479 of the Act: Requires HHS to implement a national data collection system to collect information with respect to the foster care and adoption population.
- Section 474(a)(3)(C) and (D) of the Act: Provides Federal financial participation (FFP) to States and Tribes for the planning, design, development, or installation of statewide mechanized data collection and information retrieval systems that, among other things, support the collection of foster care and adoption data under section 479 of the Act and lead to a more efficient, economical, and effective administration of the programs under state plans approved under titles IV-B and IV-E.
- 45 CFR Parts 1355, 1356 and 1357: Sets forth the requirements implementing programs under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act.
- 45 CFR Parts 1355.40 and Appendices to 45 CFR 1355: Sets forth the requirements for the AFCARS data system.
- 45 CFR 1355.50-57: Sets forth the requirements for developing and implementing a SACWIS/TACWIS.

## **F. STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDE**

The Guide is organized into seven chapters. Chapters I through III provide a general overview and background of the AAR and the review teams. Chapters IV and V describe the activities involved in an AAR. Chapter VI addresses the activities that occur after the site visit. Chapter VII provides information on the AFCARS improvement phase.

Information regarding AFCARS and SACWIS/TACWIS can be found on the Federal and title IV-E agency Reporting Systems page of the Children’s Bureau’s web site. Additional program-related guidance is available from the Children’s Bureau web page at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/>.

This *Guide* may undergo periodic updates and/or revisions. To ensure you have the latest version of the *Guide*, check the Children's Bureau's AFCARS web page at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/research-data-technology/reporting-systems/afcars>.

## CHAPTER II: OVERVIEW OF AFCARS ASSESSMENT REVIEWS

### A. INTRODUCTION

The AFCARS Assessment Review (AAR) is conducted by the Children's Bureau (Central and Regional staff). The review process incorporates an understanding of a title IV-E agency's child welfare policies and practices into an analysis of the methods used to collect AFCARS and other data, the information system designed to collect information, and the technical documentation used to extract and report the AFCARS data to the Children's Bureau.

The AAR process goes beyond the edit checks that must be met by a title IV-E agency in order to pass the AFCARS compliance error standards assessed semi-annually. The AAR ascertains the extent to which a title IV-E agency meets all of the AFCARS requirements. The AAR also evaluates the quality of the title IV-E agency's data, assesses what steps an agency has taken to conduct QA of the AFCARS data, and reviews how the agency has incorporated AFCARS data into its QA process. Additionally, while the AAR is an assessment of the title IV-E agency's collection and reporting of AFCARS data, it is also an opportunity for Federal staff to provide substantive technical assistance to title IV-E agency staff. During the AAR, the Federal team identifies improvements to be made to the system and recommends changes to the program code used to extract the AFCARS data.

The AFCARS reviews are not designed to be done on an on-going basis. However, if information regarding the quality of a title IV-E agency's data is identified through another means, such as a CFSR or an audit by an outside organization (Office of Inspector General, etc), then it is possible that another AAR will be conducted. In addition, if the Children's Bureau changes or modifies the existing AFCARS data collection through publication of a new final rule, each title IV-E agency will be subject to an AAR based on the new standards.

### B. SUMMARY OF AFCARS ASSESSMENT REVIEW PHASES

The AAR process consists of four components. They are the:

- Pre-site Visit Phase
- On-site Visit Phase
- Post-site Visit Phase
- AFCARS Improvement Phase

Exhibit 1, at the end of this section, outlines the major activities that occur in each phase. The remainder of this section provides a high level overview of each phase. More detailed information is given in later chapters.

#### 1. Pre-site Visit Phase

The pre-site visit phase begins no later than 16 weeks prior to the scheduled site visit. This phase includes activities that are necessary to prepare for the on-site review. During this phase

the title IV-E agency enters a set of test cases and extracts the test data for transmission to the Children's Bureau.

This phase also involves the exchange of documentation between the Federal and title IV-E agency teams. The Federal team conducts a preliminary analysis of the title IV-E agency's documentation in order to develop initial findings and identify those areas that require emphasis during the on-site review. Chapter IV further addresses the procedures for this phase.

## 2. On-site Visit Phase

The on-site review is conducted over five business days. At the end of the on-site review, an exit briefing is held with the title IV-E agency review team and management officials. During the exit briefing a summary of the major findings is presented. In addition to the briefing, draft findings documents are left with the title IV-E agency team in order to allow the title IV-E agency to begin making or planning any necessary changes to the system. Chapter V further addresses the procedures for this phase.

## 3. Post-site Visit Phase

The post-review phase involves a final assessment by the Federal team of the information gathered during the on-site review, including any corrections the title IV-E agency makes to its extraction code within 45 days after the site visit. This phase is approximately 90 business days from the end of the on-site visit. A report is written noting the major findings from the assessment review, with copies attached of the detailed general requirement and element findings. This report is signed by the Associate Commissioner of the Children's Bureau and mailed to the title IV-E agency. Chapter VI further addresses the procedures for this phase.

## 4. AFCARS Improvement Phase

In the event there are areas the title IV-E agency must correct in order to meet the AFCARS requirements, the title IV-E agency will start the AFCARS Improvement Phase. This phase begins once the title IV-E agency receives its report and ends when the title IV-E agency has made all system changes and the quality of the data has improved and remains consistent. It is the Children's Bureau's expectation that the title IV-E agency complete its improvement plan within two years of receiving the final report. The elements and/or general requirements that receive a rating factor of "3" or lower in the final report will make up the action items in the improvement plan (for more information on the rating factors please see Section D in this chapter). Chapter VII further addresses the procedures for this phase.

*Exhibit 1: Overview of the AFCARS Assessment Review Process*

<b>PHASE</b>	<b>Pre-site Visit</b>	<b>On-site Visit</b>	<b>Post-Site Visit</b>	<b>AFCARS Improvement</b>
<b>Activity</b>	Conduct Conference Call(s) Exchange Documentation Enter Test Cases Select Sample for Case File Review Identify Case Files Finalize Arrangements for On-site Review	Conduct Entrance Conference System Demonstration with Sample Case Scenario Review Case Files Review AFCARS Population and Data Element Requirements Conduct Technical Review Document Review Findings Conduct Exit Conference	Finalize Findings Prepare and Send Letter and Final Report to title IV-E agency Title IV-E agency drafts Timeline for Corrections	Title IV-E agency Makes Corrections to Information System/ Screens and Program Code Implement Data Quality Improvement Measures
<b>Timeframe</b>	16 weeks prior to the onsite Review Phase	5 business days	Approximately 90 business days after the onsite review	2 years from the onsite review

## C. REQUIREMENTS SUBJECT TO REVIEW

As previously noted, the AAR is a comprehensive evaluation of the title IV-E agency's methodology for collecting and reporting the AFCARS data and goes beyond the edit checks assessed on each six-month submission. The AAR assesses the extent to which a title IV-E agency is meeting all of the AFCARS requirements and the quality of the data is sustained over time. Title IV-E agencies' AFCARS data and information systems are reviewed against the requirements in 45 CFR 1355.40, the appendices to 45 CFR 1355, AFCARS policy issuances, and AFCARS Technical Bulletins. There are two major areas that are assessed during an AAR: the AFCARS general requirements and the data elements. The general requirements include the populations to be reported to AFCARS, the technical requirements for constructing a data file, data conversion, and data quality. During an AAR, each of the 103 data elements and each of the 22 AFCARS general requirements will be assessed on the basis of the requirements in the regulation and other policy and technical issuances. The title IV-E agency's AFCARS data is also evaluated for quality. In order for the data to be considered quality data, it must be accurate, complete, timely, and reliable. Information from each component of the review is analyzed and the data elements and general requirement items are individually assigned a rating factor (see the next section). Chapter V provides more detail on the evaluation process.

The tables in Appendices B and C include the requirements for AFCARS as well as detailed follow-up questions and/or clarifications. The general requirements table in Appendix B has the requirements in the first column and the checklist items in the next column. The tables with the data elements in Appendix C have been reformatted. The element number and name are in the first column. The second column contains information that is divided into "requirements" and "checklist items." The requirements items are from the AFCARS regulation and its appendices, guidance in the Child Welfare Policy Manual, AFCARS Program Instructions and/or Information Memorandum, and the Technical Bulletins (in this order). The checklist items are based on the questions the Federal team uses during an AAR to assess whether the title IV-E agency is applying the requirements correctly. They also include issues found in past AARs or technical assistance provided by the NRC-CWDT. The items listed under the checklist sections are items the title IV-E agency can use to a) conduct an assessment of its business practices in order to determine how to design a data collection process and extract the data to the AFCARS data file, or b) conduct a self-assessment of the title IV-E agency's existing methodology to collect and report the AFCARS data.

As an additional modification to the tables, common issues related to data quality have been combined under a new, separate Data Quality section of the General Requirements table. This revision streamlines how title IV-E agencies will address AFCARS data quality. Previously, conversion of data was the only item in the General Requirements table that addressed data quality. Quality of data for individual elements was assessed and noted in the final element findings tables. The improvement plans included tasks for addressing and improving the quality of data through training, supervisory oversight, and regular monitoring. This meant that title IV-E agencies often repeated the same information for several elements to address these tasks. Data quality related to conversion has been moved and combined with the system's capacity to collect historical information on closed cases (General Requirement #22). Item #21 now contains information on the overall quality of the data. This means the improvement plans will allow the



title IV-E agency to describe how it plans to address improving and maintaining data quality for all data elements in the General Requirements Improvement Plan. Individual data elements may still have findings and tasks related to data quality but they will be more specific to the individual data element.

#### **D. RATING FACTORS**

A scale of 0 (does not meet SACWIS/TACWIS requirements) to 4 (fully meets AFCARS standards) is used to assign a rating factor for each of the AFCARS general requirements and data elements. Exhibit 2 lists the rating factors and definitions. The title IV-E agency is not given an overall numerical rating based on the AAR findings.

The rating factor 0 (zero) is applicable only to those title IV-E agencies that receive FFP to develop and implement a SACWIS/TACWIS, and during an AAR, the Federal team finds the title IV-E agency's AFCARS data are not collected or extracted from a SACWIS/TACWIS. The title IV-E agency's AAR will be considered incomplete in regard to the area not collected in the SACWIS/TACWIS. The items that are collected in the system will be evaluated based on the AFCARS requirements. For instance, if the foster care elements are collected in the SACWIS/TACWIS but the adoption elements are not, the foster care elements will be given the appropriate rating factor between one and four, and each adoption element will be given a zero. Once the title IV-E agency completes the tasks associated with enhancing the SACWIS/TACWIS to collect and report the AFCARS data, the Federal team will complete the AAR on that area. Depending on the degree of changes needed, this may require a second on-site review. The Children's Bureau expects that a rating factor of "0" will be rare. If it is found during a SACWIS/TACWIS Assessment Review that the title IV-E agency is not collecting and reporting its AFCARS data from the system in compliance with 45 CFR 1355.53(b)(1), it is the Children's Bureau's expectation that this requirement be implemented immediately and given the title IV-E agency's highest priority. As noted in section C.2 of Chapter I, this may result in a disallowance of some of the Federal funds used by the title IV-E agency to develop its SACWIS/TACWIS.

**Exhibit 2: Rating Factors**

<b>RATING FACTOR</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
4	<p>All of the AFCARS requirements have been met and the agency has sustained a high level of quality data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The agency’s methodology for collecting the AFCARS information meets the technical and definitional requirements.</li> <li>• The agency’s information system contains the necessary fields to collect the AFCARS data.</li> <li>• The information is being accurately collected and extracted.</li> <li>• There are quality assurance processes in place that are used on a regular basis to ensure the data are accurately entered into the system or on the data collection form.</li> <li>• The agency has a process in place to identify and resolve data quality issues and makes necessary corrections in a timely manner.</li> </ul>
3	<p>There are data quality issues. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The data are underreported due to inconsistent data entry.</li> <li>• The system/form is capable of collecting data but the data are not being entered into the system or recorded on a form.</li> <li>• Data entry is unreliable due to incorrect or ambiguous instructions, definitions, and/or data entry screens or forms.</li> <li>• There are no supervisory controls for ensuring timely data entry, or accurate data entry.</li> <li>• There is incorrect data entry due to training or design issues.</li> <li>• There is missing or incomplete data due to conversion errors.</li> <li>• There are inconsistencies in the numbers between related data elements.</li> <li>• Fundamental data elements have missing data. These include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dates of removal from home, placement, and discharge (if applicable).</li> <li>○ Placement location.</li> <li>○ Removal and placement counts</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2	<p>The technical requirements for AFCARS reporting are not fully met. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The title IV-E agency’s data collection method/information system has the capability to collect the data, but the program logic used to construct the AFCARS file has errors.</li> <li>• The title IV-E agency uses defaults for blank information.</li> <li>• Information is coming from the wrong module or field in the system.</li> <li>• Information is located in the wrong place on the system, e.g., it should be in foster care screens, not adoption screens.</li> <li>• The information system needs modification to encompass more information and/or conditions, e.g., disability information along with start/end dates.</li> <li>• The extraction code for the AFCARS report selects and reports incorrect data.</li> </ul>
1	<p>An AFCARS requirement(s) has not been implemented in the methodology used to collect the data and/or in the information system. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The title IV-E agency’s data collection method/information system does not have the capability to collect the correct information (i.e., there is no data field on the screens or form).</li> <li>• There is no program logic to extract the information.</li> <li>• There is 100% missing data according to the frequency report or DCU/DQU reports.</li> </ul>
0	<p>Title IV-E agencies operating an information system for which it received SACWIS/ TACWIS-level FFP were found to be using an external information system, or a tool (such as Excel or Access), and are not collecting and reporting the AFCARS data from the SACWIS/ TACWIS system.</p>

It is possible that an identified problem with the data is due to both system issues and caseworker data entry issues. In this case, the element is given a “2” because corrections must be completed to either the system or the extraction code. Once the corrections are made to the system during the AFCARS Improvement Phase, the element is rated a “3” and the Children’s Bureau continues to evaluate the data for quality and consistency. A finding of fully meeting the AFCARS standard (a factor of “4”) is not given to the element until all system issues and data quality issues have been addressed in the AFCARS Improvement Phase.

While there is not an expectation that data quality is 100% accurate for every element, there is an expectation that the data be of a significant level of completeness and without inconsistency errors, and that this quality would also be maintained over a number of report periods. Certain elements, as noted in the above chart, have a lower level of tolerance for missing and inconsistent data. For instance, if the date of the first ever removal from home or the current removal from home date is missing from the child’s record it raises doubts as to the validity not only of that record but of the entire file. While the AAR process has historically always assessed and held agencies accountable for the quality of the data, the subject of data quality has become an even more visible component with the release of ACYF-CB-IM-12-07, Continuous Quality Improvement in title IV-B and IV-E Programs.

A title IV-E agency that has been determined not to satisfy fully the AFCARS standards (a rating factor of 3 or lower) must make the corrections identified by the review team to improve data quality. Action steps are identified in the AFCARS Improvement Plan (AIP) and included in the final report. The title IV-E agency is required to make the changes to the information system, extraction program, and/or data entry in order to fully satisfy the applicable requirements and standards. Since the AFCARS data are used for several significant activities at the Federal and title IV-E agency level, the title IV-E agency should implement the action items as soon as possible as a way to improve the quality of its data.

To the extent that the title IV-E agency takes action to correct its collection and extraction of AFCARS data, it is possible that a resulting improvement will bring to light weaknesses masked by prior problems. For example, a title IV-E agency’s extraction code may be written to ensure there are no missing data by incorrectly mapping missing information to a known AFCARS value (i.e., setting defaults). Once the program code is corrected, the title IV-E agency needs to address data entry in order to ensure that workers are actually entering the required information.

Title IV-E agencies found not to be in compliance during the AAR do not incur penalties as a direct result of that noncompliance. Even though there are no penalties directly linked with an AAR, at this time, the title IV-E agency is expected to use the AIP as a way to formalize technical assistance needs, action steps, and improve the quality of its data. Additionally, errors identified during an AAR may impede the use of the data for the title IV-E reviews, the Adoption Incentives Program, and other areas for which Children’s Bureau uses the AFCARS data.

## CHAPTER III: THE REVIEW TEAMS

### A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter identifies the individuals who must be involved in the AFCARS Assessment Review (AAR). It includes responsibilities for various tasks in each phase of the review, and indicates who should be present for each of the on-site segments. Membership on the review team requires a significant commitment of time and effort. Both title IV-E agency and Federal team members are responsible for the following activities:

- participation in conference calls scheduled prior to the review;
- implementation of all assigned activities associated with the review;
- participation in review activities during the on-site review; and
- participation in entrance and exit conferences.

### B. COMPOSITION OF THE REVIEW TEAMS

At a minimum, individuals responsible for meeting the following roles/responsibilities should be considered members of the title IV-E agency team:

- Child Welfare Administrator;
- AFCARS Project Manager (or a person responsible for AFCARS);
- SACWIS/TACWIS Project Manager (or a person responsible for SACWIS/TACWIS), for those title IV-E agencies implementing a SACWIS/TACWIS;
- Adoption Program Specialist;
- Foster Care Program Specialist;
- Policy Director;
- Child and Family Services Review Coordinator;
- System Analyst/Programmer familiar with AFCARS data extraction routines;
- Field staff; and
- Contractor Representative, if applicable.

There is not a designated limit on the number of individuals who can be members of the title IV-E agency review team. The title IV-E agency team may include staff other than those listed above. For instance, the agency may want to include members from their eligibility or financial units during the discussion of the foster care and adoption elements, or for the section on the sources of income for the child. Section C below provides additional guidance on who should participate in each segment of the review and expectations for team members.

The Federal team will consist of the AFCARS Specialist from Central Office as well as the Regional Program Specialist assigned to the title IV-E agency. The team may also include other members from the Children's Bureau or its Technical Assistance Network of National Resource Centers (NRC).

## C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEAM MEMBERS

Exhibit 3 provides summary information on the role and responsibilities of the title IV-E agency and Federal team members' responsibilities.

### 1. Title IV-E Agency Team

This section gives additional guidance on who should participate in the AAR and their responsibilities. Title IV-E agency team members should be identified as soon as an AAR has been agreed upon by the Children's Bureau and the title IV-E agency. Also, the agency should designate a title IV-E agency Review Team Coordinator.

- Administrators (such as the Child Welfare Administrator, Commissioner, Division Directors)

Administrators are not expected to participate in the entire review process, but are considered an integral component of the title IV-E agency team. Administrators should be informed of the AAR and should attend the entrance and exit conferences.

- The title IV-E Agency Review Team Coordinator

The title IV-E agency review team coordinator serves as the liaison with the Federal review team coordinator to plan the AAR and to ensure follow-through on the pre-site visit activities. The coordinator disseminates information internally on the nature and scope of the AAR in order to prepare program and data processing staff who participate in the on-site review. A checklist of activities that may be used to prepare for the AAR is included in Appendix D. This individual will continue to be the liaison between the title IV-E agency and the Federal review team during the post-site review phase, and if applicable, the AFCARS improvement phase.

- Foster Care and Adoption Managers

Program staff representing the title IV-E agency's foster care and adoption units are integral members of the title IV-E agency AFCARS review team. In order to assess the title IV-E agency's collection and reporting of the AFCARS data, the title IV-E agency's child welfare policies and practices need to be taken into account. Additionally, since it is often the program staff who are using and explaining the data, having them participate in the AAR provides an opportunity for them to further examine the quality of the data. It is important for the foster care and adoption managers to be present for the entire review as there often are policy or practice questions that arise that are best answered by program staff.

- SACWIS/TACWIS Project Manager

The SACWIS/TACWIS Project Manager (or other SACWIS/TACWIS representative) should participate in all components of the onsite review process. Since part of the analysis of a title IV-E agency's AFCARS relates to how data are recorded in the SACWIS/TACWIS, it is important that the SACWIS/TACWIS Project Manager be

involved, if necessary, regarding potential changes to the SACWIS/TACWIS. It may also be necessary for the SACWIS/TACWIS Project Manager to explain how and why certain components were developed in the SACWIS/TACWIS.

- **Field Staff**

Field staff (front line caseworkers, supervisors, regional staff, etc.) should participate in the case file review. The title IV-E agency may decide the level and number of staff that participate in the case file review. See Chapters IV and V for more information on the case file review process. The title IV-E agency is not limited to having field staff present only during the case file review. If the title IV-E agency has “super users,” i.e., primary contacts for providing assistance and information on the system, etc., in its field offices, then the agency may want to consider adding these individuals to the title IV-E agency review team. The agency may include them for the full week or for selected segments of the review.

- **Technical Staff**

Technical staff representing the title IV-E agency’s child welfare system are part of the core review team. This includes any staff under contract to the title IV-E agency to develop or operate the information system. The technical team is primarily responsible for describing how the system collects and extracts the AFCARS data. The person primarily responsible for developing the program code and writing the routines for AFCARS data extraction must be present during the week of the review.

- **Data Entry Staff**

Title IV-E agencies may have staff who enter information from a form completed by a caseworker or other staff working with families. The agency should include them as part of the review team in order to ensure that all staff responsible for data entry have a good understanding of the AFCARS data elements and requirements.

- **Additional Staff**

The title IV-E agency may choose to bring in representatives from other agencies that provide data to the title IV-E agency for its AFCARS reporting. Their participation may be useful during the general discussion of the types of information that are needed for AFCARS or for the data element review. Examples include representatives from juvenile justice, the courts, mental health, contract providers, or Tribes. Additionally, the title IV-E agency may want to include training and fiscal staff.

## 2. Federal Team

The Federal review team coordinator serves as the liaison with the title IV-E agency review team coordinator to plan the AAR and to ensure that pre-site visit activities are completed in a timely manner. The Federal review team coordinator is responsible for finalizing arrangements for the

site visit, clarifying expectations and answering questions about the AAR process, and ensuring the title IV-E agency has submitted all the needed documents on time to the Children’s Bureau.

***Exhibit 3: Review Team Roles and Responsibilities***

Title	Roles/Responsibilities
Title IV-E agency AAR Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represent areas of the title IV-E agency’s child welfare program under review.</li> <li>• Provide expertise in team members’ respective areas, including foster care, adoption, program policy, and information technology.</li> <li>• Attend on-site sessions.</li> </ul>
Title IV-E agency AAR Team Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve as the liaison with the Federal review team coordinator through all phases of the AAR.</li> <li>• Provide a list of title IV-E agency team members to Federal review team coordinator.</li> <li>• Ensure the timely delivery of materials to all team members.</li> <li>• Ensure that title IV-E agency information system documentation is sent to Children’s Bureau’s Regional and Central Offices staff on time.</li> <li>• Handle logistics for calls, schedules, and documentation dissemination.</li> <li>• Ensure that the test cases are entered into the title IV-E agency’s information system.</li> <li>• Ensure that paper case files are pulled and sent to the office where the review will be held.</li> <li>• Schedule title IV-E agency review team members for on-site review.</li> <li>• Reserve a room large enough to accommodate the title IV-E agency and Federal review teams during the site visit.</li> <li>• Reserve additional space for reviewing the case files, if necessary.</li> <li>• Ensure access to the title IV-E agency information system for the entire week.</li> <li>• Ensure that title IV-E agency team members attend the on-site review meetings.</li> </ul>
Federal AAR Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct site visit.</li> <li>• Produce findings.</li> <li>• Provide applicable technical assistance.</li> <li>• Produce and review draft final reports.</li> </ul>
Federal AAR Team Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedule pre-site visit conference calls.</li> <li>• Finalize due dates for documentation exchange, and ensure documents are received by the Regional and Central Offices.</li> <li>• Finalize arrangements for the on-site review with the title IV-E agency review team coordinator.</li> <li>• Follow up with team members on their assignments.</li> <li>• Send letter to title IV-E agency confirming the dates of the site visit, names, positions, and telephone numbers of the Federal team members.</li> </ul>
Federal Technical Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review title IV-E agency’s system documentation.</li> <li>• Assume lead responsibility in technical matters related to the review.</li> <li>• Run frequency and case file review reports on raw data.</li> </ul>

## CHAPTER IV: THE PRE-SITE VISIT PHASE

### A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the activities title IV-E agency staff need to complete in order to prepare for the on-site phase of the AAR. During this phase the title IV-E agency should identify those areas it wants to address specifically during the site visit. The title IV-E agency should view the AFCARS Assessment Review (AAR) as an opportunity to examine its foster care and adoption data concerns completely and take advantage of the intensive technical assistance available from the Children's Bureau. The title IV-E agency should also review its CFSR data profile to identify any areas in which it may want to request assistance from the Federal AFCARS review team.

The pre-site visit phase involves the following activities:

- documentation exchange;
- test case scenario entry, extraction, and transmission; and
- case file review preparation.

### B. OVERVIEW OF THE PRE-SITE VISIT ACTIVITIES

The pre-site visit phase begins when a title IV-E agency is notified of its AAR. Ideally, a title IV-E agency will know by July that it will have its AAR the next Federal fiscal year (FFY). A title IV-E agency will have no less than three months notice of an AAR. Once the dates are selected for the AAR, a confirmation letter will be sent to the title IV-E agency.

In order to determine a title IV-E agency's readiness for an AAR, the Children's Bureau determines whether a title IV-E agency has developed and is operating a SACWIS/TACWIS. Title IV-E agencies that have not developed a SACWIS/TACWIS, and are not planning to do so, are considered ready for an AAR.

A planning call is held approximately 16 weeks prior to the on-site review. Additional calls may be necessary prior to the onsite review, but are scheduled on an as-needed basis.

### C. DOCUMENTATION EXCHANGE

This section describes the documents that are exchanged between the title IV-E agency and the Children's Bureau. It is not the Children's Bureau's expectation that the title IV-E agency create new system documentation for the review team to analyze. The title IV-E agency should submit its technical documentation in its current format. Exhibit 4 contains examples of the types of documents the title IV-E agency will be asked to submit. The screen prints should reflect the options available to caseworkers for each AFCARS data element in its current format, and a "data dictionary" of the code values used for each option.

The title IV-E agency's system documentation may be submitted earlier than the due dates. Title IV-E agencies should have a consolidated library of the system that is kept up-to-date. This is



helpful for those title IV-E agencies that are developing a SACWIS/TACWIS and to those preparing for the SACWIS/TACWIS Assessment Review.

The Federal review team needs a “fixed” set of documentation in order to complete its analysis and provide the title IV-E agency with useful feedback (see Exhibit 4). The title IV-E agency should submit its most current version of the extraction program code that was used to submit the data for the most recent report period and for the test cases, as well as all reference tables. If the title IV-E agency identifies areas that need to be corrected, or is in the process of making overall system modifications after the documentation is submitted to the Federal team, then the title IV-E agency should provide the Federal team (either onsite or during the pre-site phase) a list of all changes and planned changes. When modifications are subsequently made to the screens and/or the program code as it relates to AFCARS, those modifications will be included in the post-site visit review.

### *Procedure*

- ❑ By the due dates, submit copies of the documentation (see Exhibit 4) to the Children’s Bureau. The documentation is to be submitted electronically.
  - ❑ E-mail all documents to the Federal team members.
  - ❑ If electronic copies of the documents are sent on a compact disk, this must be sent via overnight mail to the Children’s Bureau<sup>5</sup>. Do not send zip disks.
- ❑ If the title IV-E agency technical staff has questions regarding what technical documentation is to be submitted, contact the Federal Technical Coordinator.
- ❑ Screen prints must include a copy of the screen as it first appears on the system, and copies of AFCARS-related drop-down lists. This may take more than one screen print. The Federal review team must have the actual view that appears to the user.
- ❑ A data dictionary should include all of the title IV-E agency’s values/codes used in the system. While many of these are not related to AFCARS, we have found it is easier for the title IV-E agency to provide a comprehensive list. This provides the Federal team an opportunity to review the values and ensure that the title IV-E agency is including all appropriate values in its AFCARS extract.
- ❑ If the extraction code is sent to the Federal team in multiple files that are sections of the complete code, include a master list that identifies the order the files are executed.
- ❑ Title IV-E agencies that use forms as a means to collect the AFCARS data are to include these in their documentation submission.

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<sup>5</sup> Regular US Mail to Government Offices in Washington, DC is subject to sterilization process that will melt any electronic media sent via the US Mail.

*Exhibit 4: Title IV-E agency Documentation List*

- Programming Logic (Source Code): The programming logic that derives and extracts each AFCARS element from the title IV-E agency's system.
- Data Element Dictionary: A data dictionary or similar documentation will provide the Federal team with definitions and representations of the title IV-E agency's values for AFCARS-related fields. This document should be complete and reflective of options available to the caseworker to select. This documentation may be supplemented by code/lookup tables that will enable the team to understand elements referenced in the source code or mapping forms. For example, placement code 257 = relative foster care, licensed.
- Relevant Reference Tables and Fields: Specific fields and tables from which the data are pulled.
- Database Structures: Tables referenced in mapping documentation.
- Extraction Routine Notes: A logical description, or the steps in pseudo code, of how records are selected for inclusion in the foster care and adoption submission.
- Data Entry Screens/Forms: Printouts of screens and forms used to collect AFCARS data elements.
- Change Request Orders: Changes that the title IV-E agency has planned that impact the AFCARS data elements that are not included in the current version of the extraction program code.
- Organizational Charts: Charts of the program and information technology divisions.

**Note:** It is crucial that the documentation be submitted to the Children's Bureau on time. Delays in the submission of the documents affect the Federal team's preparedness for the on-site review and may result in an incomplete on-site evaluation.

## D. TEST CASE SCENARIOS

The use of test cases is a way to assess the title IV-E agency's collection and extraction of the AFCARS data. This process assists the Federal review team in gaining a better understanding of the title IV-E agency's policies, practices, training, and extraction routine prior to the onsite review. The records that are created by the test cases are extracted from the title IV-E agency's data system and compared with an established answer key. This information in conjunction with the analysis of the extraction program code and the other components of the AAR, provides the Federal team with a comprehensive view of the title IV-E agency's system.

The intent of the test cases is to validate the title IV-E agency's information system for accuracy and the agency's understanding of the AFCARS requirements. As such, the Federal review team coordinator may answer some questions the title IV-E agency has regarding the cases, but most will not be answered in the interest of determining objectively the title IV-E agency's AFCARS capability. The person entering the test cases into the agency's information system should be someone with casework experience.

### *Procedure*

- ❑ The Federal review coordinator e-mails the test cases to the title IV-E agency review coordinator by the established due date.
- ❑ The title IV-E agency review coordinator will identify a staff member who is familiar with the system and/or case practice to enter the cases. Additional instructions are sent to the title IV-E agency with the test cases.
- ❑ A training or test environment may be used to enter the test cases. This should mirror the production system. The title IV-E agency needs to ensure that the method used to enter the data will also allow for the entry/extraction of the financial data elements that are obtained through an interface.
- ❑ Once the test cases are entered into the system, the title IV-E agency review team coordinator will contact the Federal Technical Coordinator for instructions on electronically transmitting the test file(s). The file must be submitted by the established due date.
- ❑ The electronic copy of the scenarios are to be transmitted to the Federal review coordinator (in Word) with the encrypted case number provided for the respective test case. Additionally, the title IV-E agency team can include any relevant notes pertaining to the test cases as necessary.
- ❑ Once the test cases are transmitted to the Children's Bureau, the title IV-E agency should archive the cases for later use in the event the agency has an AFCARS Improvement Plan.

## E. CASE FILE REVIEW PREPARATION

Another tool used in the AAR process is the case file review. A sample of foster care and adoption records is selected from the most recent AFCARS report period prior to the review. In general, for State title IV-E agencies the sample size is 80 foster care and 30 adoption records. The AFCARS data submitted to the Children's Bureau for each record is then compared to information found in the paper case file during the onsite review.

The Children's Bureau has found that while there may be challenges to identifying the information in the paper file, the process provides very valuable information to the review teams. The case file review is also the only means for the Federal team to assess the accuracy and the level of completeness of the title IV-E agency's conversion process from a paper or legacy system to its new information system. The findings often provide additional information that increases the Federal team's understanding of the data reported to AFCARS. Also, this process allows the review team to assess how well records are being kept up-to-date, the accuracy of the AFCARS data, and usage of the title IV-E agency's information system. Typically, this process does not identify new problems, but confirms findings from the other components of the AAR.

While the Children's Bureau recognizes that current data may no longer be in the paper files but will, instead, be in the automated information system, there are some documents that may not be part of the title IV-E agency's information system, such as medical reports, court reports, home studies, etc. These documents usually provide a significant amount of the information for the case file reviewers. It is important that the title IV-E agency have available the complete case file; frequently relevant information is found in a sibling's folder instead of the folder on the child under review which can be challenging.

Since the case file review is the only means to assess conversion, the cases selected for the review will primarily be those in which the most recent removal date, or the first removal date, precedes the date the title IV-E agency's system went operational. If the title IV-E agency phased in its operational status, then the sample may reflect these dates.

Depending on the length of time since the title IV-E agency converted to a new information system, this portion of the AAR may be modified to accommodate the title IV-E agency's situation. During the initial conference call, the Children's Bureau and the title IV-E agency will discuss and plan for the case file review and make adjustments, as necessary.

The case file review process involves all members of the title IV-E agency and Federal technical and program teams. The title IV-E agency is encouraged to incorporate field staff, including supervisors and staff from training units, etc., as part of the title IV-E agency team for the purpose of reviewing cases. See Chapter III for additional information on who the title IV-E agency may want to include on the case file review team. A preliminary analysis of the findings is conducted during the onsite review and shared with the title IV-E agency. A further discussion of the onsite process can be found in Chapter V.

*Procedure*

The Children's Bureau will send the title IV-E agency a random sample of cases to be used in the case file review. Once the title IV-E agency review team coordinator receives the list of encrypted or sequential case record numbers from the Federal review team coordinator, he/she should:

- ❑ Create a list to cross-reference the encrypted/sequential record number with the actual case record number.
- ❑ Arrange for the case files to be delivered to the title IV-E agency office by the first day of the on-site review.
- ❑ Ensure that case records are as complete and up-to-date as possible, and include any files maintained separately, e.g., child protective services files, provider files, and eligibility files.
- ❑ All case records should include:
  - investigative reports;
  - court orders;
  - placement history;
  - caretaker (person from whom child was removed) information;
  - medical history;
  - biological parent file for the adoption records; and
  - foster care records on children adopted (if the relevant AFCARS information cannot be found in the child's adoptive record).

**Note Regarding Sealed Adoption Records:** If a sufficient number of cases cannot be identified for review due to their having been sealed, then the title IV-E agency will have to petition the court to open the records prior to the on-site review.

- ❑ Identify and schedule staff to participate in the case file review. It is recommended that the title IV-E agency have field workers, supervisors, and/or regional administrators participate in this part of the review. See Chapter III for additional information on the composition of the review team.

**F. THE ON-SITE AGENDA**

Appendix E contains the agenda for the on-site review. Any changes to the overall agenda must be discussed with the Federal review team coordinator prior to any changes being made to the agenda. The title IV-E agency review team coordinator should provide the Federal review team coordinator with a list of the names and titles of the staff participating in each segment of the AAR.

## **G. SITE LOGISTICS**

The on-site review activities are conducted in one location. The title IV-E agency capitol is generally the designated location since it is the location of the title IV-E agency central office/administrative staff, but another site may be mutually agreed upon. It is preferable to conduct the meetings in one large room to allow enough space for the size of the team and materials needed for the AAR. A separate room can be added on the day of the case file review, as this activity will include additional staff and the case files. The room used for the case file review should be secure to protect the confidentiality of the case records.

## CHAPTER V: THE ON-SITE REVIEW PHASE

### A. INTRODUCTION

The on-site review occurs over a period of five consecutive working days. During this week, there is an entrance and exit conference with management staff, the entry of a case scenario, a discussion of the title IV-E agency's provision of child welfare services and policies, a review of the technical documentation used to extract the AFCARS data, and a review of case files. During the exit briefing a summary of the major findings is presented. Draft documents of the team's preliminary on-site findings are left with the title IV-E agency team in order to allow them to begin making or planning any needed changes to the information system and the AFCARS reporting process. The title IV-E agency should also use this time to identify priority areas and a work plan for achieving them.

The title IV-E agency's AFCARS data collection process is assessed against the AFCARS requirements in the Federal regulation, policy issuances, and the AFCARS Technical Bulletins. The AAR also evaluates a title IV-E agency's information system's capability to accurately collect, extract, and transmit the AFCARS data to the Children's Bureau. A second focus of the AAR is to assess the accuracy of the collection and documentation of information related to the foster care and/or adoption case of a child.

There are two major areas that are assessed during an AAR. They are: (1) the AFCARS general requirements, and (2) the data elements. The general requirements include the population that is to be reported to AFCARS and the technical requirements for constructing a data file. During an AAR, each of the 103 data elements and each of the 22 AFCARS general requirements are assessed on the basis of the requirements in the regulation and other policy and technical issuances. Information that is collected from each of the components of the AAR is combined, and the item is assigned a rating factor. The general requirements are evaluated and rated separately from the data elements.

### B. ON-SITE LOGISTICS

During the week of the AAR, work hours will generally be between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. The agenda in Appendix E gives a general timeframe for each day. In addition to the case/system demonstration on the first day (if the title IV-E agency has a SACWIS/TACWIS or other automated case management system), accommodations must be made for the agency to have access to the system. As part of the process on days three and four, there may be a need to further review the agency's electronic data collection method.

For the case file review, it is necessary for the reviewers to be in one room. If this is not possible, a smaller second room can be designated for the group that will review the adoption files. The information system will not be needed for the case file review.

## C. ON-SITE REVIEW ACTIVITIES

There are five components of the AAR process. These are the:

- system demonstration using a sample case scenario and, as applicable, a demonstration of forms used to collect information;
- reports from the AFCARS utilities (Data Compliance, Data Quality, and Frequency);
- Title IV-E agency policy and procedures;
- paper case file review; and
- system review (screens and extraction code).

The Federal AFCARS team utilizes each component to assess the title IV-E agency's AFCARS data. Each component is discussed with the title IV-E agency team in order to gain a better understanding of the title IV-E agency's child welfare practice and policy, how the data are collected and extracted, and title IV-E agency staff's understanding of the data elements.

### 1. Day One – Entrance Conference and System Demonstration

The first day of the on-site visit begins with the entrance conference which serves to:

- introduce the Federal team to title IV-E agency management, project staff, and the title IV-E agency review team;
- review the nature and scope of the on-site review;
- respond to any questions the title IV-E agency staff might have related to the AAR process; and
- make any final modifications to the on-site agenda.

Immediately following the entrance conference, the title IV-E agency presents a walk-through of the system that is used to collect and extract the AFCARS information. The title IV-E agency should ensure that appropriate technical and programmatic staff participate in the demonstration. The Federal team will provide the title IV-E agency review team with a sample case scenario onsite. This sample case scenario is entered as part of the system demonstration. The purpose of this activity is to observe the entire process of entering data, and learn the flow of the screens used to enter the data. The title IV-E agency team should also be prepared to identify the test cases that were entered during the pre-site visit phase; these will be discussed as well.

For title IV-E agencies that use forms to collect case data, the same process is followed and adapted according to the agency's methodology for collecting the information.

### 2. Day Two – Case File Review

The Federal team provides the forms for each record drawn in the sample. This form contains the data submitted by the title IV-E agency for each element in the record. There are four columns to the form (see Appendix F for an example):



- column one lists the data elements;
- column two lists the information submitted to AFCARS by the title IV-E agency;
- column three is for the reviewer to write in the information found in the case record; and
- column four is marked if the information does not match.

### *Procedure*

- An introductory briefing and training will take place before reviewing the cases.
- The entire title IV-E agency and Federal team will review case files and will be divided into two groups. One group will review the foster care files and the other smaller group will review the adoption files.
- After all the cases are reviewed, team members will debrief on their significant findings. Once this process is completed, the Federal review team coordinator collects the forms.
- A preliminary analysis is conducted by the Federal team onsite and the results are shared with the title IV-E agency team during days three and four. Final analysis of these forms is completed during the post-site visit review phase.

### 3. Days Three and Four – Foster Care and Adoption Population and Elements

#### a. Population and Data Element Review

During days three and four the Federal team meets with the program and technical staff that are responsible for oversight of the foster care and adoption services, policy development/implementation, and implementing the technical requirements of AFCARS. Days three and four comprise the core components of an AAR. They build on the initial analysis conducted during the pre-site phase by the Federal team and the results of the test case entry and the case file review.

Throughout the day, the Federal team will ask several questions regarding the title IV-E agency's organizational structure, the population of children served, and other practice-related questions. At the same time, the technical documentation is reviewed and assessed on whether it is reflecting title IV-E agency and Federal policy, and title IV-E agency practice.

Appendices B and C contain the checklist used by the Federal team in regard to the foster care and adoption populations and the data elements.

The frequency report generated from the title IV-E agency's data for the report period under review is assessed by the Federal and title IV-E agency staff to determine if the data are representative of the title IV-E agency's child welfare population. The title IV-E agencies have their own copy of the AFCARS Frequency Utility and can use this report on an ongoing basis to evaluate their AFCARS data. Technical Bulletin #3 describes how to use the frequency report to evaluate the data.

When analyzing the program code, the types of questions that are asked include:

- Are there any AFCARS elements or values that do not have information mapped/extracted to them from the title IV-E agency system?
- Are there any relevant values in the title IV-E agency system that do not map to an AFCARS element?
- Are there any elements or values where the title IV-E agency's definition does not appear to match the AFCARS definition?
- Are there any title IV-E agency data collection policies or procedures that may cause some data not to be reported to AFCARS, or to be reported inaccurately (i.e., not reflecting the true circumstances of the case)?
- Does the program code exclude a group of children served that must be reported to AFCARS? Conversely, does the program code include children that should not be in the AFCARS reporting population?

#### b. Document Review Findings

A preliminary draft of the findings is completed by the Federal review team on-site. Generally, the above review activities are completed by noon of the fourth day. The afternoon of the fourth day is left open in the event more time is needed for the population and data element review or if time is needed for some other reason. Otherwise, this time is used by the Federal team to complete its onsite findings.

At this time, the Federal team reviews all of the on-site findings for each component and assigns a rating factor for each general requirement and data element. The findings are documented in three tables, one for adoption, one for foster care, and one for the general requirements. The tables include notes, comments, and significant findings of the AAR for each data element and general requirement.

The title IV-E agency should also note that the preliminary findings are based on a cursory review of the case file review findings. Based on the final review, an initial rating factor of "4" may get adjusted to a "3" and the title IV-E agency will need to address improvements in data quality.

A preliminary draft of the tables are completed by the Federal review team onsite and shared with the title IV-E agency review team prior to the exit conference with the title IV-E agency administrators. The Federal and title IV-E agency teams review the findings in order to ensure agreement on the findings.

Depending on time, this meeting may be at the end of day four, or early on day five prior to the exit conference.

#### 4. Day Five – Exit Conference

Once the on-site review process is complete, an exit briefing is held with the title IV-E agency review team and management officials.

The purpose of the exit conference is to:

- present specific findings resulting from the AAR process;
- report the preliminary recommendations and/or proposed resolutions to outstanding issues; and,
- answer any questions the title IV-E agency administrators might have as a result of the AAR.

The exit conference should include all staff members that were involved with the AAR during the week and senior management staff.

A one-page summary of the AAR findings is distributed during the exit briefing.

## CHAPTER VI: THE POST-SITE VISIT PHASE

### A. INTRODUCTION

The post-site visit phase involves a final assessment by the Federal review team of the information gathered during the on-site review. A final report is written that includes the major findings from the assessment review with copies attached of all of the detailed findings. The final report is signed by the Associate Commissioner of the Children's Bureau and mailed to the title IV-E agency.

While this is primarily a set of activities conducted by the Federal review team, the title IV-E agency may use this time to begin making corrections to the system or the extraction code based on the preliminary on-site findings. Also, the title IV-E agency team should utilize this time to create a timeline for completion of each task identified in the draft findings matrices provided by the Federal team during the exit conference.

### B. FINAL ANALYSIS

Although the major portion of the AFCARS evaluation is conducted on-site, a number of steps in the assessment and documentation analysis may be completed during the post-site visit phase. These steps include consolidation of documentation from all members, consultation among Federal team members, and a final analysis of all findings, documentation, and (if applicable) revised program code. The Federal review team coordinator may contact the title IV-E agency with additional questions or request additional information.

Changes/corrections to the program code or the system screens submitted to the Children's Bureau within 45 days after the completion of the on-site review will be incorporated into the final report. If the title IV-E agency submits corrections to the extraction code, the title IV-E agency also needs to include a list of the changes, where the changes are located in the extraction code, or how they are identified within the extraction code. Additionally, the title IV-E agency should refer to the document list in Chapter IV. If any of the original documents submitted by the title IV-E agency during the pre-site visit phase have been modified, the title IV-E agency also needs to submit them.

### C. FINAL REPORT

The final report is issued to the title IV-E agency approximately 90 business days after the completion of the on-site review. The purpose of the final report is to document the findings of the AAR, including the agency's strengths, areas needing improvement, and changes necessary to meet all of the AFCARS requirements at 45 CFR 1355.40.

The AAR report to the title IV-E agency will include:

- a cover letter;
- an introduction that provides an overview of the background and purpose of the AAR;
- a summary of the findings and required changes;

- a table with the completed findings; and,
- the AFCARS improvement plan matrices.

The final rating factors may differ from those given as the preliminary on-site ratings. Changes in the rating factors reflect the post site-visit review of the case file review findings, the title IV-E agency's program code, and the system screens. In order to identify those elements for which a rating changed, the original on-site rating is included with a strike-through mark and the new rating below it.

If there are areas that need correcting, the AFCARS Improvement Phase begins after the title IV-E agency receives the final report with the final findings. This phase is discussed in the next chapter.

#### **D. DISSEMINATION OF THE FINAL REPORT**

The Children's Bureau will provide copies of the report to the appropriate officials at the title IV-E agency. All documentation is retained by the Children's Bureau as part of the permanent archive file on the title IV-E agency's AFCARS. Additionally, the title IV-E agency's final report, including all attachments, will be posted on the Children's Bureau web site.

## **CHAPTER VII: AFCARS IMPROVEMENT PHASE**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Based on the final analysis, the title IV-E agency may have to enter the AFCARS Improvement Phase if there are areas that must be corrected in order for the title IV-E agency to meet the requirements established in the AFCARS Federal regulation at 45 CFR 1355.40, the appendices to 45 CFR 1355, AFCARS policy, Technical Bulletins, or to improve the quality of the AFCARS data. This phase begins once the title IV-E agency receives the final report and ends when the title IV-E agency has made all system changes and the quality of the data have improved. The elements/general requirements that receive a rating factor of “3” or lower make up the action items in the plan.

### **B. AFCARS IMPROVEMENT PLAN (AIP)**

A title IV-E agency may have an improvement plan for the general requirements and/or the foster care and adoption data elements. Each requirement will be grouped by the rating factor it received and listed in order of ratings from lowest (“0” or “1”, if applicable) to highest (“3”). For instance, all elements that received a rating of “2” are listed in the matrix prior to those receiving a rating of “3.” Each finding and its related action item are numbered for ease of reference. Action items may include but are not limited to program extraction code and/or screen modifications, modifications to data elements mapping, system interface development, caseworker training, supervisory oversight, and development of an appropriate AFCARS quality assurance process.

The AIP included with the report does not include due dates. After the site visit the title IV-E agency should evaluate each item (general requirement and/or data element) identified in the draft findings document as needing correction and determine the length of time it will take to complete the item. Within 30 days of receipt of the final report, title IV-E agency staff must submit the initial AIP electronically to the Children’s Bureau with estimated dates for completing each action item. The date should be numbered in accordance with the task it is associated with from the task column. Upon receipt of the title IV-E agency’s initial AFCARS Improvement Plan, the Children’s Bureau will review the due dates to ensure the AIP will be implemented in a timely manner. In general, the Children’s Bureau will seek to respond to the title IV-E agency within 30 days with any questions or its approval of the initial AIP.

The title IV-E agency’s plan for implementing changes to the system and for caseworker training must be included in the title IV-E agency’s title IV-B Child and Family Services Plan or the Annual Progress and Services Report as part of the information required in 45 CFR 1357.15(t) and 45 CFR 1357.16(a)(5) to be submitted by June 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. If a title IV-E agency has a SACWIS/TACWIS, changes being made to the system should also be included in the title IV-E agency’s Advance Planning Document (APD) Update to the Children’s Bureau Division of State Systems.

The title IV-E agency must provide updates of its progress to the Children’s Bureau. The first AIP update is due three months after the title IV-E agency receives the Children’s Bureau’s

approval of the initial AIP. As updates are received and reviewed, the Children's Bureau will notify the agency when transmitting its comments on the AIP of the next due date for the AIP Update (AIPU).

The electronic version of the AIP is used by the title IV-E agency and the Children's Bureau for tracking changes, progress notes, and the Children's Bureau's approval of completed action items. As changes are made to either the program code or screens, documentation noting the updates must be included with the electronic AIP (e.g., screen shots or revised program code).

All information provided by the title IV-E agency or the Children's Bureau is to remain in the matrices. Do not delete prior estimated due dates or notes. It is important for this information to remain as historical documentation of the improvement phase and to allow others that may be new to the team to view a complete history of what has occurred to date.

The Children's Bureau will review the title IV-E agency's updated AIP and respond with comments or sign-off on approved completed action items generally 30 days after receiving the AIPU. Appendix G contains sample pages of the initial AIP and updates.

#### *Procedure Checklist*

- After the onsite review, the title IV-E agency reviews items needing correction and begins to outline its own work plan for making the changes and estimated due dates for each action item listed in the draft findings.
- Upon receipt of the final report, the title IV-E agency requests electronic copies of the AFCARS Improvement Plan from the Children's Bureau.
- Within 30 days of receipt of the final report, the title IV-E agency submits the initial AIP to the Children's Bureau with the title IV-E agency's due dates for the completion of each action item and its implementation plan.
  - Where appropriate, the title IV-E agency should include milestones in its plan noting dates for activities such as system analysis and design; development and testing; and, implementation and training.
  - All dates are to be numbered in accordance with its related task number.
- The first update is due approximately three months after the Children's Bureau approves the initial improvement plan.
- If the title IV-E agency has not made any changes since the last update, submit an email to the Children's Bureau indicating there are no changes.
- Notify the Children's Bureau in e-mail correspondence if there are changes in personnel that may affect the implementation of the AIP.
- Modified extraction code: Submit a complete copy of the extraction code, not just the sections that were modified. Strategies for change notations include:
  - Change/Modification History section of code: this may include dates and/or a numbering methodology.

- The section of program code that was modified includes a change request number or a date.
- Bold or highlight the section that was modified.
- ❑ If the title IV-E agency's extraction code is submitted to the Children's Bureau in multiple files, include the index of the order the files are executed. If the title IV-E agency created new routines, annotate the original index submitted to the Federal team during the pre-site visit phase.
- ❑ Modified and/or new screens: Submit a copy of the screen as it first appears and copies of any relevant drop-down option lists.
- ❑ Submit an updated data dictionary if new codes/values have been added to the system.
- ❑ The title IV-E agency may want to submit design documents to the Children's Bureau for review and feedback as part of its update, or between updates.
- ❑ Refer to the document list in Chapter IV. If any of the original documents submitted by the title IV-E agency during the pre-site visit phase have been modified, the title IV-E agency needs to also submit them.
- ❑ The title IV-E agency is to submit changes on an on-going basis via e-mail to the Children's Bureau and not wait to complete them all before submitting an updated AIP.
- ❑ If the date the title IV-E agency provided as an estimated completion date changes, strike through the old date and insert the new one. If an item was completed prior to the estimated due date, strike through the estimated date and add the completed date.
- ❑ Format for providing updates in the matrices:
  - Agency, date: comment.
  - Where "Agency" is the name of the title IV-E agency.
  - Date is the date the AIP update is due.
  - Comments are remarks from the title IV-E agency regarding the item.
  - Be sure to use the corresponding finding/task item number for the date and the comments. This allows for easy referencing of all the information as time passes and the document increases in size. In the footer of the document, strike through the previous date and insert the date of the current AIP update.

### C. NEW CHILD WELFARE INFORMATION SYSTEMS

In the event that during the life-cycle of the AIP the title IV-E agency designs and implements a completely new information system, the Federal team will suspend monitoring of the title IV-E agency's improvement plan. However, the title IV-E agency is expected to utilize the findings from its initial AFCARS Review Assessment and incorporate the findings into the new system. Once the new system is in production and a data file has been submitted from the system, the Children's Bureau will conduct a new AAR.



## D. CLOSE-OUT OF AFCARS IMPROVEMENT PLANS

The close-out of an AIP may occur in stages. The AFCARS Improvement Phase is not considered complete until all tasks/revisions have been approved by the Children's Bureau and the quality of the data has improved and been maintained. For instance, the title IV-E agency may complete all of the technical changes and have them approved by the Children's Bureau, but the data may not show an improvement indicating additional attention on data entry by caseworkers or a need for additional training.

In general, the close-out process is similar to the pre-site visit phase. It includes the following activities:

- A complete review of the title IV-E agency's technical documentation by the Federal team.
- Entering and extracting a set of test cases by the title IV-E agency team, and the Federal team's analysis of the results.
- A review of the title IV-E agency's data, including cases from the sample.

Once the Federal team determines the title IV-E agency has completed the tasks for the technical corrections, a set of test case scenarios will be sent to the title IV-E agency. The test cases will include the ones originally used for the review but have been aged to represent later report period. Additional scenarios may be added as needed. The title IV-E agency is to enter these cases and extract them as was done during the pre-site visit phase. These test cases are used to analyze whether all technical changes are accurate. At the same time, the title IV-E agency should provide the Children's Bureau with the most recent version of the AFCARS extraction code, and any other documents that have not already been received by the Federal team. Based on the results of the test cases, the Federal team will conduct a complete analysis of the extraction code. If errors are still identified with the extraction code, they will be included as a response to the title IV-E agency's AIP update.

The Children's Bureau will also review the agency's data to assess it for improvements in the quality of the data. The Children's Bureau may utilize other means, such as reports generated by the ACYF Office of Data, Analysis, Research and Evaluation, to determine accuracy of the title IV-E agency's data. The Children's Bureau will also review what the title IV-E agency has done in the areas of training and supervisory oversight to ensure the accuracy of the data. If issues were identified during the case file review related to converting data from an older information system or the paper case files, specifically in regard to missing historical removal episodes, then the AFCARS records for those cases will be reviewed again to ensure the data has been entered.

All items in the improvement plan must have a rating of four before the AIP is considered completed. Once the AIP is completed and approved, a letter will be sent to the title IV-E agency from the Children's Bureau's acknowledging the completion of the AFCARS Improvement Plan.

## **E. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

The Children's Bureau Regional Office will work with the title IV-E agency to identify technical assistance needed to implement the AIP. The title IV-E agency may also access technical assistance from the Children's Bureau's National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data and Technology (NRC-CWDT). The NRC-CWDT can be contacted at [nrccwdt@cwla.org](mailto:nrccwdt@cwla.org), or at its web page: <http://www.nrccwdt.org>. To arrange on-site technical assistance from the NRC-CWDT, contact your Children's Bureau Regional Office.

## **AFCARS Resources**

**POLICY DOCUMENTATION**

45 CFR 1355.40, and Appendices to Part 1355

Children's Bureau's Child Welfare Policy Manual, Section 1, AFCARS.

ACYF-PI-CB-95-09 (REVISED), issued 5/23/95  
Methods of Extracting Data for Submission to AFCARS

ACYF-CB-PI-01-07, issued 5/4/2001  
Change in the State AFCARS File Name

ACYF-CB-IM-02-03, issued April 8, 2002  
Decision regarding AFCARS Penalties, AFCARS File Name

ACYF-CB-IM-02-05, issued April 22, 2002  
AFCARS Assessment Reviews

**AFCARS TECHNICAL BULLETINS**

Technical Bulletin #1: Data Elements

Technical Bulletin #2: Disability Information

Technical Bulletin #3: Frequency Report Utility

Technical Bulletin #4: Data Compliance

Technical Bulletin #5a: Data Quality

Technical Bulletin #5b: Title IV-E Agency Data Quality, Technical Documentation

Technical Bulletin #6: Data Extraction

Technical Bulletin #7: Encryption Guidelines & Algorithms

Technical Bulletin #8: Record Identifier Encryption/Decryption Utility

Technical Bulletin #9: File Format

Technical Bulletin #10: Optional Explanatory Footnotes

Technical Bulletin #11: Electronic Data Transfer

**SOFTWARE UTILITIES**

Encryption/Decryption Utility  
Data Compliance Utility  
Data Quality Utility  
Frequency Utility

**WEBSITES**

Children's Bureau:

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb>

Children's Bureau AFCARS Page

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/research-data-technology/reporting-systems/afcars>

National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data and Technology:

<http://www.nrcwdt.org>

## **AFCARS General Requirements**

No.	Requirement	Checklist Items
<b>Foster Care Reporting Population</b>		
1	<p>For the purpose of foster care reporting, each data transmission must include all children in foster care for whom the title IV-E agency has responsibility for placement, care, or supervision. (45 CFR 1355.40(a)(2)).</p> <p>The [foster care] population to be included in this reporting system includes all children in foster care under the responsibility of the title IV-E agency administering or supervising the administration of the title IV-B Child and Family Services State plan and the title IV-E plan; that is, all children who are required to be provided the assurances of section 422(b)(8) of the Social Security Act. (Appendix A to Part 1355--Foster Care Data Elements, Section II--Definitions).</p>	<p>Identify the name of the agency that is designated as the single title IV-B/E agency.</p> <p>What is the organizational structure of the title IV-E agency?</p> <p>Does the agency include any of the following?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juvenile Justice</li> <li>• Mental Health</li> <li>• Other?</li> </ul> <p>Has the agency privatized (contracted out) foster care?</p> <p>What kinds of court orders are used to remove children (for example, pick-up order, endorsement, emergency shelter, etc.)?</p> <p>What constitutes a bona fide court order? Is a signature required, and, if so, who must sign and who may sign in lieu of the mandated signer? Is an electronic signature or a signature stamp permissible? Is a date required on the court order?</p> <p>What is the agency's timeframes applicable to removal and mechanism for initiating court removals (for example, removal petitions)?</p> <p>Does the title IV-E agency include children in the foster care population who are under the responsibility for placement, care, or supervision of the agency even if there are no foster care payments? (CWPM 1.3 #4)</p> <p>Are all children in foster care who are under the joint placement and care responsibility of the juvenile justice and child welfare systems reported to AFCARS? (CWPM 1.3 #13)</p> <p>Are all children in foster care who are under the joint placement and care responsibility of the mental health and child welfare systems reported to AFCARS? (CWPM 1.3 #13)</p> <p>Are children who are under the agency's responsibility for care, placement, or supervision and whose only placement is a locked facility or a hospital excluded? (CWPM 1.3 #12)</p>

No.	Requirement	Checklist Items
		<p>Are children whose only placement during the report period is “runaway” included in the reporting population? (CWPM, 1.2B.7 #24)</p> <p>Children of minor parents: If a child/youth in foster care is a parent, and their child lives with them, is their child excluded from the foster care reporting population?</p>
2	<p>[The AFCARS foster care reporting population] includes American Indian children covered under the assurances in section 422(b)(8) of the Act on the same basis as any other child. (45 CFR 1355.40(a)(2)).</p>	<p><u>For States:</u> As noted in item #1, “The [foster care] population to be included in this reporting system includes all children in foster care under the responsibility of the title IV-E agency administering or supervising the administration of the title IV-B Child and Family Services State plan and the title IV-E plan; that is, all children who are required to be provided the assurances of section 422(b)(8) of the Social Security Act.”</p> <p>What steps has the State taken to transfer AFCARS information on Tribal children that were in State custody at the time a title IV-E Tribe’s plan was approved or who had previously been in the State’s foster care system?</p> <p><u>For Tribes:</u> This item not applicable to Tribes operating a title IV-E program; title IV-E Tribal agencies are covered under item #1.</p>
3	<p>For children in out-of-State/Tribal Service area placement, the title IV-E agency placing the child and making the foster care payment submits and continually updates the data. (45 CFR 1355.40(a)(2)).</p>	<p>Does the selection logic exclude children placed in the State by another State?</p> <p>Does the selection logic exclude children placed in the State by a title IV-E Tribe?</p> <p>Does the selection logic exclude children placed in the title IV-E Tribal service area by another title IV-E Tribe?</p> <p>Does the selection logic exclude children placed in the title IV-E Tribal service area by a State?</p>
4	<p>[The foster care] population includes all children supervised by or under the responsibility of another public agency with which the title IV-E agency has an agreement under title IV-E and on whose behalf the title IV-E agency makes title IV-E foster care maintenance payments. (Appendix A to Part 1355--Foster Care</p>	<p>Does the title IV-E agency have an agreement with other public agencies to provide foster care maintenance payments to eligible children per the requirements in section 472(a)(2)(B)(ii) of the Act)? - If yes, is the title IV-E agency including these records in the AFCARS file?</p>



No.	Requirement	Checklist Items
	Data Elements, Section II--Definitions).	
5	<p>The reporting system includes all children who have or had been in foster care at least 24 hours. (Appendix A to Part 1355--Foster Care Data Elements, Section II—Definitions).</p>	<p>Is the title IV-E agency excluding children that were out of their homes for 24 hours or less?</p> <p>Is the time of removal and discharge included in the title IV-E agency’s data collection?</p> <p>Is there a checkbox for workers to select that indicates the removal was for less than 24 hours?</p> <p>Is the program code used to compile the AFCARS file checking the time fields and determining whether the removal episode was for 24 hour or more?</p> <p>Does the title IV-E agency include children placed in emergency facilities?</p>
6	<p>Foster care does not include children who are in their own homes under the responsibility of the title IV-E agency. (Appendix A to Part 1355--Foster Care Data Elements, Section II—Definitions).</p> <p>A removal is either the physical act of a child being taken from his or her normal place of residence, by court order or a voluntary placement agreement and placed in a substitute care setting, or the removal of custody from the parent or relative guardian pursuant to a court order or voluntary placement agreement which permits the child to remain in a substitute care setting. (CWPM, 1.2B.3 Question #4).</p>	<p>Does the title IV-E agency have a policy of “protective supervision?”</p> <p>Does the title IV-E agency provide “protective supervision” without ever removing the child from his/her home?</p> <p>Are children who are in the title IV-E agency’s responsibility for placement and care who were first placed with a non-custodial parent excluded from the reporting population?</p>
7	<p>[The foster care population] includes youth over the age of 18 if a payment is being made on behalf of the child (CWPM, 1.3).</p> <p>A title IV-E agency that exercises the option to extend assistance to youth age 18 or older must collect and report data to AFCARS on all youth receiving a title IV-E foster care maintenance payment. (ACYF-CB-PI-10-11, Issued July 9, 2010).</p>	<p>What is the title IV-E agency’s legal age of majority?</p> <p>What is the definition of child under the agency’s title IV-E plan?</p> <p>Is the title IV-E agency claiming title IV-E funds for youth over 18?</p> <p>See foster care elements #56 and #58 for additional information.</p>
8	<p>Include all children who are in the placement, care, or supervision responsibility of the title IV-B/E agency that are on “trial home visits” (CWPM 1.3).</p>	<p>Does the agency have a policy that all children are returned home prior to the release of court ordered placement, care, or supervision?</p> <p>Is there a timeframe specified in policy or statute for the length of time that the title IV-E agency must</p>

No.	Requirement	Checklist Items
		<p>maintain placement and care responsibility before the child is considered discharged?</p> <p>Does the agency conduct all periodic reviews in court?</p> <p>Does the program code report the record as an open foster care case regardless of the length of time the child has been in his/her own home?</p> <p>See foster care elements #56 and #58 for additional information when there is no policy regarding how long a placement of a child in his/her own home may last or if the agency does not conduct all periodic reviews in court.</p>
<b>Adoption Reporting Population</b>		
9	<p>For the purposes of adoption reporting, data are required to be transmitted by the title IV-E agency on all adopted children who were placed by the title IV-E agency. (45 CFR 1355.40(a)(3)).</p> <p>The title IV-E agency must report on all children who are adopted in the State or Tribal service area during the reporting period and in whose adoption the title IV-E agency has had any involvement. ...reports on the following are mandated:                      (a) All children adopted who had been <u>in foster care</u> under the responsibility and care of the child welfare agency and who were subsequently adopted whether special needs or not and whether subsidies are provided or not; (Appendix B to Part 1355--Adoption Data Elements, Section II - Definitions).</p>	<p>Has the State privatized its adoption functions?</p> <p>Does the State contract out any part of adoption placement services? If yes, describe the contract arrangements and type of service provided under contract.</p> <p>Are all adoptions under the jurisdiction of the agency required to be entered into the system?</p> <p>What controls exist to ensure that all adoption cases are entered into the system?</p> <p>Does the title IV-E agency contract out any of its adoption services?</p> <p>--If the above is yes, are these adoptions entered into the system, and by whom?</p> <p>Does the program code include customary adoptions?</p>
10	<p>For a child adopted out-of-State, the title IV-E agency which placed the child submits the data. Similarly, the Tribal title IV-E agency which placed the child outside of the Tribal service area for adoption submits the data.(45 CFR 1355.40(a)(3) I - Definitions).</p>	<p><u>For States:</u>                      Does the selection logic exclude children placed in the State for adoption by another State?</p> <p>Does the selection logic exclude children placed in the State for adoption by a title IV-E Tribe?</p> <p><u>For title IV-E Tribes:</u>                      Does the selection logic exclude children placed in the Tribal service area by a State?</p> <p>Does the selection logic exclude children placed in the Tribal service area for adoption by another title</p>

No.	Requirement	Checklist Items
11	<p>For the purposes of adoption reporting, data are required to be transmitted by the title IV-E agency ... on all adopted children for whom the agency is providing adoption assistance (either ongoing or for nonrecurring expenses), care or services directly or by contract or agreement with other private or public agencies. (45 CFR 1355.40(a)(3)).</p> <p>The title IV-E agency must report on all children who are adopted in the State or Tribal service area during the reporting period and in whose adoption the title IV-E agency has had any involvement. ...reports on the following are mandated:</p> <p>(b) All special needs children who were adopted in the State or Tribal service area, whether or not they were in the public foster care system prior to their adoption and for whom non-recurring expenses were reimbursed; and</p> <p>(c) All children adopted for whom an adoption assistance payment or service is being provided based on arrangements made by or through the title IV-E agency. (Appendix B to Part 1355--Adoption Data Elements, Section I).</p>	<p>IV-E Tribe?</p> <p>Does the title IV-E agency enter into adoption assistance agreements with families adopting from a private agency?</p> <p>Does the title IV-E agency enter into adoption assistance agreements with families adopting from a private agency that is located in another State, Indian Tribe, or Tribal Service Area?</p> <p>Are private individual adoptions included?</p>
<b>Technical Requirements</b>		
12	<p>The data must be extracted from the data system as of the last day of the reporting period (45 CFR 1355.40(b)(1)):</p> <p><u>For foster care information</u>, the child-specific data to be transmitted must reflect the data in the information system when the data are extracted. (45 CFR 1355.40(b)(2)).</p> <p>Report the status of all children in foster care as of the last day of the reporting period.</p> <p>Also, provide data for all children who were discharged from foster care at any time during the reporting period, or in the previous reporting period, if not previously reported. (Appendix D, 45 CFR 1355 Foster Care and Adoption Record Layouts Section</p>	<p><u>For Regular Files:</u></p> <p>The file should not include information or dates that occur after the end of a regular report period.</p> <p>The data must be reflective of the child's circumstances for the report period being submitted.</p> <p>If data are missing, the extraction code does not insert a valid value into the file.</p> <p>Does the information system store all historical information, or is information overwritten with the most recent event? (Example: The system stores all case plan goals with its associated date.)</p>

No.	Requirement	Checklist Items
	A.1.b(5)); (AFCARS Technical Bulletin #6, Data Extraction).	
13	<p>The data must be extracted from the data system as of the last day of the reporting period (45 CFR 1355.40(b)(1)):</p> <p><u>For foster care information</u>, the child-specific data to be transmitted must reflect the data in the information system when the data are extracted. (45 CFR 1355.40(b)(2)).</p> <p>Report the status of all children in foster care as of the last day of the reporting period. (AFCARS Technical Bulletin #6, Data Extraction)</p>	<p><u>For Subsequent Files:</u> How does the title IV-E agency extract subsequent files?</p> <p>The data must be reflective of the child’s circumstances for the report period being submitted. Example: The title IV-E agency is extracting the 2011B report period on June 8, 2012 for submission to the Children’s Bureau. Data in the 2011B file must reflect the child’s circumstances as of September 30, 2011. If a diagnosis has changed or a case plan goal since September 30, 2011, the new information is not to be included in the 2011B file.</p> <p>Does the information system store all historical information, or is information overwritten with the most recent event? (Example: Are diagnosed conditions overwritten or deleted when they change?)</p>
14	<p>The data must be extracted from the data system as of the last day of the reporting period. (45 CFR 1355.40(b)(1)):</p> <p><u>Adoption data</u> are to be reported during the reporting period in which the adoption is legalized or, at the title IV-E agency's option, in the following reporting period if the adoption is legalized within the last 60 days of the reporting period. For a semi-annual period in which no adoptions have been legalized, the title IV-E agency must report such an occurrence.(45 CFR 1355.40(b)(3)).</p>	<p>What controls exist to ensure that an individual adoption record is extracted and reported to AFCARS only once?</p> <p>How does the title IV-E agency extract subsequent files? Does the data in the subsequent submission reflect activities for that report period? Or, are current data extracted instead? For example: if there was a change in the amount of the adoption subsidy, is the amount that was in the adoption agreement at the time of the adoption the amount that is included in the subsequent submission?</p>
15	<p>The title IV-E agency extracts all records based on the transaction date of discharge (foster care element #57) or the date of latest removal (foster care element #21), if the child has not been discharged. (ACYF-PI-CB-95-09, Reissued May 23, 1995 and Technical Bulletin #6, AFCARS Data Extraction)</p>	<p>The data submitted to AFCARS should be extracted based on removal episodes and not on placement information.</p> <p>Does the selection logic check:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For a transaction date of discharge for a record that occurs during the reporting period.</li> <li>• If the transaction date of discharge is after the last day of the reporting period, but the same day or prior to the date the Title IV-E agency extracts the data for submission, AND the date of latest removal is equal or</li> </ul>

No.	Requirement	Checklist Items
		<p>prior to the last day of the reporting period, then the record must be included.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the transaction date of discharge is absent AND the date of latest removal is equal or prior to the last day of the reporting period, then the record must be included.</li> </ul> <p>If the transaction date of discharge is present, but does not fall within the dates of the reporting period AND the date of latest removal is after the last day of the reporting period, the record must be excluded.</p> <p>Does the title IV-E agency have a number of “dropped” records?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the cause because the transaction date is not used to extract the file?</li> <li>• Is there another cause for records being dropped from the file?</li> </ul>
16	<p>A summary file of the semi-annual data transmission must be submitted and will be used to verify the completeness of the title IV-E agency's detailed submission for the reporting period. (45 CFR 1355.40(b)(4)).</p> <p>The values for these data elements are generated by processing all records in the semi-annual detailed data transmission and computing the summary values for Elements #1 and #3-22. Element #2 is the semi-annual report period ending date. In calculating the age range for the child, the last day of the reporting period is to be used. (Appendix D, 45 CFR 1355 Foster Care and Adoption Record Layouts Sections A.2 and B.2).</p>	<p>Does the title IV-E agency’s semi-annual transmission often fail the format standard for the summary file?</p>
17	<p>[Files] must be submitted in electronic form as described in appendix C to Part 1355 and in record layouts as delineated in appendix D to Part 135545 CFR 1355.40(b)(1) Records must be written using ASCII standard character format. (Appendix C, 45 CFR 1355 Electronic Data Transmission Format).</p>	
18	<p>[Files] must be submitted in electronic form as described in appendix C to Part 1355 and in record layouts as delineated in appendix D to Part 135545 CFR 1355.40(b)(1) (2)</p>	

No.	Requirement	Checklist Items
	<p>All elements must be comprised of integer (numeric) value(s). (Appendix C, 45 CFR 1355 Electronic Data Transmission Format).</p>	
19	<p>[Files] must be submitted in electronic form as described in appendix C to Part 1355 and in record layouts as delineated in appendix D to Part 1355.(45 CFR 1355.40(b)(1)).</p> <p>All records must be a fixed length. The Foster Care Detailed Data Elements Record is 150 characters long and the Adoption Detailed Data Elements Record is 72 characters long. The Foster Care Summary Data Elements Record and the Adoption Summary Data Elements Record are each 172 characters long. (Appendix C, 45 CFR 1355 Electronic Data Transmission Format).</p>	
NR	<p>[Files] must be submitted in electronic form as described in appendix C to Part 1355 and in record layouts as delineated in appendix D to Part 1355. (45 CFR 1355.40(b)(1)) All title IV-E agencies must inform the Department, in writing, of the method of transfer they intend to use. (Appendix C, 45 CFR 1355 Electronic Data Transmission Format).</p>	<p>Has the title IV-E agency submitted the AFCARS File Registration Form?</p>
20	<p>The title IV-E agency must use correct file name for transmission. (Technical Bulletin #2, File Format).</p>	<p>Does the title IV-E agency submit the file using the correct naming convention?</p>
<b>Data Quality</b>		
21	<p><b>General Data Quality</b></p> <p>For data to be considered “quality” it must be accurate, complete, timely, and consistent in definition and usage across the entire IV-E agency and State/Tribal service area. The quality of the AFCARS data is assessed by the agency on a regular and continuous basis in order to sustain a high level of quality data. The agency incorporates AFCARS data into its quality assurance/continuous quality improvement plan. The agency involves staff from every level of the organization, and other stakeholders from outside of the agency.</p>	<p>What is the overall quality of the data?</p> <p>Does the title IV-E agency utilize management reports and the data in its analyses?</p> <p>What ongoing training exists for caseworkers regarding the information system?</p> <p>What is the title IV-E agency’s process to monitor the accuracy and completeness of the AFCARS data?</p> <p>Who are the staff involved in reviewing the AFCARS data?</p>

No.	Requirement	Checklist Items
22	<p><b>Data Conversion</b></p> <p>The information system has the capability of recording historical information, as applicable. This primarily applies to closed cases, if the agency did not convert all cases (open and closed), that re-open after conversion, and these cases must be entered into the system.</p> <p>The title IV-E agency transfers historical information on open cases. Specifically, it includes information on: date of first removal, total number of removals, and whether the child’s mother was married at the time of the child’s birth. If the case was open at the time of conversion, information on the number of placement settings is included.</p>	<p>Did the title IV-E agency have a legacy system?</p> <p>Were all records converted?</p> <p>How are cases that were closed at the time of conversion, but have re-opened, handled?</p> <p>Has relevant data from paper files been converted to the new system?</p> <p>Has information related to the current removal episode been transferred to the new system, such as all placements?</p> <p>Has all prior removal episode start and dates been moved to the new system? Did the reason for discharge for those episodes get transferred to the new system?</p>

## **AFCARS Data Elements**



**Foster Care Data Elements**

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
<b>I. General Information</b>	
1. Title IV-E Agency	<p><u>Requirements</u><sup>1</sup> For a State, the U.S. Postal Service two letter abbreviation for the State submitting the report. For a Tribal title IV-E agency, the abbreviation provided by ACF (Appendix A, Section II of Part 1355).</p> <p>All elements must be comprised of integer (numeric) value(s) (Appendix C of Part 1355 and CWPM, 1.2A.3 Question 1 and 1.2B.2 Question 4).</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Is the value reported as the 2 digit number assigned to the State or Tribe?</p> <p>This value can be hard-coded into the extraction routine.</p>
2. Report Period Ending Date	<p><u>Requirements</u> The last month and year for the reporting period.</p>
3. Local Agency (FIPS Code)	<p><u>Requirements</u> Identity of the county or equivalent unit which has responsibility for the case. The 5 digit Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) must be used or other ACF-provided code.</p> <p>The local agency code used must be the code of the office responsible for the case and not the home residence of the child (CWPM, 1.2B.2, Question 3).</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> <u>For States:</u> Is the State agency correctly using County offices instead of Regional Offices?</p> <p>If there are missing FIPS codes, this element is to be reported as blank and not the county of the Central Office.</p> <p><u>For Tribes:</u> Has the Tribal agency identified how it wants to utilize the local agency code and provided this information to the Children’s Bureau?</p>
4. Record Number	<p><u>Requirements</u> The sequential number which the title IV-E agency uses to</p>

<sup>1</sup> The requirements section includes the regulatory language as well as guidance from the Child Welfare Policy Manual (CWPM) and the Technical Bulletins (TB). The CWPM and TBs information includes the citation.

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>transmit data to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) or a unique number which follows the child as long as he or she is in foster care. The record number cannot be linked to the child's case I.D. number except at the title IV-E agency level.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      The record number must remain the person's identifier Statewide/in the Tribal service area.</p> <p>The number reported to AFCARS should be an encrypted person number.</p> <p>The same number is unique to the child and remains the child's number regardless of where the family/child moves to within the State/Tribal service area.</p> <p>Is the person number the same number from intake through the life of the case?</p> <p>For agencies that converted from an automated system to a new system, how was the person number handled for conversion purposes?</p> <p>The record number is <u>not</u> a social security number.</p> <p>The record number reported to AFCARS is <u>not</u> the child's person number in the agency's system.</p>
<p>5. Date of Most Recent Periodic Review (if applicable)</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      For children who have been in care for seven months or longer, enter the month, day and year of the most recent administrative or court review, including dispositional hearing. For children who have been in care less than seven months, leave the field blank. An entry in this field certifies that the child's computer record is current.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      How frequently does the agency conduct periodic reviews?</p> <p>Are all periodic reviews conducted in court or does the agency conduct administrative reviews also? The program code must select the later (most recent) of the two if both are conducted.</p> <p>The periodic review does not include supervisory reviews.</p> <p>The date used for this element is for reviews that meet the requirements in section 422(b)(8)(ii) and 475(5)(B) of the Social Security Act (SSA).</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>If a periodic review was conducted prior to or during the sixth month of the child’s foster care episode, the date of the review should be included.</p> <p>The most recent periodic review is for the <u>current</u> removal episode.</p> <p>Are there older dates reported? What is the cause of the older dates?</p> <p>This date must be the actual date on which the review occurred and not the scheduled date or due date for the next review.</p> <p>The dates reported must occur prior to the end or equal to the last day of the report period.</p> <p>For title IV-E agencies where the designated title IV-B and IV-E agency includes either juvenile justice or mental health: children that either directly enter a community-based placement (foster home, group home, etc.) or are placed in such a setting after leaving a correctional/detention facility, and are under the placement and care responsibility of the single IV-B/E State/Tribal agency, must be reported in AFCARS and be provided the protections in section 422(b)(8)(ii) and 475(5)(B) of the Act.</p> <p>Does the agency require a review of the accuracy of the information in the automated system at the same time that all aspects of the case are under review?</p>
<b>II. Child’s Demographic Information</b>	
<p>6. Date of Birth</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> [The] month, day and year of the child’s birth. If the child is abandoned or the date of birth is otherwise unknown, enter an approximate date of birth. Use the 15th as the day of birth.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Are there system edits, or other verification means, to verify the accuracy of the child’s date of birth in comparison to other factors (e.g., child is younger than the age defined in the title IV-E agency’s Plan when entered care, child is not older than the primary caregiver(s) or the foster parents)?</p>
<p>7. Sex</p> <p>1 = Male</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Indicate as appropriate.</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
2 = Female	<p><u>Checklist</u> If “other” or “unknown” are title IV-E agency values, they must be mapped to blank.</p>
<p>8. Child’s Race</p> <p>0=No 1=Yes</p> <p>a. American Indian or Alaska Native b. Asian c. Black or African American d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander e. White f. Unable to Determine</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> In general, a person’s race is determined by how they define themselves or by how others define them. In the case of young children, parents determine the race of the child.</p> <p>American Indian or Alaska Native -A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North or South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.</p> <p>Asian - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.</p> <p>Black or African American - A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.</p> <p>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.</p> <p>White - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.</p> <p>Unable to Determine - The specific race category is “unable to determine” because the child is very young or is severely disabled and no person is available to identify the child’s race. Also used if the parent, relative or guardian is unwilling to identify the child’s race.</p> <p>Indicate all races (a through e) that apply with a “1.” For those that do not apply, indicate a “0.” Indicate “f. unable to determine” with a “1” if it applies and a “0” if it does not.</p> <p>If at least one of the race categories “a-e” is selected (coded as 1) then “f” cannot also apply.</p> <p>A combination of a “1” in any category “a-e” and a “1” in “f” will result in an error.</p> <p>If all race categories “a-f” are all zeros, this will result in an error.</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p><u>Checklist</u>                      Every relevant agency value must map to an AFCARS value. If there are race values collected as ethnicities these must also be mapped to the appropriate AFCARS value.</p> <p>An agency’s method of collecting race information must allow for all possible combinations. There should not be a “primary” race identified.</p> <p>Hispanic/Latino is to be reported as an ethnicity not a race.</p> <p>This field should not be initialized or defaulted to zero. If data are missing (i.e., no race was selected), each race category should be blank. However, if the system collects the information by having the worker select all applicable races (e.g. selection boxes), those races not selected are mapped to “no.”</p> <p>Does the number of records reported as having two or more races seem accurate for the State/Tribe?</p> <p>What training is provided to workers and supervisors to ensure that individuals are asked to identify all applicable races?</p> <p>Has the agency implemented options for the AFCARS administrative value “unable to determine” that are clear to the worker in meaning and use? For instance, does the agency use terms such as “declined,” “incapacitated,” or “Safe Haven?”</p> <p>NYTD values:                      Is the NYTD value “declined” mapped to the AFCARS value “unable to determine?”</p> <p>The NYTD definition of "unknown" encompasses two situations in which it can be used. One situation would be mapped to AFCARS and the other would not. In order to make the response option of "unknown" more meaningful to the worker, the State may want to consider alternate terminology. One example might be "incapacitated" and "multi-racial-other race not known." These would then map in NYTD to "unknown." For AFCARS reporting purposes:                      -- If a child, youth, or parent is incapacitated and unable to provide the worker with race information, the worker would select "incapacitated/unknown." This value would be mapped to the AFCARS value "unable to determine."</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>-- If a person is multi-racial, but does not know the other race(s), the worker would select "multi-racial-other race not known/unknown." This value would then be mapped to blank and only the known race would be reported in AFCARS.</p>
<p>9. Child’s Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity</p> <p>1 = Yes 2 = No 3 = Unable to Determine</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Answer “yes” if the child is of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American origin, or a person of other Spanish cultural origin regardless of race. Whether or not a person is Hispanic or Latino is determined by how they define themselves or by how others define them. In the case of young children, parents determine the ethnicity of the child.</p> <p>“Unable to Determine” is used because the child is very young or is severely disabled and no person is available to determine whether or not the child is Hispanic or Latino. Also used if the parent, relative or guardian is unwilling to identify the child’s ethnicity.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> NYTD values: Is the NYTD value “declined” mapped to the AFCARS value “unable to determine?”</p> <p>Is the NYTD value “unknown” mapped to blank in AFCARS?</p>
<p>10. Has the Child Been Clinically Diagnosed with a Disability(ies)?</p> <p>1 = Yes 2 = No 3 = Not Yet Determined</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> “Yes” indicates that a qualified professional has clinically diagnosed the child as having at least one of the disabilities listed below.</p> <p>“No” indicates that a qualified professional has conducted a clinical assessment of the child and has determined that the child has no disabilities.</p> <p>“Not Yet Determined” indicates that a clinical assessment of the child by a qualified professional has not been conducted.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Does the agency have a policy regarding a timeframe for medical and psychological evaluations? If so, does the program code map this element to blank after some reasonable timeframe if no information has been entered into the system?</p> <p>Does the information system contain this as a question? If</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>not, how is this information extracted for AFCARS? What information in the system is used to determine if the child has had a health exam and was diagnosed with a condition that is to be mapped to AFCARS?</p> <p>Does the information system contain a module for health information? Is this where the AFCARS information is collected? Is the extraction code checking this section of the system? Are there other modules that collect similar information (such as observed behaviors) that may be confused with diagnosed disabilities?</p> <p>Is there a date associated with when the child was diagnosed with a condition? If not, how does the agency ensure the accuracy of subsequent submissions?</p>
<p>11. Mental Retardation</p> <p>0 = Condition Does Not Apply 1 = Condition Applies</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Significantly subaverage general cognitive and motor functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior manifested during the development period that adversely affect a child's/youth's socialization and learning.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Is there a date associated with when the child was diagnosed with a condition? If not, how does the agency ensure the accuracy of subsequent submissions?</p>
<p>12. Visually or Hearing Impaired</p> <p>0 = Condition Does Not Apply 1 = Condition Applies</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Having a visual impairment that may significantly affect educational performance or development; or a hearing impairment, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects educational performance.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Is there a date associated with when the child was diagnosed with a condition? If not, how does the agency ensure the accuracy of subsequent submissions?</p>
<p>13. Physically Disabled (Child)</p> <p>0 = Condition Does Not Apply 1 = Condition Applies</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> A physical condition that adversely affects the child's day-to-day motor functioning, such as cerebral palsy, spina bifida, multiple sclerosis, orthopedic impairments, and other physical disabilities.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Is there a date associated with when the child was diagnosed with a condition? If not, how does the agency ensure the accuracy of subsequent submissions?</p>
<p>14. Emotionally Disturbed (DSM- IV)</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> A condition exhibiting one or more of the following</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree: An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships; inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal problems. The term includes persons who are schizophrenic or autistic. The term does not include persons who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they are also seriously emotionally disturbed.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Is there a date associated with when the child was diagnosed with a condition? If not, how does the agency ensure the accuracy of subsequent submissions?</p>
<p>15. Other Medically Diagnosed Conditions Requiring Special Care</p> <p>0 = Condition Does Not Apply 1 = Condition Applies</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Conditions other than those noted above which require special medical care such as chronic illnesses. Included are children diagnosed as HIV positive or with AIDS.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Is there a date associated with when the child was diagnosed with a condition? If not, how does the agency ensure the accuracy of subsequent submissions?</p>
<p>16. Has this Child Ever Been Adopted?</p> <p>1 = Yes 2 = No 3 = Unable to Determine</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> If this child has ever been legally adopted, enter “yes.” If the child has never been legally adopted, enter “no.” Enter “Unable to Determine” if the child has been abandoned or the child’s parent(s) are otherwise not available to provide the information.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> This question should only be answered “yes” if child has been adopted before the current/most recent removal episode.</p> <p>This is to be a question the worker responds to and not a system-created response.</p> <p>The information system must be able to report the information regardless of whether the adoption was public or private.</p> <p>The system must be able to report the information regardless of whether the adoption was in-State/within the Tribal service area or in another State, country, or by another Tribe, as applicable for State and Tribal reporting title IV-E agencies.</p>



Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>Does the system have the capacity to collect the information that must be reported under section 422(b)(12) of the Act? This section of the Act relates to inter-country adoptions and requires title IV-E agencies to identify the number of children who were adopted from other countries and entered into custody of the title IV-E agency, the reasons for the disruptions or dissolutions, the permanency plan for the children, and identify the agencies that handled the placement or adoption. Title IV-E/B agencies are currently required to provide this information in the Five-Year Child and Family Services plan, and annually in the Annual Progress and Services Report.</p>
<p>17. If Yes, How Old was the Child when Adoption was Legalized?</p> <p>0 = Not Applicable                      1=less than 2 years old                      2=2-5 years old                      3=6 to 12 years old                      4=13 years or older                      5 = Unable to Determine</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      Enter the number which represents the appropriate age range. If uncertain, use an estimate.</p> <p>If no one is available to provide the information, enter “Unable to Determine.”</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      The response “not applicable” is only used if the child is known to have not been previously adopted (response to element #16 is “no”).</p> <p>If the child was previously adopted, but the age is unknown, this element must be left blank. An estimated age can be used to complete this field by the caseworker.</p>
<p><b>III. Removal/Placement Setting Indicators</b></p>	
<p>Removal Episodes</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      The removal of the child from his/her normal place of residence resulting in his/her placement in a foster care setting.</p> <p>A removal is either the physical act of a child being taken from his or her normal place of residence, by court order or a voluntary placement agreement and placed in a substitute care setting, or the removal of custody from the parent or relative guardian pursuant to a court order or voluntary placement agreement which permits the child to remain in a substitute care setting (CWPM, 1.2B.7, Question #7).</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      The information system must be able to capture the physical removal/voluntary removal/or constructive removal date as well as the date of the court order giving the agency responsibility for placement and care.</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
<p>18. Date of First Removal from Home</p>	<p>The program code must be able to identify the removal episode based on the current AFCARS requirements.</p> <p><u>Requirements</u>                      [The] Month, day and year the child was removed from home for the first time for the purpose of placement in a foster care setting. If the current removal is the first removal, enter the date of the current removal. For children who have exited foster care, “current” refers to the most recent removal episode.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      The information system must include historical information prior to a conversion from a legacy system (or paper file) to a new information system.</p> <p>The data collection system must include historical information on cases closed prior to a conversion to a new information system that have since re-opened.</p> <p>The agency enters the information on children that are on runaway status at the time the agency obtained responsibility for placement and care and who are still on runaway status at the end of the report period.</p> <p>If the first-ever removal from home is an episode that was 24-hours or less in duration, the date of that episode is never included as a first removal date.</p> <p>If in the first-ever removal the child’s only placement was a hospital or a locked facility, this episode date is never to be selected as the first removal date.</p> <p>If in the first-ever removal the child’s first placement was a detention facility or a hospital and the child subsequently enters a foster care setting within the scope of title IV-E, the date of the foster care placement is to always be the first removal from home date.</p> <p>The data collection system must include dates of removal that occurred in another county within the State, if applicable.</p>
<p>19. Total Number of Removals from Home To Date</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      The number of times the child was removed from home, including the current removal.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      The data collection system must include historical information prior to a conversion from a legacy system to a new information system.</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>Removal episodes that are less than 24-hours are never included in the removal count.</p> <p>In instances where the child’s only living arrangement is a hospital or detention (locked facility) at the time the title IV-B/IV-E agency obtains responsibility for placement and care, is the program code excluding these records from the number of removal episodes?</p>
<p>20. Date Child was Discharged from Last Foster Care Episode</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      For children with prior removals, enter the month, day and year they were discharged from care for the episode immediately prior to the current episode.</p> <p>For children with no prior removals, leave this field blank.</p> <p>If foster care element #19 is <math>\geq 2</math>, then this field must not be blank.</p> <p>If this field is not blank, it must be a date prior to foster care element #21 (Date of Latest Removal From Home).</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      The date of discharge must reflect the date the agency no longer has care, placement, or supervision of the child.</p> <p>Must not include the date the child entered a “trial home visit.”</p> <p>If a child re-enters care from a “trial home visit” that was for a non-specified period of time, and a discharge date is entered that equals six months from the date of placement, then that date must be entered for element #20.</p> <p>The data collection system must include historical information prior to a conversion from a legacy system (or paper files) to a new information system.</p> <p>If there was a prior removal episode that was 24-hours or less, and the child later re-enters foster care, the end date of the previous 24-hour episode is not to be reported for this element.</p> <p>If the child’s prior removal episode only contained a placement that was a hospital or detention (locked) facility, the end date of this episode is not to be reported for this element.</p>
<p>21. Date of Latest Removal from Home</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      Month, day and year the child was last removed from</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>his/her home for the purpose of being place in foster care.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      This would be the date for the current episode or, if the child has exited foster care, the date of removal for the most recent removal.</p> <p>This must be the date of the current removal from home (not necessarily the date of case opening).                      This date must be equal to or prior to foster care element #23 (Date of Placement in Current Foster Care Setting).</p> <p>The system must include information prior to a conversion from a legacy system to a new information system.</p> <p>If a child is on runaway status at the time the IV-B/IV-E agency obtains responsibility for placement and care, the child is to be included in the AFCARS reporting population. If at the end of the report period the child is still on runaway status, the date of removal and placement date (foster care element #23) will be the same, element #41 will reflect “runaway,” and the number of placements will be zero.</p> <p>If the child’s only placement was a hospital stay or a detention (locked) facility, this is not a removal for AFCARS reporting purposes.</p> <p>If the child’s first placement was a detention (locked) facility or a hospital and then the child enters a foster care setting within the scope of title IV-E, the date of removal is the start date of this placement.</p>
22. Removal Transaction Date	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      A computer-generated date which accurately indicates the month, day and year the response to “Date of Latest Removal From Home” was entered into the information system.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      This date must be a non-modifiable, computer-generated date that reflects when element #21 was first entered into system.</p>
23. Date of Placement in Current Foster Care Setting	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      Month, day and year the child moved into the current foster home, facility, residence, shelter, institution, etc. for purposes of continued foster care.</p> <p>The date must not change when there is a change in the status of the same placement setting (e.g., a foster home</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>that becomes a pre-adoptive home) (CWPM, 1.2B.7, Question #1, #17, and #19).</p> <p>The agency must indicate the date the child was returned home while still in the agency’s responsibility for placement and care (CWPM, 1.2B.7, Question #23).</p> <p>The agency must indicate the date the child ran away from a placement (CWPM, 1.2B.7, Question #23).</p> <p>If a child’s only “placement” in the removal episode is as a “runaway,” then the date of removal and placement date will be the same (CWPM, 1.2B.7, Question #24).</p> <p>In regard to institutions with several cottages on their campus, the agency is not to change the date when a child moves from one cottage to another. Only report a change in the date of placement if the site is at a different address (CWPM, 1.2B.7, Question #25).</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Does the information system or the title IV-E agency’s method of collecting data, contain all locations the child has resided since the agency removed the child or received responsibility for placement and care?</p>
<p>24. Number of Previous Placement Settings During this Removal Episode</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Enter the number of places the child has lived, including the current setting, during the current removal episode.</p> <p>Placement occurs after removal and is the physical setting in which a child resides, that is, the resultant foster care setting. A new placement setting results when the foster care setting changes (for example, when a child moves from one foster family home to another or to a group home or institution) (CWPM, 1.2B.7, Question #7).</p> <p>The number of placements must not include a change in status of the same placement setting (e.g., a foster home that becomes a pre-adoptive home) (CWPM, 1.2B.7, Question #1, #17, and #19).</p> <p>There are certain temporary living conditions that are not placements, but rather represent a temporary absence from the child’s ongoing foster care placement. As such, the title IV-E agency must exclude the following temporary absences from the calculation of the number of previous placement settings for foster care element #24.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visitation with a sibling, relative, or other caretaker (e.g., pre-placement visits with a</li> </ul>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>subsequent foster care provider or pre-adoptive parents)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hospitalization for medical treatment, acute psychiatric episodes or diagnosis</li> <li>• Respite care</li> <li>• Day or summer camps</li> <li>• Trial home visits</li> <li>• Runaway episodes (CWPM, 1.2B.7, Question #21)</li> </ul> <p>The placement count must not include the return to the same foster care placement setting from a “trial home visit” (CWPM, 1.2B.7, Question #8, 9, 11, and 23).</p> <p>The placement count must not include return from runaway status and entry to the same placement setting (CWPM, 1.2B.7, Question #8, 9, 11, 23, and 24).</p> <p>If a child’s only “placement” in the removal episode is as a “runaway,” the placement count must be zero (CWPM, 1.2B.7, Question # 24).</p> <p>In regard to institutions with several cottages on their campus, the agency is not to count a move from one cottage to another. Only count the placement if the site is at a different address. (CWPM, 1.2B.7, Question #25).</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> This element is not to be initialized or defaulted to zero.</p> <p>The child’s home that he/she was removed from is not included in the placement count.</p> <p>Does the information system or the title IV-E agency’s method of collecting data, contain all locations the child has resided since the agency removed the child or received responsibility for placement and care?</p>
<b>IV. Circumstances of Removal</b>	
<p>25. Manner of Removal from Home for Current Removal Episode</p> <p>1 = Voluntary 2 = Court Ordered 3 = Not Yet Determined</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Voluntary Placement Agreement—An official voluntary placement agreement has been executed between the caretaker and the agency. The placement remains voluntary even if a subsequent court order is issued to continue the child in foster care.</p> <p>Court Ordered—The court has issued an order which is the basis for the child’s removal.</p> <p>Not Yet Determined—A voluntary placement agreement</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>has not been signed or a court order has not been issued. This mostly will occur in very short-term cases. When either a voluntary placement agreement is signed or a court order is issued, the record should be updated to reflect the manner of removal at that time.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Does the title IV-E agency have voluntary placement agreements?</p> <p>Does the title IV-E agency claim title IV-E reimbursement for children voluntarily placed? Who may enter into a voluntary placement agreement and what is the duration of such an agreement?</p>
<p>Actions or Conditions Associated With Child’s Removal</p> <p>0=Does not Apply 1=Applies</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Indicate all elements #26-40 that apply with a 1. Indicate a zero for conditions that do not apply</p> <p>At least one of the foster care elements #26- 40 must have a value equal to 1 (Applies).</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> The system must have the capacity to report on all AFCARS values for elements #26 – 40.</p> <p>The system must report only those conditions that existed at the time of removal — it must not report any conditions that are found to exist after the child is removed.</p> <p>Circumstances associated with removal must be checked for voluntary placements as well as court ordered placements.</p> <p>Where applicable, this information is to be converted from a legacy, or paper files, for open cases.</p> <p>Are there additional options on the screen that can/should be mapped to the AFCARS values?</p>
<p>26. Physical Abuse (alleged/reported)</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Alleged or substantiated physical abuse, injury or maltreatment of the child by a person responsible for the child’s welfare.</p>
<p>27. Sexual Abuse (alleged/reported)</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Alleged or substantiated sexual abuse or exploitation of a child by a person who is responsible for the child’s welfare.</p>
<p>28. Neglect (alleged/reported)</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Alleged or substantiated negligent treatment or</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>maltreatment, including failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter or care.</p> <p>Map mental/emotional abuse as “Neglect” (CWPM, 1.2B.3 Question #3).</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Domestic violence should be mapped to this element.</p>
29. Alcohol Abuse (parent)	<p><u>Requirements</u> Principal caretaker’s compulsive use of alcohol that is not of a temporary nature.</p>
30. Drug Abuse (parent)	<p><u>Requirements</u> Principal caretaker’s compulsive use of drugs that is not of a temporary nature.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> The system must be able to differentiate between drug abuse and alcohol abuse (i.e. cannot have simply “substance abuse”).</p>
31. Alcohol Abuse (child)	<p><u>Requirements</u> Child’s compulsive use of or need for alcohol.</p> <p>This element should include infants addicted at birth.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> The system must be able to differentiate between drug abuse and alcohol abuse (i.e. cannot have simply “substance abuse”).</p> <p>This element also includes infants exposed in-utero to alcohol.</p>
32. Drug Abuse (child)	<p><u>Requirements</u> Child’s compulsive use of or need for narcotics.</p> <p>This element should include infants addicted at birth.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> The system must be able to differentiate between drug abuse and alcohol abuse (i.e. cannot have simply “substance abuse”).</p> <p>This element also includes infants exposed in-utero to drugs.</p>
33. Child's Disability	<p><u>Requirements</u> Clinical diagnosis by a qualified professional of one or more of the following: Mental retardation; emotional disturbance; specific learning disability; hearing, speech or sight impairment; physical disability; or other clinically</p>



Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>diagnosed handicap.</p> <p>Include only if the disability(ies) was at least one of the factors which led to the child's removal.</p>
34. Child's Behavior Problem	<p><u>Requirements</u> Behavior in the school and/or community that adversely affects socialization, learning, growth, and moral development. These may include adjudicated or nonadjudicated child behavior problems. This would include the child's running away from home or other placement.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Is this being used for children in foster care under a title IV-E agreement with juvenile justice?</p>
35. Death of Parent(s)	<p><u>Requirements</u> Family stress or inability to care for child due to death of a parent or caretaker.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Is the date(s) of death included as the termination of parental rights dates, if applicable?</p>
36. Incarceration of Parent(s)	<p><u>Requirements</u> Temporary or permanent placement of a parent or caretaker in jail that adversely affects care for the child.</p>
37. Caretaker's Inability to Cope Due to Illness or Other Reason	<p><u>Requirements</u> Physical or emotional illness or disabling condition adversely affecting the caretaker's ability to care for the child.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Can be marked "applies" if none of the other conditions apply.</p>
38. Abandonment	<p><u>Requirements</u> Child was left alone or with others; caretaker did not return or make whereabouts known.</p>
39. Relinquishment	<p><u>Requirements</u> In writing, assigned the physical and legal custody of the child to the agency for the purpose of having the child adopted.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> If the agency operates a Safe Haven program indicate "applies" for this element for those infants/children entering under the Safe Haven program.</p>
40. Inadequate Housing	<p><u>Requirements</u> Housing facilities were substandard, overcrowded, unsafe</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	or otherwise inadequate resulting in their not being appropriate for the parents and child to reside together. Also includes homelessness.
<b>V. Current Placement Setting</b>	
<p>41. Current Placement Setting</p> <p>1 = Pre-Adoptive Home                  2 = Foster Family Home (Relative)                  3 = Foster Family Home (Non-Relative)                  4 = Group Home                  5 = Institution                  6 = Supervised Independent Living                  7 = Runaway                  8 = Trial Home Visit</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u></p> <p>Pre-Adoptive Home—A home in which the family intends to adopt the child. The family may or may not be receiving a foster care payment or an adoption subsidy on behalf of the child.</p> <p>Foster Family Home (Relative)—A licensed or unlicensed home of the child's relatives regarded by the title IV-E agency as a foster care living arrangement for the child.</p> <p>Foster Family Home (Non-Relative)—A licensed foster family home regarded by the title IV-E agency as a foster care living arrangement.</p> <p>Group Home—A licensed or approved home providing 24-hour care for children in a small group setting that generally has from seven to twelve children.</p> <p>Institution—A child care facility operated by a public or private agency and providing 24-hour care and/or treatment for children who require separation from their own homes and group living experience. These facilities may include: child care institutions; residential treatment facilities; maternity homes; etc.</p> <p>Supervised Independent Living—An alternative transitional living arrangement where the child is under the supervision of the agency but without 24 hour adult supervision, is receiving financial support from the child welfare agency, and is in a setting which provides the opportunity for increased responsibility for self care.</p> <p>Runaway—The child has run away from the foster care setting.</p> <p>Trial Home Visit—The child has been in a foster care placement, but, under title IV-E agency supervision, has been returned to the principal caretaker for a limited and specified period of time. If a time period is not specified the child must be identified as having been returned home at the point at which the trial home visit exceeds six months (CWPM, 1.2B.7 Question #5, and 1.3, Question #11).</p> <p>Multi-service agencies should not be coded as “Institution;” the actual setting should be used (CWPM,</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>1.2B.7 Question #25).</p> <p>Foster homes are included whether or not they are licensed; this includes placement with relatives (CWPM, 1.2B.7 Question #15).</p> <p>If at the time the agency obtains responsibility for care and placement of the child, and the child is on runaway status and remains a runaway as of the end of the report period, then report “runaway” for this element (CWPM, 1.2B.7 Question #24).</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      Are relative placements mapped to “foster family home (relative)” even if there is no payment?</p> <p>The system must have the capacity to include all living arrangements of the child from the time the child enters the title IV-E agency’s responsibility for placement and care, including a placement where a payment is not made to the foster family or the a facility.</p> <p>Does the extraction code select records of children in a non-paid placement?</p>
<p>42. Is Current Placement Setting Outside of the State or Tribal Service Area?</p> <p>1 = yes                      2 = no</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      “Yes” indicates that the current placement setting is located outside of the State or the Tribal service area of the Tribal title IV-E agency making the report.</p> <p>“No” indicates that the child continues to reside within the State or the Tribal service area of the Tribal title IV-E agency making the report.</p> <p>Note: Only the title IV-E agency with placement and care responsibility for the child should include the child in this reporting system.</p>
<p><b>VI. Most Recent Case Plan Goal</b></p>	
<p>43. Most Recent Case Plan Goal</p> <p>1 = Reunify with Parent(s) or Principal caretaker(s)                      2 = Live with Other Relative(s)                      3 = Adoption                      4 = Long-term Foster Care                      5 = Emancipation                      6 = Guardianship                      7 = Case Plan Goal Not Yet Established</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      Indicate the most recent case plan goal for the child based on the latest review of the child’s case plan - whether a court review or an administrative review. If the child has been in care less than six months, enter the goal in the case record as determined by the caseworker.</p> <p>Reunify With Parents or Principal Caretaker(s)—The goal is to keep the child in foster care for a limited time to enable the agency to work with the family with whom the child had been living prior to entering foster care in order</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>to reestablish a stable family environment.</p> <p>Live With Other Relatives—The goal is to have the child live permanently with a relative or relatives other than the ones from whom the child was removed. This could include guardianship by a relative(s).</p> <p>Adoption—The goal is to facilitate the child's adoption by relatives, foster parents or other unrelated individuals.</p> <p>Long-term Foster Care—Because of specific factors or conditions, it is not appropriate or possible to return the child home or place her or him for adoption, and the goal is to maintain the child in a long-term foster care placement.</p> <p>Emancipation—Because of specific factors or conditions, it is not appropriate or possible to return the child home, have a child live permanently with a relative or have the child be adopted; therefore, the goal is to maintain the child in a foster care setting until the child reaches the age of majority.</p> <p>Guardianship—The goal is to facilitate the child's placement with an agency or unrelated caretaker, with whom he or she was not living prior to entering foster care, and whom a court of competent jurisdiction has designated as legal guardian.</p> <p>Case Plan Goal Not Yet Established—No case plan goal has yet been established other than the care and protection of the child.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      If the program code defaults missing data to “not yet established,” then this information should be mapped to blank after 60 days from the date of latest removal.</p> <p>Is the return of a child to a non-custodial parent mapped to “reunification?”</p> <p>If the agency does not list “long-term foster care” on the case screen, then the program code must list the alternative living arrangement plans that are mapped to it.</p> <p>If the youth will be in foster care until the age of 18 and no other goal is currently applicable, and the youth has a permanent connection with an adult, use the goal “emancipation.” If there is no adult with a permanent</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	connection to the child, use “long-term foster care.”
<b>VII. Principal Caretaker’s Information</b>	
Principal Caretaker(s) Information	<p><u>Requirements</u> Provide information on the person(s) from whom the child was removed.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> This may include biological parents, grandparents, other family members, legal parents, or others.</p>
<p>44. Caretaker Family Structure</p> <p>1 = Married Couple 2 = Unmarried Couple 3 = Single Female 4 = Single Male 5 = Unable to Determine</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Select the category which best describes the type of adult caretaker(s) from whom the child was removed for the current foster care episode.</p> <p>Enter “Unable to Determine” if the child has been abandoned or the child's caretakers are otherwise unknown</p> <p>If a child's principal caretakers are a same sex couple, how is the information entered into the system?</p> <p>For AFCARS reporting, indicate the couple’s family structure as either an unmarried or married couple depending on State law (CWPM, 1.2B.8 Question #3).</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> “Separated” must be mapped to “married.”</p>
45. Year of Birth (1 <sup>st</sup> Principal Caretaker)	<p><u>Requirements</u> Enter the year of birth.</p> <p>If the response to foster care element #44, Caretaker Family Structure, was 1 or 2, enter data for two caretakers.</p> <p>If the response to element #44 was 3 or 4, enter data only for the first caretaker.</p> <p>If the exact year of birth is unknown, enter an estimated year of birth.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Are there edit checks in the system to ensure that the year of birth is prior to the child’s year of birth?</p> <p>Are there edits to check if the parent is at least between 10 and 12 years of age?</p> <p>There should not be a default year used by the extraction code (e.g., 1900).</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>There should not be a default year entered into the system for an unknown parent.</p> <p>Are there edit checks, in either the system or the extraction code, that check for caretakers that are more than 80 years old and notify the worker to confirm if the age is accurate?</p> <p>Do the number of records reported in element #44 as a married or unmarried couple, single male and single female equal the number of records with a reported year of birth in element #45?</p>
<p>46. Year of Birth (2<sup>nd</sup> Principal Caretaker - if applicable)</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Enter the year of birth if the response to element #44 was a 1 or 2. If the exact year of birth is unknown, enter an estimated year of birth.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Are there edit checks in the system to ensure that the year of birth is prior to the child’s year of birth?</p> <p>Are there edits to check if the parent is at least between 10 and 12 years of age?</p> <p>There should not be a default year used by the extraction code (e.g., 1900).</p> <p>There should not be a default year entered into the system for an unknown parent.</p> <p>Are there edit checks, in either the system or the extraction code, that check for caretakers that are more than 80 years old and notify the worker to confirm if the age is accurate?</p> <p>Do the number of records reported in element #44 as a married or unmarried couple equal the number of records with a year of birth reported in element #46?</p>
<p><b>VIII. Parental Rights Termination (if applicable)</b></p>	
<p>47. Date of Mother's Parental Rights Termination (if applicable)</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Enter the month, day and year that the court terminated the mother’s parental rights. If the mother is known to be deceased, enter the date of death.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> If the parent was the legal mother as a result of having adopted the child, the legal mother’s TPR date is to be reported.</p> <p>TPRs that occurred prior to an agency’s conversion to a</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>new system must be included.</p> <p>If the child’s outcome/discharge from foster care is adoption, there must be a TPR date.</p> <p>If the adoptive (legal) parents are two men, for AFCARS reporting purposes extract one of the dates for this element.</p>
<p>48. Date of Legal or Putative Father's Parental Rights Termination (if applicable)</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Enter the month, day and year that the court terminated the father’s parental rights. If the father is known to be deceased, enter the date of death.</p> <p>Legal or most recent putative father’s TPR date (i.e. the last impediment to freeing the child) must be used (CWPM, 1.2B.8, Question #2).</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> If the child’s outcome/discharge from foster care is adoption, there must be a TPR date.</p> <p>TPRs that occurred prior to an agency’s conversion to a new system must be included.</p> <p>If the parent was the legal father as a result of having adopted the child, the legal father’s TPR date is to be reported.</p> <p>If the adoptive (legal) parents are two women, for AFCARS reporting purposes extract one of the dates for this element.</p>
<b>IX. Foster Family Home</b>	
<p>Foster Family Home - Parent(s) Data</p>	<p><u>Checklist</u> The system must have the capacity to report elements #49-55 if the child is in a foster home of a private provider (contracted provider).</p> <p>Does the title IV-E agency’s case management or tracking system use the same screen for the collection of the foster care provider’s demographic information that is used for the person information related to the child and other family members?</p>
<p>49. Foster Family Structure</p> <p>0=Not Applicable 1 = Married Couple 2 = Unmarried Couple 3 = Single Female</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Select the category which best describes the nature of the foster parents with whom the child is living in the current foster care episode.</p> <p>If foster care element #41 (current placement setting) has a</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
4 = Single Male	<p>value = 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8 (indicating that the child is not in a foster family or pre-adoptive home), foster care element #49 must be 0, not applicable.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Does the total number of records reported for a family structure equal the number of records with a response of 1, 2 or 3 in element #41?</p> <p>Are the number of records reported with a value of “not applicable” equal to the number of records reported in element #41 for the values 4 – 8?</p>
50. Year of Birth (1 <sup>st</sup> Foster Caretaker)	<p><u>Requirements</u> Enter the year of birth.</p> <p>If the response to element #49 was 3 or 4, enter data only for the first foster caretaker. If the exact year of birth is unknown, enter an estimated year of birth.</p> <p>If foster care element #41 (current placement setting) has a value = 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8 (indicating that the child is not in a foster family or pre-adoptive home), foster care element #50 should be blank.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Do the number of records reported in element #49 as a married or unmarried couple, single male and single female equal the number of records with a reported year of birth in element #50?</p> <p>Are there system edits to verify the accuracy of the foster parent’s date? For example, where the date of birth entered would result in the foster parent being younger than 18.</p>
51. Year of Birth (2 <sup>nd</sup> Foster Caretaker)	<p><u>Requirements</u> Enter the year of birth if the response to element #49 was a 1 or 2. If the exact year of birth is unknown, enter an estimated year of birth.</p> <p>If foster care element #41 (current placement setting) has a value = 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8 (indicating that the child is not in a foster family or pre-adoptive home), then foster care element #51 must be blank.</p> <p>Do the number of records reported in element #49 as a married or unmarried couple equal the number of records with a reported year of birth in element #51?</p> <p>Are there system edits to verify the accuracy of the foster</p>



Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	parent’s date? For example, when the date of birth entered would result in the foster parent being 18 or younger.
<p>52. Race of 1<sup>st</sup> Foster Caretaker</p> <p>a. American Indian or Alaska Native                      b. Asian                      c. Black or African American                      d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander                      e. White                      f. Unable to Determine</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      Indicate the race for the first foster parent. See instructions and definitions for the race categories under element #8, child’s race.</p> <p>Use “f. Unable to Determine” only when a foster parent is unwilling to identify his or her race.</p> <p>If at least one of the race categories “a-e” is selected (coded as 1) then f cannot also apply. A combination of a “1” in any category "a-e" and a “1” in “f” will result in an error. In addition, if all race categories “a-f” are all “0”s, this will result in an error.</p> <p>If foster care element #41 (Current Placement Setting) has a value = 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8 (indicating that the child is not in a foster family or pre-adoptive home), then the race categories are to be left blank.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      This field should not be initialized or defaulted to zero.</p>
<p>53. Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity of 1<sup>st</sup> Foster Caretaker</p> <p>0 = Not Applicable                      1 = Yes                      2 = No                      3 = Unable to Determine</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      Indicate the ethnicity for the first foster parent. See instructions and definitions under element #9, child’s Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity.</p> <p>Use “Unable to Determine” only when a foster parent is unwilling to identify his or her ethnicity.</p> <p>If foster care element #41 (current placement setting) has a value = 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8 (indicating that the child is not in a foster family or pre-adoptive home), then this element must be “0.”</p>
<p>54. Race of 2<sup>nd</sup> Foster Caretaker (if applicable)</p> <p>a. American Indian or Alaska Native                      b. Asian                      c. Black or African American                      d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander                      e. White                      f. Unable to Determine</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      Indicate the race for the second foster parent. See instructions and definitions for the race categories under element #8, child’s race.</p> <p>Use “f. Unable to Determine” only when a foster parent is unwilling to identify his or her race.</p> <p>If at least one of the race categories “a-e” is selected (coded as 1) then “f” cannot also apply. A combination of a “1” in any category “a-e” and a “1” in “f” will result in an error. In addition, if all race categories “a-f” are all 0’s, this will result in an error.</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>If foster care element #41 (current placement setting) has a value = 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8 (indicating that the child is not in a foster family or pre-adoptive home), then the race categories must be blank.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> This field should not be initialized or defaulted to zero.</p>
<p>55. Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity of 2<sup>nd</sup> Foster Caretaker (if applicable)</p> <p>0 = Not Applicable 1 = Yes 2 = No 3 = Unable to Determine</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Indicate the ethnicity for the second foster parent. See instructions and definitions under element #9, child’s Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity.</p> <p>Use “f. Unable to Determine” only when a foster parent is unwilling to identify his or her ethnicity.</p> <p>If foster care element #41 (Current Placement Setting) has a value = 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8 (indicating that the child is not in a foster family or pre-adoptive home), then this element must be “0.”</p> <p>If foster care element #49 is either “single male” or “single female,” then this element should be “not applicable.”</p>
<b>X. Outcome Data</b>	
<p>Outcome Information</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Enter data only for children who have exited foster care during the reporting period.</p> <p>For those title IV-E agencies that exercise the option to extend assistance to youth age 18 or older: &gt; The AFCARS foster care removal episode does not end until the youth is no longer receiving a title IV-E foster care maintenance payment. These records are considered an open removal episode (45 CFR 1355.40, ACYF-CB-PI-10-11, and (CWPM, Section 1.3).</p> <p>A discharge represents that point in time when the child is no longer in foster care under the care and responsibility or supervision of the title IV-E agency. For AFCARS purposes, situations in which the title IV-E agency retains supervision of a child and the child returns home on a trial basis, for an unspecified period of time, are considered a discharge from foster care after a six month period (CWPM, 1.2B.3 Question #4, and 1.2B.7 Question #7).</p> <p>Children who are returned home (element #41, placement setting of “trial home visit”) and the agency has not been dismissed of its responsibility for placement and care, are not considered discharged from the AFCARS reporting</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>population (CWPM, Section 1.3).</p> <p><u>Checklist</u></p> <p>If the agency claims, and the youth is eligible, title IV-E funds, is the discharge date equivalent to the when the child is no longer eligible for title IV-E funds?</p> <p>If the agency does not claim title IV-E foster care maintenance payments on youth over the age of 18, are these records reported as discharged from the AFCARS foster care file on or before the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.</p> <p>Is the title IV-E agency providing services to youth over the age of 18 who are not eligible for title IV-E funds? If so, are these records reported as discharges when the child turns 18?</p>
56. Date of Discharge from Foster Care	<p><u>Requirements</u></p> <p>Enter the month, day and year the child was discharged from foster care. If the child has not been discharged from care, leave blank.</p> <p>If this foster care element is applicable, the date entered must be later than or equal to the Date of Last Removal From Home (foster care element #21).</p> <p><u>Checklist</u></p> <p>If this element is applicable, there must be a reason provided in element #58.</p> <p>The date should be equal to or prior to the last day of the report period.</p> <p>If the date is entered after the end of the report period, but before the agency extracts the data, it can be extracted and reported for the report period in which the discharge occurred. It must also be submitted in the report period the transaction date occurred.</p>
57. Foster Care Discharge Transaction Date	<p><u>Requirements</u></p> <p>A computer generated date which accurately indicates the month, day and year the response to “Date of Discharge from Foster Care” was entered into the information system.</p> <p>If the date of discharge from foster care (element #56) is present, the date of discharge from foster care transaction date ( element #57) must be present and must be later than or equal to the date of discharge from foster care (element #56).</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	Must be a non-modifiable computer-generated date that reflects the date element #56 was first entered into system.
<p>58. Reason for Discharge</p> <p>0 = Not Applicable                      1 = Reunification with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s)                      2 = Living with Other Relative(s)                      3 = Adoption                      4 = Emancipation                      5 = Guardianship                      6 = Transfer to Another Agency                      7 = Runaway                      8 = Death of Child</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      Reunification With Parents or Primary Caretakers—The child was returned to his or her principal caretaker(s)' home.</p> <p>Living With Other Relatives—The child went to live with a relative other than the one from whose home he or she was removed.</p> <p>Adoption—The child was legally adopted.</p> <p>Emancipation—The child reached majority according to the law by virtue of age, marriage, etc.</p> <p>Guardianship—Permanent custody of the child was awarded to an individual.</p> <p>Transfer to Another Agency—Responsibility for the care of the child was awarded to another agency—either in or outside of the State or Tribal service area.</p> <p>Runaway—The child ran away from the foster care placement.</p> <p>Death of Child—The child died while in foster care.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      If this element has a response, then a date must be in element #56.</p> <p>“Runaway” should only be indicated if the agency has been dismissed of responsibility for care and placement.</p>
<b>XI. Source(s) of Federal Financial Support/Assistance for a Child</b>	
<p>Source(s) of Federal Financial Support/assistance for Child</p> <p>0-Does not apply                      1-Applies</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      Indicate all that apply with a "1."</p> <p>At least one of the foster care elements #59 through #65 must have a value of 1.</p> <p>Include all that applied at any time during the six-month reporting period. The payment/benefit can be for less than a full month and still qualify as “applies” for any one of these benefits in elements #59 - 65.</p>
59. Title IV-E (Foster Care)	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      Title IV-E foster care maintenance payments are being paid on behalf of the child.</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p><u>Checklist</u> This element should not check whether a claim has been submitted by the title IV-E agency to the Children’s Bureau.</p> <p>Does the program code incorrectly only check for a title IV-E payment? Does the program code also check the eligibility status of those children who entered foster care in the last month of the report period but for whom a payment has not yet been made to the provider?</p> <p>Title IV-E eligibility criteria include court order language, AFDC requirements, and whether the facility is eligible for reimbursement.</p> <p>Does the agency’s frequency response for “applies” appear accurate or is it lower than expected?</p>
60. Title IV-E (Adoption Assistance)	<p><u>Requirements</u> Title IV-E adoption subsidy is being paid on behalf of the child who is in an adoptive home, but the adoption has not been legalized.</p>
61. Title IV-A	<p><u>Requirements</u> Child is living with relative(s) whose source of support is an AFDC payment for the child.</p>
62. Title IV-D (Child Support)	<p><u>Requirements</u> Child support funds are being paid to the title IV-E agency on behalf of the child by assignment from the receiving parent.</p>
63. Title XIX (Medicaid)	<p><u>Requirements</u> Child is eligible for and may be receiving assistance under title XIX.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Does the agency’s frequency response for “applies” appear accurate or is it lower than expected?</p>
64. SSI or Other Social Security Benefits	<p><u>Requirements</u> Child is receiving support under title XVI or other Social Security Act titles not included in this section.</p>
65. None of the Above	<p><u>Requirements</u> Child is receiving support only from the title IV-E agency, or from some other source (Federal or non-Federal) which is not indicated above.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> The program code checks for other sources of State, Tribal, Federal, or non-Federal regardless of the responses to elements #59 - 64.</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
<b>XII. Amount of the Monthly Foster Care Payment (regardless of source)</b>	
66. Amount of Monthly Foster Care Payment	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      Enter the monthly payment paid on behalf of the child regardless of source (e.g., Federal, State, county, municipality, Tribal, and private payments). If title IV-E funds are paid on behalf of the child, the amount indicated should be the total computable amount. If the payment made on behalf of the child is not the same each month, indicate the amount of the last full monthly payment made during the reporting period. If no monthly payment has been made during the period, enter all zeros.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      Should be amount of last full monthly payment paid in the AFCARS report period.</p> <p>A blank in this field indicates that the title IV-E agency does not have the information for this foster care element or that a payment was not made.</p>

**Adoption Data Elements**

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
<b>I. General Information</b>	
1. Title IV-E Agency	<p><u>Requirements</u> For a State, the U.S. Postal Service two letter abbreviation for the State submitting the report. For a Tribal title IV-E agency, the two letter abbreviation provided by ACF (Appendix B, Section II of Part 1355).</p> <p>All elements must be comprised of integer (numeric) value(s) (Appendix C of Part 1355 and CWPM, 1.2A.3 Question 1 and 1.2B.2 Question 4).</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Is the value reported the 2 digit number assigned to the State or Tribe?</p> <p>This value can be hard-coded into the extraction routine.</p>
2. Report Period Ending Date	The last month and the year for the reporting period.
3. Record number	<p><u>Requirements</u> The sequential number which the title IV-E agency uses to transmit data to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The record number cannot be linked to the child except at the title IV-E agency level.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Does the agency use the same single record number Statewide/in the Tribal service area that is the same as the foster care number? The number reported to AFCARS should be an encrypted person number.</p> <p>The same number is unique to the child and remains the child's number.</p> <p>The record number <u>is not</u> a social security number.</p>
4. Did the title IV-E Agency have any involvement in this adoption?  1=Yes 2=No	<p><u>Requirements</u> Indicate whether the title IV-E agency had any involvement in this adoption, that is, whether the adopted child belongs to one of the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A child who had been in foster care under the responsibility and care of the child welfare agency and who was subsequently adopted, whether special needs or not, and whether a subsidy was provided;</li> <li>• A special needs child who was adopted in the State or</li> </ul>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>Tribal service area, whether or not he/she was in the public foster care system prior to his/her adoption and for whom non-recurring expenses were reimbursed; or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A child for whom an adoption assistance payment or service is being provided based on arrangements made by or through the title IV-E agency.</li> </ul> <p><u>Checklist</u></p> <p>This item is linked to the General Requirements items #9 and 11.</p>
<b>II. Child's Demographic Information</b>	
<p>5. Child's Date of Birth</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Month and year of the child's birth. If the child was abandoned or the date of birth is otherwise unknown, enter an approximate date of birth.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Does the title IV-E agency's case management or tracking system use the same screen for this element that is used for foster care element #6?</p>
<p>6. Sex</p> <p>1=Male 2=Female</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Indicate as appropriate.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> If "other" or "unknown" are agency values, they must be mapped to blank.</p> <p>Does the title IV-E agency's case management or tracking system use the same screen for this element that is used for foster care element #7?</p>
<p>7. Child's Race</p> <p>0=No 1=Yes</p> <p>a. American Indian or Alaska Native b. Asian c. Black or African American d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander e. White f. Unable to Determine</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> In general, a person's race is determined by how they define themselves or by how others define them. In the case of young children, parents determine the race of the child.</p> <p>American Indian or Alaska Native -A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North or South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.</p> <p>Asian - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.</p>



Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>Black or African American - A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.</p> <p>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.</p> <p>White - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.</p> <p>Unable to Determine - The specific race category is “unable to determine” because the child is very young or is severely disabled and no person is available to identify the child’s race. Also used if the parent, relative or guardian is unwilling to identify the child’s race.</p> <p>Indicate all races (a through e) that apply with a “1.” For those that do not apply, indicate a “0.” Indicate “f. unable to determine” with a “1” if it applies and a “0” if it does not.</p> <p>If at least one of the race categories “a-e” is selected (coded as 1) then “f” cannot also apply.</p> <p>A combination of a “1” in any category “a-e” and a “1” in “f” will result in an error.</p> <p>If all race categories “a-f” are all zeros, this will result in an error.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u></p> <p>Every relevant agency value must map to an AFCARS value. If there are race values collected as ethnicities these must also be mapped to the appropriate AFCARS value.</p> <p>An agency’s method of collecting race information must allow for all possible combinations. There should not be a “primary” race identified.</p> <p>Hispanic/Latino is to be reported as an ethnicity not race.</p> <p>This field should not be initialized/defaulted to zero. If data are missing (i.e., no race was selected), each race category should be blank.</p> <p>Does the number of records reported as having two or more races seem accurate for the State/Tribe?</p> <p>Does the title IV-E agency’s case management or tracking</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
<p>8. Child’s Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity</p> <p>1=Yes 2=No 3=Unable to determine</p>	<p>system use the same screen for this element that is used for foster care element #8?</p> <p><u>Requirements</u> Answer “yes” if the child is of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American origin, or a person of other Spanish cultural origin regardless of race. Whether or not a person is Hispanic or Latino is determined by how they define themselves or by how others define them. In the case of young children, parents determine the ethnicity of the child. “Unable to Determine” is used because the child is very young or is severely disabled and no other person is available to determine whether or not the child is Hispanic or Latino.</p> <p>“Unable to determine” is also used if the parent, relative or guardian is unwilling to identify the child's ethnicity.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Does the title IV-E agency’s case management or tracking system use the same screen for this element that is used for foster care element #7?</p>
<p><b>III. Special Needs Status</b></p>	
<p>9. Has the title IV-E agency determined that the child has special needs?</p> <p>1=Yes 2=No</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Use the title IV-E agency definition of special needs as it pertains to a child eligible for an adoption subsidy under title IV-E.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Is the number of “yes” responses for this element equal to or greater than the number reported as “yes” in element #35, child receiving monthly subsidy?</p> <p>Does the title IV-E agency have this as a question in the system, or on forms, or is the information reported to AFCARS derived based on the response to adoption element #10?</p>
<p>10. Primary Factor or Condition for Special Needs</p> <p>0=Not applicable 1=Racial/Ethnic Background 2=Age 3=Membership in a Sibling Group 4=Medical conditions or Mental, Physical or Emotional Disabilities 5=Other</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Indicate only the primary factor or condition for categorization as special needs and only as it is defined by the title IV-E agency.</p> <p>Racial/Original Background—Primary condition or factor for special needs is racial/original background as defined by the title IV-E agency.</p> <p>Age—Primary factor or condition for special needs is age of the child as defined by the title IV-E agency.</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>Membership in a Sibling Group to be Placed for Adoption Together—Primary factor or condition for special needs is membership in a sibling group as defined by the title IV-E agency.</p> <p>Medical Conditions or Mental, Physical, or Emotional Disabilities—Primary factor or condition for special needs is the child's medical condition as defined by the title IV-E agency, but clinically diagnosed by a qualified professional. When this is the response to this question, then elements #11-15 must be answered with at least one being “yes, applies.”</p> <p>Other [as defined by the title IV-E agency].</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Does the title IV-E agency have its own defined reasons for special needs? If yes, are these included in the collection methodology and extracted?</p> <p>The primary basis for determination should be worker-determined and not system-determined.</p> <p>Identify for eligible foster care children with special needs the one factor that may make adoptive homes more difficult to find.</p> <p>Is the response for “not applicable” equal to the number of records reported as “no” in adoption element #9?</p>
<p>Elements #11 – 15</p> <p>0=Does not Apply 1=Yes, applies</p>	<p><u>Checklist</u> The information system must be able to collect information on all diagnosed conditions.</p> <p>Elements #11 - 15 are only reported if the response to element #10 is “4, medical conditions or mental, physical or emotional disabilities.”</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Does the title IV-E agency’s case management or tracking system use the same screen for this element that is used for foster care elements #11 - 15?</p>
<p>11. Type of Disability-Mental Retardation</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u> Significantly subaverage general cognitive and motor functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior manifested during the development period that adversely affect a child’s/youth’s socialization and learning.</p>
<p>12. Type of Disability-Visually or Hearing</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u></p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
Impaired	Having a visual impairment that may significantly affect educational performance or development; or a hearing impairment, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects educational performance.
13. Type of Disability-Physically Disabled	<p><u>Requirements</u> A physical condition that adversely affects the child’s day-to-day motor functioning, such as cerebral palsy, spina bifida, multiple sclerosis, orthopedic impairments, and other physical disabilities.</p>
14. Type of Disability-Emotionally Disturbed	<p><u>Requirements</u> A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree: An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships; inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal problems. The term includes persons who are schizophrenic or autistic. The term does not include persons who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they are also seriously emotionally disturbed.</p>
15. Type of Disability-Other Medically Diagnosed Condition Requiring Special Care	<p><u>Requirements</u> Conditions other than those noted above which require special medical care such as chronic illnesses. Included are children diagnosed as HIV positive or with AIDS.</p>
<b>IV. Birth Parents</b>	
16. Mother’s Year of Birth	<p><u>Requirements</u> Enter the year of birth for mother, if known. If the child was abandoned and no information was available, leave blank.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> If the parent was a legal or adoptive parent, is the parent’s birth year reported for this element?</p> <p>If the legal parents of the child were of the same sex, then use both elements #16 and #17 to reflect the legal parent’s year of birth regardless of gender.</p> <p>Does the title IV-E agency’s case management or tracking system use the same screen for collecting this information that is used for all persons?</p>
17. Father’s Year of Birth	<p><u>Requirements</u> Enter the year of birth for father, if known. If the child was abandoned and no information was available, leave blank.</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p><u>Checklist</u>                      If the parent was a legal or adoptive parent, is the parent's birth year reported for this element?</p> <p>If the legal parents of the child were of the same sex, then use both elements #16 and #17 to reflect the legal parent's year of birth regardless of gender.</p>
<p>18. Was the Mother married at the time of the child's birth?</p> <p>1=Yes                      2=No                      3-Unable to determine</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      Indicate whether the mother was married at the time of the child's birth; include common law marriage if legal in the State or Tribe. If the child was abandoned and no information was available on the mother, enter "Unable to Determine."</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      This question always applies to the birth mother.</p>
<b>V. Court Actions</b>	
<p>19. Date of Mother's Termination of Parental Rights</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      Enter the month, day and year that the court terminated mother's parental rights. If the mother is known to be deceased, enter the date of death.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      This element must be prior to or equal to adoption element #21 (Date adoption legalized).                      Is the extraction code checking for a legal parent, if applicable?</p> <p>If the legal parents of the child were of the same sex, then use both elements #19 and #20 to reflect the termination of parental rights of the legal parent regardless of gender.</p> <p>Does the title IV-E agency's case management or tracking system use the same screen for this element that is used for foster care element #47?</p>
<p>20. Date of Father's Termination of Parental Rights</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      Enter the month, day and year that the court terminated father's parental rights. If the father is known to be deceased, enter the date of death.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      If there are multiple fathers, the one who represented the last barrier to the child's adoption should be used. This element must be prior to or equal to adoption element #21 (Date adoption legalized).</p> <p>Is the extraction code checking for a legal parent, if applicable?</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>If the legal parents of the child were of the same sex, then use both elements #19 and #20 to reflect the termination of parental rights of the legal parent regardless of gender.</p> <p>Does the title IV-E agency’s case management or tracking system use the same screen for this element that is used for foster care element #48?</p>
21. Date Adoption Legalized	<p><u>Requirements</u> Enter the date the court issued the final adoption decree.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Is this date and the date of discharge in foster care element #56 the same?</p> <p>Does the title IV-E agency’s case management or tracking system use the same field for this element that is used for foster care element #56?</p>
<b>VI. Adoptive Parents</b>	
Adoptive Parent Information (Elements #22 – 28)	<p><u>Checklist</u> Does the title IV-E agency’s case management or tracking system use the same screen for these elements that is used for foster care elements #49 - 55?</p>
22. Adoptive Parents’ Family Structure  1=Married couple 2=Unmarried couple 3=Single female 4=Single male	<p><u>Requirements</u> Select the category which best describes the nature of the adoptive parent(s) family structure.</p>
23. Adoptive Mother's Year of Birth	<p><u>Requirements</u> Enter year of birth.</p> <p>If the response to element #22, Family Structure was 1 or 2, enter data for two parents.</p> <p>If the response to element #22 was 3 or 4, enter data only for the appropriate parent. If the exact year of birth is unknown, enter an estimated year of birth.</p> <p>If element #22 is 1, 2 or 3, adoption element #23 must be completed.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u> Do the number of records reported in element #22 as a married, unmarried couple, single male, and single female equal the number of records with a reported a year of birth in element #23?</p> <p>If the State or Tribe allows same sex couples to adopt a</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
24. Adoptive Father's Year of Birth	<p>child, then use both elements #23 and #24 to reflect the adoptive parent's year of birth regardless of gender.</p> <p><u>Requirements</u>                      Enter year of birth.                      If the response to data element #22 was 1 or 2, enter data for two parents.</p> <p>If the response to element #22 was 3 or 4, enter data only for the appropriate parent. If the exact year of birth is unknown, enter an estimated year of birth.</p> <p>If element #22 ( is 1, 2 or 4, adoption element #24 must be completed.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      Do the number of records reported in element #22 as a married and unmarried couple equal the number of records with a reported year of birth in element #24?</p> <p>If the State or Tribe allows same sex couples to adopt a child, then use both elements #23 and #24 to reflect the adoptive parent's year of birth regardless of gender.</p>
25. Adoptive Mother's Race  a. American Indian or Alaska Native b. Asian c. Black or African American d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander e. White f. Unable to Determine	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      Indicate the race for the adoptive mother. See instructions and definitions for the race categories under element #7, child's race.</p> <p>Use "f. Unable to Determine" only when an adoptive parent is unwilling to identify his or her race.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      If the child was adopted by a single male, then these elements are to be reported as blanks.</p> <p>If the State or Tribe allows same sex couples to adopt a child, then use both race elements #25 and #27 to reflect the adoptive parent's race regardless of gender.</p>
26. Adoptive Mother's Hispanic Origin  0=Not Applicable 1=Yes 2=No 3=Unable to determine	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      Indicate the ethnicity for the adoptive mother. See instructions and definitions under element #8, child's Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      Use "Unable to Determine" only when a foster parent is unwilling to identify his or her ethnicity.</p> <p>If the child was adopted by a single male, then this element is to be reported as "not applicable."</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>If the State or Tribe allows same sex couples to adopt a child, then use both Hispanic Origin elements #26 and #28 to reflect the adoptive parent’s Hispanic Origin regardless of gender.</p>
<p><b>27. Adoptive Father's Race</b></p> <p>a. American Indian or Alaska Native                      b. Asian                      c. Black or African American                      d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander                      e. White                      f. Unable to Determine</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      Indicate the race for the adoptive father. See instructions and definitions for the race categories under element #7, child’s race.</p> <p>Use “Unable to Determine” only when an adoptive parent is unwilling to identify his or her race.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      If the child was adopted by a single female, then these elements are to be reported as blanks.</p> <p>If the State or Tribe allows same sex couples to adopt a child, then use both race elements #25 and #27 to reflect the adoptive parent’s race regardless of gender.</p>
<p><b>28. Adoptive Father's Hispanic Origin</b></p> <p>0=Not Applicable                      1=Yes                      2=No                      3=Unable to determine</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      Indicate the ethnicity for the adoptive father. See instructions and definitions under element #8, child’s Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity.</p> <p>Use “Unable to Determine” only when a foster parent is unwilling to identify his or her ethnicity.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      If the child was adopted by a single female, then this element is to be reported as “not applicable.”</p> <p>If the State or Tribe allows same sex couples to adopt a child, then use both Hispanic Origin elements #26 and #28 to reflect the adoptive parent’s Hispanic Origin regardless of gender.</p>
<p>Elements #29 –32</p> <p>0 = Does not Apply                      1 = Applies</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      Indicate the prior Relationship(s) the child had with the adoptive parent(s).</p> <p>Indicate with a “1” all that apply.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      Does the data collection methodology include each of the relationship types for the caseworker to select or record more than one?</p>



Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	Does the extraction code check for and report all applicable relationships?
29. Relationship to Adoptive Parent-Stepparent  0=Does not apply 1=Yes, Applies	<u>Requirements</u>  Indicate the prior relationship(s) the child had with the adoptive parent(s): Spouse of the child's birth mother or birth father.
30. Relationship to Adoptive Parent -Other Relative  0=Does not apply 1=Yes, Applies	<u>Requirements</u>  Indicate the prior relationship(s) the child had with the adoptive parent(s): A relative through the birth parents by blood or marriage.
31. Relationship to Adoptive Parent -Foster Parent  0=Does not apply 1=Yes, Applies	<u>Requirements</u>  Indicate the prior relationship(s) the child had with the adoptive parent(s): Child was placed in a non-relative foster family home with a family which later adopted him or her. The initial placement could have been for the purpose of adoption or for the purpose of foster care.
32. Relationship to Adoptive Parent -Other Non-relative  0=Does not apply 1=Yes, Applies	<u>Requirements</u>  Indicate the prior relationship(s) the child had with the adoptive parent(s): Adoptive parent does not fit into any of the categories above.
<b>VII. Placement Information</b>	
33. Child was placed from  1=Within State or Tribal Service Area 2=Another State or Tribal Service Area 3=Another Country	<u>Requirements</u>  Indicate the location of the individual or agency that had custody or responsibility for the child at the time of initiation of adoption proceedings.  Within State or Tribal service area—Responsibility for the child resided with an individual or agency within the State or Tribal service area of the title IV-E agency filing the report.  Another State or Tribal service area—Responsibility for the child resided with an individual or agency in another State, Tribal service area, or territory of the United States.  Another Country—Immediately prior to the adoptive placement, the child was residing in another country and was not a citizen of the United States.  <u>Checklist</u> Does the data collection methodology include all of the locations?  Are adoptions that occur within the jurisdiction of the title

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
	<p>IV-E agency but the private adoption placement agency is outside of the IV-E agency’s jurisdiction get included and recorded as “another State or Tribal Service area?” (This relates to General Requirements item #12.)</p>
<p>34. Child was placed by                      1=Public agency                      2=Private agency                      3=Tribal Agency                      4=Independent person                      5=Birth parent</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u></p> <p>Indicate the individual or agency which placed the child for adoption.</p> <p>Public Agency—A unit of State or local government.</p> <p>Private Agency—A for-profit or non-profit agency or institution.</p> <p>Tribal Agency—A unit within one of the Federally recognized Indian Tribes, Indian Tribal Organizations, or Indian Tribal consortia.</p> <p>Independent Person—A doctor, a lawyer or some other individual.</p> <p>Birth Parent—The parent(s) placed the child directly with the Adoptive parent(s).</p> <p>If the “Child Was Placed By” (element #34) is answered with a 1, “Public Agency,” then the question, “Did the title IV-E Agency Have any Involvement in this Adoption” (adoption element #4) must be “1.”</p> <p><u>Checklist</u></p> <p>Private agencies under contract to the title IV-E agency are considered “public” agencies.</p> <p>Title IV-E Tribal agencies are to report “public agency” for adoptions in which the child was in the title IV-E Tribal foster care system or on whose behalf the title IV-E Tribal agency was involved due to an adoption agreement for subsidy or services.</p>
<b>VIII. Adoption Support</b>	
<p>35. Is the Child Receiving a Monthly Subsidy?</p> <p>1=Yes                      2=No</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u></p> <p>Enter “yes” if this child was adopted with an adoption assistance agreement under which regular subsidies (Federal, State, or Tribal) are paid.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u></p> <p>This element is to indicate “yes” if the only subsidy is Medicaid.</p>

Data Element	Requirements Checklist
<p>36. Monthly Amount</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      Indicate the monthly amount of the subsidy. The amount of the subsidy should be rounded to the nearest dollar. Indicate "0" if the subsidy includes only benefits under titles XIX or XX of the Social Security Act.</p> <p><u>Checklist</u>                      If adoption element #35 (Monthly subsidy) equals 2 (No), then adoption element #36 (Monthly amount) must equal 00000.</p> <p>The response to this element must be padded with zeros if the amount is less than five digits.</p>
<p>37. Is the Child receiving a title IV-E adoption subsidy?</p> <p>1=Yes 2=No</p>	<p><u>Requirements</u>                      If element #35 is "1,yes," indicate whether the subsidy is claimed by the title IV-E agency for reimbursement under title IV-E. Do not include title IV-E non-recurring costs in this item.</p>

## **Title IV-E Agency Activities Checklist**

<b>Important Dates to Remember</b>			
Date of the onsite review: _____			
Date to submit system documents: _____			
Date test case extraction due: _____			
<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE</b>	<b>DATE DUE</b>	<b>COMPLETED</b>
<b>Pre-site Visit Phase</b> (Minimum 12-16 weeks prior to on-site)			
Identify Agency AAR Team Coordinator			
Provide list of Agency Team Members to Federal Review Team Coordinator			
Reserve a room large enough to accommodate the size of the Agency and Federal review teams combine for the on-site review*			
*Reserve additional space for reviewing the case files (if necessary)			
Gather documentation to be sent to Federal team <i>See Exhibit 4: State Documentation List</i>			
Submit documentation to Federal team			
Identify staff member who is familiar with system and/or practice to enter the test cases (approx 40 working hours)			
Enter the Test Cases <i>See Appendix E: Instructions for Entering Test Case Scenarios</i>			
After test cases entered, contact the Federal Technical Coordinator for instructions on transmitting test files			
Decrypt case record numbers sent by Federal team			
Arrange for paper case files to be pulled and sent to the Central office where the review will be held			
Petition the court to open adoption records (if necessary)			
Ensure that case records are as complete and up-to-date as possible			
Identify and schedule staff to participate in the case file review typically held on day two of the on-site			
Identify person to conduct the overview of the agency's System			
Identify person that will demonstrate the case scenario entry and person to extract			

cases.			
Ensure Agency staff have copies of agency's documentation			
Provide Agency team with copies (1 week before onsite visit)			

## **Onsite Agenda**

**AFCARS Assessment Review Only**

	<b>Day 1 (Monday)</b>	<b>Day 2 (Tuesday)</b>	<b>Day 3 (Wednesday)</b>	<b>Day 4 (Thursday)</b>	<b>Day 5 (Friday)</b>
<b>A.M.</b>	9:00 A.M Entrance Meeting (1 hour)  Break  Following Break System Demonstration with Sample Case Scenario	8:30 Case File Review	8:30 – 5:00 Review of Foster Care Elements	8:30 – 12:00 Review of Adoption Elements	8:30 Review of Draft Findings with title IV- E Agency Review Team  11:00 Exit Briefing with Administrators
<b>P.M.</b>	Demo., Con't	Debriefing of case file review (Approximately 4:00 p.m.)	Review of Foster Care Elements, Con't.	Extra time if needed for data element review or questions  OR  Preparation of Findings – Federal Team – Depending on progress of the review.	



**AFCARS/SACWIS CONCURRENT REVIEW**

<b>Date &amp; Time</b>	<b>SACWIS</b>	<b>AFCARS</b>
<b>Monday</b>		
8:30 – 9:30	Entrance Meeting	
9:30–12:00	System Demonstration Using an AFCARS Demo Case	
12:00-1:00	Lunch	
1:00-5:30	System Demo Continues	
<b>Tuesday</b> 8:00-12:00	SACWIS Demonstration Continues (Some of these items will have been covered on Monday) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intake Management                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intake</li> <li>Screening</li> <li>Assessment</li> <li>Investigation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Eligibility</li> <li>Financial Management</li> <li>• Case Management –                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service/Case Plan.</li> <li>Case Review/Evaluation</li> <li>Monitoring</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Agency & Federal Teams Review Case Records
12:00-5:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource Management                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilities Support</li> <li>Foster/Adoptive Homes</li> <li>Resources Directory</li> <li>Contract Support</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Court Processing</li> <li>• Administration                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff Management</li> <li>Reporting</li> <li>Admin Support</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Interfaces</li> <li>• Quality Assurance                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alerts</li> <li>Edits</li> <li>Tracking</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Security</li> </ul>	
<b>Wednesday</b>		
8:00	Central Office Interviews	Foster Care Element Review
3:00	Some of the SACWIS Team Will Visit Central Intake	Central Office Interviews Continue Foster Care Element Review
<b>Thursday</b>	Local Office Interviews	Adoption Element Review
<b>Friday</b>	Exit Conference	

## **Sample Case File Review Form**

This form will be generated automatically by the Children’s Bureau with all information submitted for the record by the participating State. This is an example of only one page. A report is generated for both Adoption and Foster Care.

<b>Foster Care Case Review Report</b>			
<b>Report Period: October 1, 2012 – March 31, 2013</b>			
<b>State: Bliss</b>		<b>State Client Identifier:</b> _____	
<b>AFCARS Record Number: XN5000001235</b>			
<b>AFCARS Element</b>	<b>Data from AFCARS</b>	<b>Data from Paper File</b>	<b>Data Do Not Match (X)</b>
#3 Local FIPS Code	Clinton		
#5 Date of Most Recent Periodic Review	July 08, 2012		
#6 Child Birth Date	August 22, 2008		
#7 Child Sex	Male		
#8 Child Race			
a. American Indian/Alaska Native	Yes		
b. Asian	Yes		
c. Black/African American	Yes		
d. Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Yes		
e. White	Yes		
f. Unable to determine	No		
#9 Child Hispanic Origin	Yes		
#10 Has Child Been Diagnosed with Disability?	No		
#11 Mental Retardation	Condition does not apply		
#12 Visually/Hearing Impaired	Condition does not apply		
#13 Physically Disabled	Condition does not apply		
#14 Emotionally Disturbed	Condition does not apply		
#15 Other Diagnosed Condition	Condition does not apply		
#16 Has Child Ever Been Adopted	No		
#17 Age at Adoption	Not Applicable		
#18 Date of First Removal from Home	April 10, 2009		
#19 Total Number of Removals from Home	01		
#20 Date of Discharge from Last Episode	-		
#21 Date of Latest Removal	April 10, 2009		
#23 Date of Placement in Current Setting	October 24, 2010		
#24 Number of Previous Placement Settings in Episode	03		

**Sample AFCARS Improvement Plan  
General Requirements and Element Matrices**



Data Element	Rating Factor	Findings	Tasks	Dates	Notes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Multi-racial-other race not known/unknown" would be mapped to blank and only the known race would be reported in AFCARS.</li> </ul>			
<p>#10 Has the child been clinically diagnosed as having a disability(ies)? 1=Yes 2=No 3=Not yet Determined</p>	2	<p><u>Screens:</u> Person Management; Disability AFCARS Tab and, Medical/Mental Health Screen – This screen is not used for AFCARS but contains more comprehensive information.</p> <p><u>Program Code, LNs 964 – 978</u> 1) The program code extracts the information on whether the child has been diagnosed with a condition that is mapped to AFCARS from the child’s person record.</p> <p>2) The program code does not check for a date.</p> <p><u>Data Quality</u> <u>Frequency Report (n=27,522):</u> Yes=1,834 (7%); No=25,379 (92%); Not yet determined=100 (&lt;1%); blank=209 (&lt;1%)</p>	<p><u>Screen</u> 1) Modify the system to collect the health, behavioral health, and education related diagnoses in one location – the Medical/Mental Health Screen.</p> <p><u>Program Code</u> 1) Add a field that identifies if the child has been seen by a health care professional and if there is a diagnosed condition.</p> <p>1a) Include the options: yes, no, and not yet determined.</p> <p>1b) Modify the program code to extract the data from the Medical/Mental Health Screen.</p> <p>2) Modify the program code to extract whether the child has a diagnosed condition based on whether there are active conditions for the period being extracted.</p> <p><u>Data Quality</u> 1) CB will monitor data.</p>	<p><u>Screen</u> 1) 2/2014</p> <p><u>Code</u> 1)</p> <p>1a) 2/2014</p> <p>1b) 2/2014</p> <p>2) 2/2014</p>	

Data Element	Rating Factor	Findings	Tasks	Dates	Notes
		<p><u>Case File Review Findings:</u> 16 (21%) of the records analyzed did not match what was reported in AFCARS. In all of the error cases, the response should have been “yes” instead of “no.”</p>			
#18 Date of First Removal from Home	2	<p><u>Screen:</u> Out-of-Home Placement; Removal/Placement Tab</p> <p><u>Program Code, LNs 144 – 147 and 1076 – 1083</u></p> <p>1) The program code does not check if the first removal from home began with an initial placement in a locked facility or a hospital prior to the child being placed in a foster care setting.</p> <p><u>Data Quality</u></p> <p><u>Case File Review Findings:</u> 8 (14%) of the records analyzed did not match what was reported in AFCARS. The majority of the errors were due to those cases of children whose initial placement in the removal episode was either a hospital or a locked facility. For additional information on the findings see the Case File Review Findings.</p>	<p><u>Program Code</u></p> <p>1) After changes are made to General Requirement #1, ensure that the extraction code correctly sets this element to the correct removal date.</p> <p>2a) Modify the program code to check if the first ever removal episode began with a placement of hospital, check for the start date of the first foster care setting after the hospitalization and report that date for element #18.</p> <p>2b) Modify the program code to check if the first ever removal episode began with a placement of a locked facility, check for the start date of the first foster care setting after the locked placement and report that date for element #18.</p>	<p><u>Code</u></p> <p>1) 9/2013</p> <p>2a) 9/2013</p> <p>2b) 9/2013</p>	<p><u>Code</u></p>