

ACF

Administration
for Children
and Families

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

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PROGRAM INSTRUCTION

TO: State Agencies Administering or Supervising the Administration of Title IV-B and Title IV-E of the Social Security Act.

SUBJECT: Program Instruction on Methods of Extracting Data for Submission to the Federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

LEGISLATIVE MANDATE AND REFERENCES: Section 479 of the Social Security Act; 45 CFR Parts 1355, 1356 and 1357.

BACKGROUND: *(NOTE: It was brought to our attention with the original issuance of ACYF-PI-CB-95-09 that if States follow the instructions as written, children who are in care on the last day of the reporting period, but who are discharged during the time between the end of the reporting period and the day the State actually does the extraction, will not appear on the report. This revised version of the Program Instruction remedies that error.*

The Final Rule for the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) describes the populations of children in foster care and adoption on whom States must report. However, it has been brought to the attention of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) that there has been confusion as to exactly how the States should extract data from their State systems when reporting on children in foster care for a particular reporting period.

In 45 CFR 1355.40(b)(1) it states that: "The State agency shall transmit...information on *each child in foster care and each child adopted during the reporting period.*"

The paragraph continues to say: "The data must be extracted from the data system as of the last day of the reporting period...". Also, in the preamble to the regulation, **VII. Section by Section Discussion of Comments and the Department's Response**, on page 67918, bottom of the second column and top of the third column, in response to comments about States' concerns regarding the method of taking a "snap shot" of the data, the Department responded: "Many [States] erroneously believed that the intent of AFCARS was to reflect the status of children in foster care rather than *the information on the children contained in the State data system on the*

day the data are extracted (emphasis added). The requirement is to obtain a profile from the State data system."

These statements have caused confusion as to whether States should include in their submissions all records for those children who were actually in care during the reporting period or only those records that had data entry activity during the period. The answer to this question bears on how States should extract data from their system so that all children are eventually reported in AFCARS.

The issue does not affect the adoption section of AFCARS.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Program Instruction is to clarify which records should be included in AFCARS Foster Care submissions by providing guidance to States on how they should extract data from their data systems for semi-annual Foster Care reporting to AFCARS.

CONTENT:

Permanent Data Extraction Method

The AFCARS Foster Care data set includes two "transaction dates" which are computer-generated dates that indicate when certain data are actually entered for the first time into a particular child's computer record. One of these transaction dates reflects the date of data entry of the "Date of Latest Removal." The other reflects the date of data entry of the "Date of Discharge." These transaction dates are stored data fields which cannot be overwritten or changed.

Beginning with the reporting period of April 1, 1997 - September 30, 1997 (submission due by November 14, 1997), ACF will require that States extract data from their systems using the Transaction Date of Discharge. The following formula should be used in determining which records to include in AFCARS submission:

IF (Transaction Date of Discharge \geq 1st Day of Reporting Period
AND
Transaction Date of Discharge \leq Last Day of Reporting Period)
OR
[(Transaction Date of Discharge is Null OR
Transaction Date of Discharge is $>$ Last Day of Reporting Period)
AND
Date of Latest Removal is \leq Last Day of Reporting Period]

THEN Include

ELSE Exclude

If the Transaction Date of Discharge for a record has a value and it occurs during the reporting period, the record should be included in the submission. If the Transaction Date of Discharge is either absent or is later than the last day of the reporting period AND the Date of actual Latest Removal is equal or prior to the last day of the reporting period (implying the child was still in care on the last day of the reporting period), then the record should be included. If the Transaction Date of Discharge has a value but does not fall within the dates of the reporting period and the Date of Latest Removal is later than the last day of the reporting period, the record should not be included.

Because ACF recognizes that many State systems do not currently have transaction dates as defined by the AFCARS Final Rule, this method will not be required until the report period beginning April 1, 1997. However, since the transaction dates are required in all AFCARS records, ACF does anticipate that by the above mentioned reporting period, which is the last reporting period before the penalty provisions become effective, all State systems will have the capacity to generate the transaction dates, and thus will be able to extract data using the method described above.

Interim Data Extraction Method

ACF encourages States with the capacity to generate transaction dates to use the above method of extraction. However, for the report periods enumerated in Table 1., States may extract records from their systems using the actual dates in care for each child. In addition, during this period, ACF will temporarily extend the submission period for State AFCARS files from the published 45 days to 75 days. The deadlines for transmission will now occur on June 14 and December 14. This will ensure that data on children who enter and/or exit care towards the end of the reporting period will still be entered into the system. ACF assumes that the information on these children will be entered in the system within 60 days of the event as the regulation requires.

	Report Period Start Date	Report Period End Date	Submission Due
FFY 1995 Period 1	October 1, 1994	March 31, 1995	June 14, 1995
FFY 1995	April 1, 1995	September 30, 1995	December 14, 1995

Period 2			
FFY 1996 Period 1	October 1, 1995	March 31, 1996	June 14, 1996
FFY 1996 Period 2	April 1, 1996	September 30, 1996	December 14, 1996
FFY 1997 Period 1	October 1, 1996	March 31, 1997	June 14, 1997

States should extract using the following formula:

IF (Date of Discharge >= 1st Day of Reporting Period
AND
Date of Discharge <= Last Day of Reporting Period)
OR
[(Date of Discharge is Null OR Date of Discharge is >
Last Day of Reporting Period)
AND
Date of Latest Removal is <= Last Day of Reporting
Period]

THEN Include

ELSE Exclude

If the Date of Discharge for a record exists and it occurs during the reporting period, the record should be included in the submission. If the Date of Discharge is either absent or is later than the last day of the reporting period AND the Date of Latest Removal is equal or prior to the last day of the reporting period (implying the child was still in care on the last day of the reporting period), then the record should be included. If the Date of Discharge exists but it does not fall within the dates of the reporting period and the Date of Latest Removal is later than the last day of the reporting period, the record should not be included.

States using this method are advised to extract data no later than the 61st day after the reporting period ends (or after they are certain that all data reflecting activity that occurred during the reporting period has been entered into the information system).

INQUIRIES:

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