

AFCARS ASSESSMENT REVIEW IMPROVEMENT PLAN: Foster Care Data Elements

State: Massachusetts

AFCARS Reporting Period: October 1, 2004 - March 31, 2005 (2005A)

AFCARS Data Element	Rating Factor	Findings	Tasks	Estimated/ Completed Date	State/ACF's Comments/Notes ACF's Sign-off Notes
<p>#10 Has the child been clinically diagnosed as having a disability(ies)?</p> <p>1=Yes 2=No 3=Not yet Determined</p>	<p align="center">2</p>	<p>Screen: Medical/Behavioral Information: Conditions/ Behavioral</p> <p>1) The State identified this as an area it plans to revise. The State needs to be aware the identified approach may still result in false "no" responses.</p> <p>2) The program code defaults to "unable to determine."</p> <p>3) Many of the errors in the case file review were due to the information not being updated from "not yet determined."</p> <p>4) Several of the errors in the case file review were reported as</p>	<p>1) State's plan: modify the program code to check for medical visit dates. If there is a visit date and no conditions entered, the State plans to map these to "no."</p> <p>1a) Consider a way to incorporate the question and the responses into an appropriate screen in the system.</p> <p>1b) Ensure that a response of "no" means the child has been seen by a medical professional and determined to have no disabilities.</p> <p>2) Map missing information to blank.</p> <p><u>Supervision/Training</u> 3/4) Develop a method to ensure that once the evaluation reports are received from the medical personnel the data are entered and the record is updated.</p>		

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		"no" and the reviewer found the child had been diagnosed with a disability.	5) Provide training on new field(s), if implemented. 6) Implement supervisory oversight to ensure workers enter this information. 7) ACF will review the data to ensure accuracy.		
#11 Mental Retardation #12 Visually/Hearing Impaired #13 Physically Disabled #14 Emotionally Disturbed #15 Other Diagnosed Condition [0 = Does not apply] 1 = Applies	2	There are conditions that are not correctly mapped or should not be included in the AFCARS extraction.	1) Modify mapping of medical/psychological conditions. See Tab C for Federal team notes on the State's codes. <u>Supervision/Training</u> 2) Implement supervisory oversight to ensure workers enter this information. 3) ACF will review the data to ensure accuracy.		
#18 Date of First Removal from Home #21 Date of Latest Removal ____ (mo) ____ (day) ____ (year)	2	The State's program code does not exclude as a removal if the child's first placement, while in the agency's responsibility for care and placement, is a hospital or locked facility.	1) Modify the program code to not include a child whose first placement is a locked facility or a hospital. 1a) The date of removal would be the date the child entered a foster care setting after the above setting(s), if		

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#23 Date of Placement in Current Foster Care Setting	2	<p>Screen: Non-Referral Location and Service Referrals Frequency Report (n=16,086): There are 196 (1%) records in the frequency report that are missing a date of placement.</p> <p>1) The actual start date for “trial home visits” are not recorded in FamilyNet and reported to AFCARS. Instead, the system sets the placement start date for “trial home visits” by adding one day to the end date of the previous placement.</p> <p>2) There were several records that did not match what was found in the paper file during the case file review.</p>	<p>applicable.</p> <p>1) Modify the program code to report the actual day that a “trial home visit” begins.</p> <p><u>Supervision/Training</u></p> <p>2) Implement training and supervisory oversight to ensure workers accurately enter this information.</p> <p>3) The State may need to conduct data clean-up once changes are made to the program code to include the series of one-night placements.</p> <p>3) The State may need to conduct data clean-up for cases that were converted to the new system.</p>		

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			4) ACF will review the data.		
#24 Number of Previous Placement Settings in This Episode	2	<p>1) If the number of placements is blank or zero, the program code incorrectly sets the number of placements to one.</p> <p>2) The program code includes respite.</p> <p>3) The State does not include overnight stays that are a series of different locations.</p>	<p>1) Modify the program code to map missing placements to blank. If the child's first "placement" while in the agency's responsibility for care and placement is "runaway," this element would be a zero.</p> <p>2) Exclude respites from the count of placement settings.</p> <p>3) Modify the program code to count all placements except those noted in Child Welfare Policy Manual (CWPM), 1.2B.7 question #21.</p> <p><u>Supervision/Training</u></p> <p>4) Implement supervisory oversight to ensure workers enter this information.</p> <p>5) ACF will review the data to ensure accuracy.</p>		
#25 Manner of Removal From Home for Current placement Episode 1 = Voluntary 2 = Court Ordered	2	<p>Screen: Legal Status</p> <p>1) The State has a code of "emergency removal" that is not mapped to AFCARS.</p>	1) Map "emergency removal" to "not yet determined."		

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3 = Not Yet Determined		2) Missing data are mapped to "not yet determined."	2) Map missing data to blank. 3) ACF will review the data to ensure accuracy based on the program code changes.		
<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>	2	<p>Screen: Non-Referral Location and Service Referrals</p> <p>1) Respite is incorrectly mapped to either foster home relative or non-relative. There are codes for "respite" in the program code and mapping forms.</p> <p>2) The program code does not exclude an initial placement that may be either a hospital or a locked facility.</p> <p>3) All of the State's group homes are mapped to the AFCARS value "group home" regardless of the size of the home.</p>	<p>1) Modify the system to record placements that are for respite purposes.</p> <p>1a) Modify the program code to exclude respites as a placement setting.</p> <p>2) Modify the program code to exclude initial placements in a hospital or a locked facility. (The removal date and the placement date would be when/if the child is moved to a foster home or other setting.)</p> <p>3) Modify the program code to map group homes that house between seven and twelve children to "group home" and those more than 12 beds to "institution."</p>		

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		<p>4) Single night placements are not being recorded or reported to AFCARS.</p> <p><u>Comment</u> The State may want to comment out the program code for "3977, trial home visit" since this is not a value that the workers enter and the program code checks for a "trial home flag" in the beginning.</p>	<p><u>Supervision/Training</u> 4) The State must ensure that case workers enter the date and location for all living arrangements.</p> <p>5) Implement supervisory oversight to ensure workers enter this information.</p> <p>6) ACF will review the data to ensure accuracy.</p>		
<p>Mother's and Legal or Putative Father's TPR date</p> <p>Foster care #47 & 48; Adoption #19 & #20</p>	2	The program code does not extract the latest TPR date for either the mother or father.	Modify the program code to extract the latest TPR date if there is more than one.		
#56 Date of Discharge from foster care	2	The dates and/or the number of records with an outcome of adoption greatly differ from the number of adoptions reported in the file.	Modify the program code to also check for the legalization date of adoptions.		
<p>#58 Reason for Discharge</p> <p>[0 = Not Applicable] 1 = Reunification with</p>	2	1) If element #56 is blank, this element is incorrectly mapped to blank.	1) Modify the program code to map this element to "not applicable" for children that are still in foster		

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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		2) The State's number of outcomes to adoption is underreported.	care/agency's responsibility for care and placement. 2) Modify the program code to also check for the legalization date of adoptions. 3) ACF will review the data to ensure accuracy based on the program code changes.		
#59 Title IV-E (Foster Care)	2	The State is reporting based on eligibility, not that a payment was made.	1) Modify the program code to extract whether a title IV-E foster care payment was made on behalf of the child during the report period. 2) ACF will review the data to ensure accuracy based on the program code changes.		
#62 Title IV-D (Child Support)	2	1) The system will support the manual entry of payment information. The program code is not checking the correct field for existing payment information. 2) There is no interface with the Child Support system.	1) Modify the program code to check for child support payments made on behalf of the child during the report period. 2) Complete the Child Support interface per SACWIS requirements. 3) ACF will review the data to ensure accuracy based on the program code changes.		

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#64 SSI or other Social Security Act Benefits	2	The State is reporting based on eligibility, not that a payment was made.	1) Modify the program code to extract whether a SSI payment was made on behalf of the child during the report period. 2) ACF will review the data to ensure accuracy based on the program code changes.		
#65 None of the Above	2	The program code only reports this element as "applies" if elements #59 – 64 are "does not apply." The program code does not check for other sources of Federal, State, or private funds that may have applied during the report period.	1) Modify the program code to check for other sources of income. 2) ACF will review the data to ensure accuracy based on the program code changes.		
#66 Amount Of Monthly Foster Care Payment (regardless of source)	2	The program code currently extracts an average payment, not an actual full month amount for a placement.	1) Modify the program code to extract the last full month (calendar) payment. 2) ACF will review the data to ensure accuracy based on the program code changes.		
#5 Date of Most Recent Periodic Review (if applicable)	3	Frequency Report (n=16,086): Dates prior to 2004 = 634 (2%) There are old dates of review (prior to 2004) that appear to be those for older youth, especially those over age 18 that the State is incorrectly including in the reporting population. This was also supported by the case file	The Federal review team will evaluate future data submissions to assess if this data improves once the youth over the age of 18 that are not required for AFCARS reporting are		

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		review.	removed from the State's submission.		
#6 Child Birth Date	3	<p>Frequency Report (n=16,086): 1980 = 3; 1981 = 8; 1982 = 36; 1983 = 133; 1984 = 196; 1985 = 330; 1986 = 703</p> <p>State is incorrectly including children over the age of majority.</p>	The Federal review team will evaluate future data submissions to assess if this data improves once the youth over the age of 18 that are not required for AFCARS reporting are removed from the State's submission.		
<p>#16 Has this child ever been adopted?</p> <p>1 = Yes 2 = No 3 = Unable to Determine</p> <p>#17 If [#16 is] yes, how old was the child when the adoption was legalized?</p> <p>[0 = Not Applicable] 1 = less than 2 years old 2 = 2-5 years old 3 = 6-12 years old 4 = 13 years or older 5 = Unable to Determine</p>	3	<p>Frequency Report (n=16,086): Yes = 655 (4%); No = 14,210 (88%); Unable to determine = 368 (2%); Not reported = 853 (5%)</p> <p>The State recently modified the system by making this a mandatory field in order for a worker to open a removal episode.</p> <p>The system will automatically populate this field if a child had been adopted from the agency's foster care system and later re-enters foster care.</p> <p>The case file review found many errors in this data. In general it was either missing in AFCARS or had the value "unable to determine." In nearly all of the</p>	<p>1a) Review all open cases and have workers correct the information regarding whether the child had a prior adoption.</p> <p>1b) Re-submit the 2005A data to the Children's Bureau.</p> <p>2) Implement training and supervisory oversight to ensure workers accurately enter this information.</p> <p>3) ACF will review the data.</p>		

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		cases, the reviewers were able to determine the information.			
Actions or Conditions Associated With Child's Removal (Indicate all that apply with a "1".) [0-Does not Apply] 1- Applies #26 Physical Abuse #27 Sexual Abuse #28 Neglect #29 Parent Alcohol Abuse #30 Parent Drug Abuse #31 Child Alcohol Abuse #32 Child Drug Abuse #33 Child Disability #34 Child's Behavior Problem #35 Death of Parent #36 Incarceration of Parent #37 Caretaker Inability to Cope Due to Illness or Other Reasons #38 Abandonment #39 Relinquishment #40 Inadequate Housing	3	<p>Frequency Report: There were 884 records missing data for elements #26 - 40.</p> <p>In most of the cases reviewed there should have been additional conditions checked as applying.</p>	1) Train staff to include all contributing reasons that lead to the child being "removed from home" and placed into foster care. 2) Utilize management reports to assess the completeness of this information and whether it is reflective of the reasons for children entering foster care. 3) Implement a process to ensure the timely and accurate entry of this information. 4) Implement supervisory oversight to ensure workers enter and update this information. 5) ACF will review the data to assess it for accuracy.		
#46 2 nd Primary Caretaker's Birth Year (if applicable)	3	<p>Frequency Report (n=16,086): Reported = 2,108; Not reported = 13,978</p> <p>There are several records missing a date of birth that</p>	1) Implement training and supervisory oversight to ensure workers enter and update this information. 2) ACF will review the		

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		should have one based on the numbers reported in element #44. (Number of couples reported was 4,575.) In all of the error cases in the case file review the marital structure for element #44 was either married or unmarried couple and this element was blank. The reviewers found a date of birth in all cases.	data for continued improvement.		
#52 1 st Foster Caretaker's Race	3	Based on the case file review, there were instances in which "unable to determine" was reported for AFCARS but the reviewer found race information. It did not appear that the individual refused to provide his/her race.	1) Implement training and supervisory oversight to ensure workers enter and update this information. 2) ACF will review the data for continued improvement.		
#53 1 st Foster Caretaker's Hispanic or Latino Origin 1 = Yes 2 = No 3 = Unable to Determine	3	Based on the case file review, there were instances in which "unable to determine" was reported for AFCARS but the reviewer found information regarding the persons ethnicity. It did not appear that the individual refused to provide this information.	1) Implement training and supervisory oversight to ensure workers enter and update this information. 2) ACF will review the data for continued improvement.		

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#6 Child Sex 1 = Male 2 = Female	2	The program code maps the value "unknown" to zero, which is not a valid value in AFCARS.	1) Modify the program code to map "unknown" to blank. 2) ACF will review the data for improvement.		
#10 Primary Basis for Determining Special Needs 0 = Not Applicable 1 = Racial/Original Background 2 = Age 3 = Membership in a Sibling Group 4 = Medical Conditions or Mental, Physical or Emotional Disabilities 5 = Other State Defined Special Needs	2	The program code will set this element to "not applicable" if a primary basis for special needs is not selected by the case worker.	1) Modify the program code to map missing data to blank. 2) Modify the program code to include language to check if element #9 is "no" and the special needs flag is not "yes," to map this element to "not applicable." 3) ACF will review the data for improvement.		
#11 Mental Retardation #12 Visually/Hearing Impaired #13 Physically Disabled #14 Emotionally Disturbed #15 Other Diagnosed Condition [0 = Does not apply] 1 = Applies	2	1) The State incorrectly includes responses to elements #11 – 15 even if the response to element #10 is other than "medical conditions or mental, physical or emotional disabilities."	1) Modify the program code to report responses to elements #11- 15 only if the response to adoption element #10 is "4, medical conditions or mental, physical or emotional disabilities." 1a) Modify the program code to leave elements #11 - 15 blank if the response to element #10 is not the value "4."		

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		2) The State's program code does not exclude as a removal if the child's first placement, while in the agency's responsibility for care and placement, is a hospital or locked facility.	2) Modify the mapping of medical/psychological conditions. See Tab C for Federal team notes on the State's codes. <u>Supervision/Training</u> 3) Implement supervisory oversight to ensure workers enter this information. 4) ACF will review the data to ensure accuracy.		
#16 Mother's Birth Year	2	The program code incorrectly includes foster and stepparent information.	Modify the program code by removing foster parent and stepparent relationships.		
#18 Mother Married at Time of Birth 1 = Yes 2 = No 3 = Unable to Determine	2	The State does not have a value to account for children that are abandoned. Therefore, the marital status of the child is not known.	1) Modify the program code and system to include "unable to determine." <u>Supervision/Training</u> 2) Implement training of the use of "unable to determine." 3) Implement supervisory oversight to ensure workers enter this information. 4) ACF will review the data to ensure accuracy.		
#30 Relationship of Adoptive Parent to Child - Other Relative	2	1) The program code checks for "other relative," but is looking in a place that isn't used.	1) Modify the program code to check the correct field.		

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#32 Relationship of Adoptive Parent to Child - Other Non-Relative		<p>2) The State is not including multiple relationships between the child and the adoptive parents.</p> <p>3) The State's definition of "kin" is very broad and includes "fictive kin."</p>	<p>2) Modify the system/ program code to extract all possible relationships between the child and the adoptive parents.</p> <p><u>Supervision/Training</u></p> <p>3) Ensure that case workers are not reporting individuals as relatives when there is no legal or biological relationship to the child.</p> <p>4) ACF will review the data to ensure accuracy.</p>		
#36 Monthly Amount	2	The information reported for this element is a calculated rate and not the amount from the adoption agreement.	Modify the program code to extract the actual amount from the adoption agreement.		
#37 Adoption Assistance IV-E 1=Yes 2=No	2	The State staff indicated the number of records reported as "yes" should be higher. They believe there is something incorrect in the way the program code extracts the data.	State needs to further evaluate the program code and system.		