

Ms. Linda Smith
 Director
 Children and Family Services Division
 Oklahoma Department of Human Services
 Children and Family Services Division
 P.O. Box 25352
 Oklahoma City, OK 73125

Dear Ms. Smith:

From August 21 - 25, 2006, staff of the Children’s Bureau, Region VI, and the Office of Information Services (OIS) conducted an Assessment Review of Oklahoma’s Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). The AFCARS data used for the review was from the report period October 1, 2005 – March 31, 2006 (2006A). I have summarized the major findings from the AFCARS review in this letter. Enclosed please find the full report.

The AFCARS assessment review evaluates two areas: the AFCARS general requirements (reporting populations and technical standards) and the data elements. Information collected on these areas is combined and a rating factor is assigned to each of the general requirements and each data element. The rating factors are: “1,” the system is not collecting the AFCARS data elements and the data are not transmitted to ACF; “2,” technical corrections are required; “3,” improvement in data quality is needed; and “4,” the State fully meets the AFCARS standards. The report provides a more detailed explanation of each of the rating factors.

General Requirements (26)

Rating Factor	Foster Care	Adoption	Technical
4	8 (100%)	3 (100%)	14 (93%)
3	0	0	1 (7%)
2	0	0	0
1	0	0	0

Data Elements (103)

Rating Factor	Foster Care (66)	Adoption (37)	Total (103)
4	19(29%)	19(51%)	38(37%)
3	35(53%)	11(30%)	46(45%)
2	12(18%)	7(19%)	19(18%)
1	0	0	0

The State is in compliance with the reporting population requirements for the foster care and adoption files. However, the State received a rating of “3” for the technical requirement related to data conversion. The primary finding was that all removal episodes were not entered into the system at the time of conversion. This information is crucial to the evaluation of a State’s child welfare practices. In order to determine if the number of children re-entering foster care is actually increasing or decreasing, a complete removal history is needed in the information system.

In regard to the data elements, the most significant finding is in the need for improved completeness and accuracy of the data entered into KIDS. The State will need to implement additional measures to ensure the accuracy of data entry and improve the quality of the data. In some instances this involves data clean-up, additional training, and/or supervisory oversight to ensure timeliness of data entry.

There are some technical changes required for the foster care and adoption data elements. One significant area is in the collection of whether a child has been diagnosed with a disability. This is an area that the State staff had already identified as needing changes and was in the process of designing and making modifications to the system. The Federal review team provided the state staff with feedback which is noted in the findings matrices. Once these technical changes are made to the system, underlying data quality issues may surface. These elements and those that received a rating factor of “3” will require additional training and supervisory oversight for the timeliness and accuracy of data entry.

Also, the State’s semi-annual data submission may fail to meet the “missing data” standard. In order to ensure the data are complete, the agency must increase supervisory oversight and require workers to enter the data in a timely manner. Assessment of the validity of the data prior to submitting it to ACF will also be required. To do so, the State may utilize the management reports created by the agency, as well as the Data Quality Utility and the Frequency Utility posted on the Children’s Bureau’s website. It is important that the AFCARS data accurately reflect the circumstances of children in foster care and under the agency’s responsibility.

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

Once ACF and the State agree that the quality of the data is acceptable, the AFCARS Improvement Plan will be considered finished, and a letter will be sent to the State from the Children’s Bureau confirming this fact. The letter will include a summary of the actions taken by the State and the completed AFCARS Improvement Plan.

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

The Children's Bureau's Regional Office will work with the State to determine if technical assistance is needed, and available, to implement the AFCARS Improvement Plan. The State may obtain technical assistance from the Children's Bureau's National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data and Technology (NRC-CWDT). If you wish to request on-site technical assistance from the NRC-CWDT, please contact your ACF Regional Office.

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

Sincerely,

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

Enclosures

cc: June Lloyd, Program Manager, Children's Bureau, Region VI
Angelina M. Palmiero, M.S.W., AFCARS
Terry Watt, Director, Division of State Systems
Jerry Milner, National Child and Family Services Review Team