



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
1250 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024

MAR 18 2008

Ms. Tanya Keys
Director
Kansas Department of Social and
Rehabilitative Services
Children and Family Services
915 Harrison - 5th Floor South
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Ms. Keys:

From August 27 - 31, 2007 staff of the Children's Bureau, Central and Regional Offices, and the Office of Information Services (OIS) conducted an Assessment Review of the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services' (SRS) Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). The AFCARS data used for the review was from the report period October 1, 2007 – March 31, 2007 (2007A). I have summarized the major findings from the AFCARS review in this letter. Enclosed please find the full report, including the AFCARS Improvement Plan.

In general, the State is compliant with the AFCARS General Requirements. There are some changes to specific foster care data elements, and to the adoption file, that once completed will bring the State into compliance with the General Requirements. There were two major issues related to the General Requirements. The first is the program code that extracts the foster care data does not exclude dates that occurred after the end of the report period. Each AFCARS report should contain information that was known for that reporting period. In instances in which the State re-submits data for a prior report period, the State is incorrectly extracting and submitting current information instead of the information that was current for the report period being resubmitted.

The second issue is the State is not submitting all finalized adoptions. This can occur if the adoption legalization occurs towards the end of a report period, but all information is not entered into the system prior to the State submitting the report period data. The State needs to modify the program code to identify all adoption records that have not been previously submitted and submit them in the next data transmission. The adoption file is used for determining adoption bonuses and it is to the State's advantage to have all adoptions counted.

As part of the AFCARS file, the State is required to submit records from the Juvenile Justice Administration (JJA) on those youth that are covered by the inter-agency agreement for title IV-E of the Social Security Act funds. During the review, it was found that JJA may be over counting the number of removals a youth has, and/or not reporting the correct start and end date

of a removal episode. During the review the JJA staff indicated they are writing a new program code to extract the data from their system and transfer it to SRS. JJA is to submit the new program code to the Children's Bureau as part of the State's AFCARS Improvement Plan for review and analysis.

There is one significant system modification that will need to be completed to FACTS. This is in regard to the collection of diagnosed disability information. There are no start and end dates associated with the diagnosed conditions that are entered into FACTS. Data submitted for each report period, or prior report periods, must reflect the information on the child at that time. Date fields need to be added in order to determine when the diagnosis occurs and, if applicable, when the condition no longer exists.

The State has many good processes for reviewing the work of the provider agencies and ensuring good practice. The State needs to continue building on these practices to ensure that the AFCARS data accurately reflects the experiences of children in the Kansas foster care system. The State has an existing quality assurance system that is used to review cases. The State should build on this process by incorporating more of the AFCARS-related information. Also, the State may want to consider adding reports for use by line workers and the Human Service Aides that are similar to those currently generated for managers. Two areas where reports reflecting the validity of the data could be used are race and disability information. By increasing the type of information going back and forth in a feedback loop, there will be less chance of incomplete and/or inaccurate data entered into FACTS.

Once the technical corrections are completed, underlying issues may surface providing a more accurate reflection of the experiences of a child in foster care, or the need for better data entry. As a result, the AFCARS data submissions may fail the compliance standards used to determine compliance on the six-month reports. 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. The State can also assess the validity of the data prior to submitting it to the Children's Bureau. 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.

Within 30 calendar days after the receipt of this report, the State staff must submit the AFCARS Improvement Plan electronically to 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 Children's Bureau. Once the Children's Bureau 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

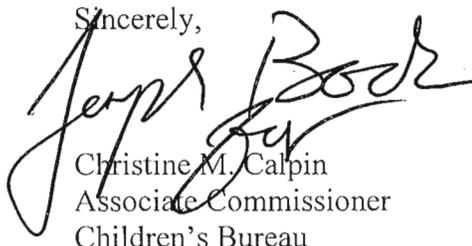
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and for caseworker training must be included in the State's title IV-B Annual Progress and Services Report as part of the information required in 45 CFR 1357.15(t) and 45 CFR 1357.16(a)(5).

The Children's Bureau 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 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christine M. Calpin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Christine M. Calpin
Associate Commissioner
Children's Bureau

Enclosures

cc:

Paula Ellis, Assistant Director, CFS Programs and Training, KS SRS
Jaymee Metzenthin, Assistant Director, Contracts and Performance Improvement, KS SRS
Roslyn Wilson, Program Manager, Children's Bureau Region VII
Angelina M. Palmiero, M.S.W., Children's Bureau, AFCARS
Terry Watt, Director, Children's Bureau, Division of State Systems
Linda Mitchell, Children's Bureau, National Child and Family Services Review Team