



Technical Bulletin #4
Data Compliance
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This Technical Bulletin provides guidance on the standards used to determine compliance on the semi-annual Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data files. It also includes instructions for installing, executing, and interpreting the title IV-E Agency AFCARS Data Compliance Utility (DCU), version 3.1. This utility is made available to title IV-E agencies to assist them in assessing the compliance of their data with AFCARS standards prior to submission of the data to the Children's Bureau.

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¹ Initial issuance date August, 1995 as Technical Bulletin #12.

² Revised for century date format August, 1996.

³ Revised for format for race categories, see ACYF-CB-PI-99-01, January 27, 1999 and 65 FR 4019.

⁴ Previously issued as Technical Bulletin #8, March, 2000.

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I. Introduction

A. AFCARS Background

AFCARS is designed to collect uniform, reliable information on children who are under the responsibility of the title IV-B/IV-E agency for placement, care, or supervision. The collection of adoption and foster care data is mandated by section 479 of the Social Security Act (the Act). The requirements for AFCARS are codified in Federal regulation at 45 CFR 1355.40. 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. On January 6, 2012, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) issued an Interim Final Rule (IFR)¹ to implement statutory provisions related to the Tribal title IV-E program. The Federal regulations at 45 CFR 1355.40 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.

AFCARS was established to provide data that would assist in policy development and program management. Data can be used by policymakers at the Federal, Tribal, and State levels to assess the reasons why children are in foster care and to develop strategies to prevent their unnecessary placement into foster care. Specifically, the data include information about foster care placements, adoptive parents, and length of time in foster care, and make it possible to identify trends in particular geographic areas. Also, the data enable the Children's Bureau to administer the Federal title IV-E foster care and adoption assistance programs more effectively. The Children's Bureau and ACF use these data for a number of purposes, including:

- 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 General Accounting Office (GAO), the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Inspector General (OIG), national advocacy organizations, States, Tribes, and other interested organizations;
- developing short and long-term budget projections;
- developing trend analyses and short and long-term planning;
- targeting areas for greater or potential technical assistance efforts, for discretionary service grants, research and evaluation, and regulatory change; and
- determining and assessing outcomes for children and families.

Additionally, the AFCARS data are used specifically in the

- Adoption Incentives Program;
- Child Welfare Outcomes Report;

¹ 77 FR 896 (January 6, 2012)

- Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs);
- Title IV- E Eligibility Reviews; and
- Allotment of funds in the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP).

The AFCARS data periods are as follows:

- October 1–March 31 (the “A” Data Report Period)
- April 1–September 30 (the “B” Data Report Period)

Transmission periods for the data are:

- A Data Report Period: April 1–May 15 (the “A” Transmission Period)
- B Data Report Period: October 1–November 14 (the “B” Transmission Period)

While the AFCARS data are to be transmitted to the Children's Bureau no later than May 15 and November 14 of each year, the Children's Bureau encourages title IV-E agencies to submit AFCARS files as early in the transmission time frame as possible. Early transmissions ensure that the title IV-E agency transmits its data on time and, if there are problems with transmitting the file, there is adequate time for the Children's Bureau and the title IV-E agency to resolve the issues related to file transmission before the end of the transmission period.

B. Overview of the Technical Bulletin

The purpose of this Technical Bulletin is to provide title IV-E agencies with information on the standards an AFCARS data file must meet to comply with the provisions of the AFCARS regulation found at 45 CFR 1355.40 and Appendix E to Part 1355. The data compliance standards are assessed on title IV-E agencies semi-annual data submissions. The Data Compliance Detailed and Summary Reports are generated and transmitted to the title IV-E agency after their file has been processed. This Technical Bulletin addresses the information contained in the Data Compliance Report. 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 its noncompliance.²

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 Children's Bureau has available on its web site a version of the Federal utilities that title IV-E agencies can download and run on their AFCARS data. In addition to the Data Compliance Utility, there is a data quality report utility and a frequency report utility. The Children's Bureau encourages the title IV-E agency to use these utilities prior to submitting the data. In order to optimize the usefulness of these utilities, title IV-E agencies should

² 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).

incorporate them as a routine task in quality control of the AFCARS data and assess the data on a regular basis, such as quarterly.

This Technical Bulletin also includes guidance on how to interpret the data compliance reports, both those from the Federal system as well as the title IV-E agency version of the utility. Additionally, it provides guidance for installing and executing the title IV-E Agency AFCARS Data Compliance Utility (DCU), version 3.1.

II. AFCARS Compliance Standards

A. Overview of the Compliance Standards

Title IV-E agencies are required to submit AFCARS data semi-annually to the Children's Bureau in accordance with 45 CFR 1355.40³. All data submissions will be evaluated to determine the completeness and internal consistency of the data. Four types of assessments will be conducted on both the foster care and adoption data submissions. The results of these assessments will determine the applicability of a substantial non-compliance determination with the title IV-E plan. Substantial noncompliance occurs when any element meets or exceeds a 10 percent error rate. The four types of assessments are:

- Comparisons of the detailed data to the summary data (*format error*);
- Internal consistency checks of the detailed data;
- An assessment of the status of missing data; and
- Timeliness: if the file is submitted on time, and if it is a foster care file, an assessment of the timeliness of data entry of certain data elements.

It is important to note that the edit checks described in this Technical Bulletin are not able to inform the Children's Bureau as to whether or not a title IV-E agency's information system satisfies all of the Federal AFCARS regulatory requirements, nor demonstrates that the title IV-E agency is submitting accurate and reliable data to the Children's Bureau. This explains why a title IV-E agency may be found to be in compliance with the semi-annual data submissions yet still needs to improve its AFCARS data for accuracy, reliability, and validity. 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. These are items that are assessed during an AFCARS Assessment Review (AAR).

The edit checks programmed in the Federal system are applied to every data file submitted to the Children's Bureau. However, compliance with the AFCARS standards are only formally assessed on the files submitted on a semi-annual basis. Corrected data

³ 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).

files that an agency resubmits are not formally assessed for compliance.

B. Detailed Description of the Error Standards

B-1. Timely Data Submissions

As noted above, title IV-E agencies are to transmit the AFCARS data files during the transmission periods of April 1st through May 15th and October 1st through November 14th. If the files are not received by midnight of the last day of the transmission period, then the file is considered out of compliance. The Federal system logs the date and time when the file is received. It is the date of receipt and not the date of transmission that is used to determine if the file is submitted on time.

B-2. Format Errors

In order for a file to be processed, it must meet the format standards set forth in the regulations, Technical Bulletin #9: AFCARS File Format, and any other Children's Bureau memorandum describing proper file format. This section describes the three categories of format standards that the Federal AFCAR System assesses on each file. Section III.D-1 provides further information on each of these standards and the possible resulting errors along with examples of how they will appear in the Data Compliance Report.

B-2a. Properly formatted AFCARS file⁴

The AFCARS data file must include file delimiters, summary files, and the foster care and adoption data files must be the correct file length.

B-2b. Summary data element files

A summary file is used to verify the completeness of the title IV-E agency's detailed submission for the reporting period. The summary file is a discrete file separate from the detailed data file that contains the number of children for the 19 age groups. When the data file is received for processing, the Federal system also generates a summary file. The number of records per age group in the two summary files (the one submitted by the title IV-E agency and the one generated during Federal processing) are then compared. If the two files match, further validation of the detailed data elements will commence. (See Section III.C below for information on the detailed data element file.)

B-2c. Consistency of the summary data element files

The summary file consist of the number of children in the 19 age groups. The Federal system counts the number of children being reported in the detail file and generates a total by age group that is compared to the counts per age group in the summary file.

⁴ The AFCARS file consists of two concatenated files – the adoption file and the foster care file.

B-3. Data Errors

B-3a. Out-of-range

Each AFCARS data element has specified responses used for data reporting. If a value other than the one specified in Appendices A and B to Part 1355, Technical Bulletin #1: AFCARS Data Elements, or other guidance by the Children's Bureau, then the value is considered out-of-range. For example, if the acceptable response to the element, sex of the adoptive child, is "1" for a male or "2" for a female, but the datum provided in the element is "3," this represents an out-of-range response.

B-3b. Internal consistency checks of the detailed data

Internal consistency validations involve evaluating the logical relationships between data elements in each record within the foster care and adoption detailed data files. For example, a child cannot be discharged from foster care before he or she has been removed from his or her home. Thus, the "date of latest removal from home" (data element #21) must be a date prior to the "date of discharge" (data element #56). If this is not the case, an internal inconsistency will be detected and an "error" indicated in the detailed data file. The internal consistency validations that will be performed on each of the AFCARS files can be found in Appendix E of Part 1355 and in Appendix A of this Technical Bulletin.

B-3c. Missing data standards

The term "missing data" refers to instances where no data have been entered, if applicable, for a particular data element. In addition, all data elements which fail a consistency check for a particular case and data which are "out-of-range" will also be converted to missing data by the Federal AFCAR System. Additional information is provided in the section on how to interpret the AFCARS Data Compliance Reports.

B-4. Timeliness of Foster Care Data Entry

For each child record, a computer generated transaction date must reflect the actual date of data entry and must accompany the date of latest removal from the home and the date of exit from foster care.

III. Interpreting AFCARS Data Compliance Reports

A. Overview

This section provides guidance on how to interpret the AFCARS Data Compliance Reports generated by the Federal AFCAR System as well as the reports generated by the Title IV-E Agency AFCARS Data Compliance Utility (DCU). The edit checks in the DCU are the same as those in the Federal system. In general, the DCU reports are the same as those the title IV-E agency receives from the Federal system with some exceptions. The

description below of the reports notes where those differences occur.

There are two types of reports for foster care and adoption data. The "Data Compliance Summary Report" is a summary report that gives the total of each type of error for each element. The "Data Compliance Detailed Report" gives a breakdown of errors for each record. Examples of both reports are included in Appendix B.

Listed at the top of the Federal foster care and adoption reports are: the date the report is received, the date the file was processed, the title IV-E agency name, and the file name. The first report generated is the Data Compliance Detailed Report followed by the Data Compliance Summary Report. The Detailed Report lists each record number down the left hand side and across the top is the element numbers grouped in tens. At the end of the detailed report (see section C for information on the detailed report) is a legend identifying the numbers and letters used in the detailed file to denote errors. The Data Compliance Summary Report contains additional information and is described in Section D below.

B. Special Information

In order to interpret the AFCARS data compliance reports there are a few caveats to keep in mind regarding the AFCARS data requirements.

B-1. Subject Records

You will note that in the data compliance summary report the number of records in the "subject records" column will differ from element to element. This is because every element is not subject to compliance assessment. This could be due to the relationship/dependence of one element on another or because the element is not a core element (see below for discussion on core elements).

B-2. Foster Care

In the AFCARS foster care data set there are "core" data elements (see Appendices A and E of Part 1355 for core data elements). Core data elements are identified for the purpose of determining AFCARS compliance and are the only elements assessed for errors in one of two criteria:

- Children who were in foster care for 30 days or less; or
- The child entered foster care prior to October 1, 1995 and is still in the same removal episode.

If a record meets one of the above criteria, then only those elements listed in the Federal regulation will be considered for compliance purposes. The Children's Bureau recommends the title IV-E agency complete as much of the remaining information as possible.

For either of these criteria to be accounted for compliance purposes, the "date of latest

removal" (foster care element #21) must have no errors. Therefore, any record in which foster care element #21 fails the missing data check, the out-of-range check, or any internal consistency check will require ALL foster care elements to be completed.

B-3. Adoption

All data elements are required for adoption if the record meets one of the three criteria for title IV-E agency involvement in Appendix B of Part 1355. If the response to adoption element #4 is "no," then only elements #1-4 are required for compliance purposes.

Any record in which adoption element #4 fails the missing check, the out-of-range check, or any internal consistency check will require ALL adoption elements to be completed.

C. Data Compliance Detailed Reports

The Data Compliance Detailed report lists all of the errors found by the compliance utility. The first column in the report gives the record number, which is element #4 for foster care and element #3 for adoption. The Federal version of the report contains the encrypted record number used by the title IV-E agency. The title IV-E agency's version may contain either the encrypted number or the actual person number used by the agency.

The remaining columns represent the element numbers (sixty-six for foster care, thirty-seven for adoption). If there is a "." in a column, the element had no errors in it. Otherwise, one of several possible errors is identified. These errors are described below.

C-1. Missing

A "1" in the detailed report indicates the element was found to be missing for that record. This means that the element was left blank (and, in the case of race elements, all blanks) in the record when it was required.

C-2. Out-of-Range

A "2" in the detailed report indicates the element in that record was out-of-range (i.e., not an allowable value). For example, the allowable values for sex are "1" for male and "2" for female. Any other value is out-of-range. Allowable values for coded elements are listed in Appendices A and B to Part 1355, as well as in Technical Bulletin #1, AFCARS Data Elements. With the exception of the record number (element #4 in foster care, element #3 in adoption), all elements must contain only digits or blanks and no other characters.

C-3. Internal Consistency Error

An uppercase letter ("A", "B", "C", etc.) in the detailed report indicates that an internal consistency check has failed. There are nine adoption consistency checks and eighteen foster care consistency checks enumerated in Appendix E of Part 1355. The letter in the report corresponds to the legend, printed at the end of the detailed report, which indicates

which elements were involved in the inconsistency. A full list of the internal consistency checks is included in Appendix A of this Technical Bulletin.

Also, these checks will be performed exactly as they appear in Appendix E, 45 CFR 1355. For example, foster care Internal Consistency Check #4 states:

“If a child is identified as having a disability(ies) (foster care element #10), at least one “type of disability condition” (foster care elements #11-#15) must be indicated...”

In this case, the record will only fail this check if foster care element #10 indicates the child has a disability but none of foster care elements #11-#15 indicates any type of disability. If, however, the record indicates that the child has a particular type of disability (in foster care elements #11-#15) but foster care element #10 indicates that the child has no disability, the record will *not* fail the internal consistency check.

There are three other important points to keep in mind about internal consistency checks:

- 1) Only those internal consistency checks where *all* elements involved are required in the record will be performed. Therefore, if the record only requires core elements, no internal consistency checks involving one or more non-core elements will be performed.
- 2) If an element for a particular record was found to contain either missing or out-of-range data, then no internal consistencies that involve that element will be performed on the record. If an element has already failed one internal consistency check, no further internal consistency checks that involve that element will be performed on that record. The exception to this is internal foster care consistency check #13, which will still be performed even if foster care element #5 has failed foster care data internal consistency check #3.
- 3) If an internal consistency check fails, all of the elements that are involved in the check will be considered to be in error (e.g., if foster care internal consistency check #4 fails then foster care elements #10-#15 will all be marked as errors for that record). The exception to this is foster care data internal consistency check #3, which will only mark foster care element #5 as an error if it fails check #3.

C-4. *Timeliness*

In the detailed data compliance report, a “3” for foster care elements #22 and #57 (transaction date of latest removal and transaction date of discharge, respectively) indicate that the element failed the timeliness standard as described in 45 CFR 1355.40(d) (i.e., the date entered is more than 60 days after the date of the actual occurrence).

These elements should reflect the *date of data entry* of the associated data element. For example, if the “date of latest removal” (foster care element #21) for a child is March 1, 2005, and that date is entered into the system *for the first time* on March 20, 2005, then

foster care element #22 should be 20050320 (March 20, 2005).

These elements should not change when a date in elements #21 or #56 is corrected in the system. In the example above, if the worker realizes that the "date of latest removal" for the current episode was actually March 2, 2005 and makes that modification to the system on April 20, 2005, the transaction date (foster care element #22) should still remain 20050320 (March 20, 2005), the date that the "date of latest removal" for the current episode was first entered.

Since it is impossible for a title IV-E agency to change a transaction date, it will only be considered as a timeliness error in the first report that it occurs. For example, if a record indicates that a child's "date of latest removal" is January 1, 2005 and the transaction date indicates that this information was not entered into the system until April 2, 2005 (more than 60 days later); the transaction date will be subject to penalty for the period ending September 30, 2005 (2005B). If, however, that same child is still in the same removal episode during the next reporting period and, therefore, the date of latest removal has not changed, then the transaction date *will not* be subject to penalty in the 2006A reporting period.

The transaction dates are used to ensure that these dates are being entered into the title IV-E agency's information system in a timely manner. To that end, there is a requirement that no more than 10 percent of the cases can have a transaction date of latest removal that is more than 60 days beyond the actual date of latest removal. Also, no more than 10 percent of the cases can have a transaction date of discharge that is more than 60 days beyond the actual date of discharge. If the title IV-E agency has questions concerning the transaction date and other issues that may affect it, such as converting from an older information system to a newer one, contact the Children's Bureau at afcars@acf.hhs.gov.

D. Data Compliance Summary Reports

The data compliance summary report is provided for two reasons: 1) to allow the user a quick means to evaluate whether the data would exceed the standard (10 percent), as stated in the AFCARS regulation (45 CFR 1355.40) if it were submitted to the Federal AFCAR System; and 2) to assist the user in determining problems/errors in the data.

As noted in Section II above, there are three types of errors that may appear in the foster care and adoption reports: late submission, format errors, and data errors. In addition to these, the foster care report also contains data entry timeliness errors. The Summary Report contains a section for each of these error types.

D-1. Format Errors

The first section of the Data Compliance Summary Report lists any format errors that occurred. The first type of check that the Federal system does is whether or not a file meets the format standards specified in Technical Bulletin #9, AFCARS File Format. If one of the following occurs the file cannot be processed:

- missing file delimiters;
- missing summary file(s);
- the foster care file is not the correct file length; and/or,
- the adoption file is not the correct file length.

The file length errors are only identified by the Federal AFCAR System and do not show up in the title IV-E agency's version of the compliance checks. This is why it is important for the title IV-E agency to review the reports transmitted back to the agency by the Federal system as soon as possible. **Any** format error that occurs in a data file submitted that has not been corrected and the file submitted prior to the final due date for a transmission period could result in the file being found out of compliance.

Both the Federal version and the title IV-E agency version of the compliance checks include the remaining checks for format errors.

If the title IV-E agency does not submit a file in the proper file length, an error message similar to the below will appear:

“Incorrect foster care detailed record length. The file contained 182 characters; the correct record length format is 197 characters for foster care.”

If the summary file created by the title IV-E agency does not match the summary file that the Federal AFCARS creates using the data in the detail file, an error message similar to the following is displayed:

Foster Care # of Records Not Equal to Summary #

of Records in summary file: 1321
Actual # of records in file: 1322

Another common type of format error is when the number of records in the detail file for these age groups is found inconsistent with the summary file. Therefore, it is very important that the State ensure that the information in the summary file matches the information in the detail file. An example of the language that will appear in the data compliance summary report for the age group inconsistencies is given in the sample reports in Appendix A.

D-2. Data Errors

The data errors appear in the second half of the data report, below the format errors. This section of the report provides an aggregate summary of the errors that appear in the Data Compliance Detailed Report. The data error section has eight columns:

1. *Data Element* - the element number.

2. *Missing Data* - the number of records where an element was required but data were not included.
3. *Out-of-Range* - the number of records where the element was required, but the response was not an allowable response (e.g., not one of the allowable codes, an invalid date, etc.).
4. *Internal Consistency* - the number of records where the element was required but the information given did not meet all of the internal consistencies applicable to it as enumerated in 45 CFR 1355.40.
5. *Total Errors* - the total number of records with Missing, Out-Of-Range, or Internal Consistency Errors for the element (i.e., the sum of columns 2,3, and 4 above).
6. *Subject Records* - the total number of records in which the element was required.
7. *Percent Failing* - the percentage of that element that failed (i.e., column 5 divided by column 6).
8. *Exceeded Standard* - if column 7 indicates that the element exceeded the allowable percentage of error, this column will have an "X".⁵

Errors for elements that are not required for a particular record will not appear in columns 2-5. Likewise, the number of subject records (column 6) will not include any records in which an element is not required.

D-3. Timeliness Errors

Only the AFCARS Foster Care Data Compliance Summary Report contains a "Timeliness Error" section. This section summarizes the number of timeliness errors that appear for foster care elements #22 and #57. The Subject Records for this section will include:

Foster care element #22: the total number of records in the file.

Foster care element #57: the total number of records in the file where there is a *valid* date of discharge (foster care element #56).

IV. Using the Title IV-E Agency AFCARS Data Compliance Utility

A. General Description of the title IV-E Agency AFCARS Data Compliance Utility

The utility uses the same logic as the Federal AFCAR System, and a diagram of the

⁵ The allowable percentage is usually 10 percent, except for the first four elements in each file, where it is 0 percent.

programming logic has been included in Appendix C. The utility will only work on an AFCARS data file that has been formatted according to Technical Bulletin #9: AFCARS File Format. The utility will create two files that contain the same four reports that a title IV-E agency receives from the Federal system:

- A file that contains a Foster Care Data Compliance Detailed Report and a Foster Care Data Compliance Summary Report.
- A file that contains an Adoption Data Compliance Detailed Report and an Adoption Data Compliance Summary Report.

A-1. Utility Files

The software can be downloaded from the Children's Bureau's AFCARS web site. The utility source code file is available in the C programming language and a PC-compatible executable in C. The following is a complete listing of the utility files:

C Files:

CHKDAT3.EXE (executable)

CHKDAT3.C (source code)

ASCII file:

FIPS.LST (contains a list of valid local agency codes)

A-2. Options for Using the Utility

The Children's Bureau is providing both source code and executable files to allow the title IV-E agency to select their own method for checking their AFCARS data. Two options are listed below:

1. *Use an executable file.* This is the easiest option. Simply copy the executable and the "FIPS.LST" file to the PC where the AFCARS data submission file is stored and execute it. The executable will only run on a PC under DOS version 3.0 or higher.
2. *Use the source code.* This option provides the flexibility to execute the utility on different computer platforms. The source code and the "FIPS.LST" file can be copied to a PC or mainframe. The code must then be compiled. The code may be edited to include additional checks at the title IV-E agency's option. **However, the Children's Bureau cannot guarantee the validity of reports created by the utility if the source code is modified in any way from its original form.**

A-3. C Source Code and Executable Files

The executable written in C follows the logical diagram included in Appendix C of this Technical Bulletin.

If the source code (with or without making modifications) needs to be compiled either on a PC or another platform, then a compiler that meets the ANSI-C standard is needed. For assistance or additional information, send an email to afcars@acf.hhs.gov.

B. Installing the Software

Copy the executable file for the AFCARS DCU file and the "FIPS.LST" file to an IBM 386 (or higher), or a compatible personal computer running DOS 3.0 or higher.

When using the source code, copy the source code and the "FIPS.LST" files to the platform where the C compiler is located. Then make any modifications and compile the source code.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: The "FIPS.LST" file contains a list of valid local agency codes which the AFCARS Data Compliance Utility uses to validate foster care element #3. When executing the utility, the "FIPS.LST" file must be contained in the same directory as the executable. Otherwise, the utility will not work properly.

C. Checking AFCARS Data Files

IMPORTANT NOTICE: The AFCARS DCU executable will process only files formatted as specified in "AFCARS Technical Bulletin #9: File Format" and will not process files in EBCDIC and/or other non-ASCII formats.

Execute the command by typing, or selecting, the name of the executable that has been copied or compiled (i.e., **CHKDAT3.exe**).

The program will then prompt the user for four things:

1. The name of the AFCARS file to be checked. This file contains the title IV-E agency client identifier numbers that may be encrypted or sequential. The data file submitted to the Federal AFCARS should have the client identification number either encrypted or in sequential order.
2. The name to be used for the file that will be generated by the program that contains the two foster care report files.
3. The name to be used for the file that will be generated by the program that contains the two adoption report files.
4. The title IV-E agency's two-digit code.

The program will then process the data file. If the file is not formatted correctly, the utility will not run properly so it is important that the directions are followed as listed in AFCARS Technical Bulletin #9 when creating the file.

After the program has completed processing, the two report files generated may be viewed or printed by using any text editor. A word processing software package such as WordPerfect or Microsoft Word may also be used to view the file. If a word processor is used, be sure to use a non-scalable font (we suggest Courier 12 cpi) when printing the file. Otherwise, the reports will not print properly.

V. Additional Information

If additional information is required, please send an email to afcars@acf.hhs.gov.

Appendix A:
Internal Consistency Checks

FOSTER CARE

A. Internal Consistency Check #1: The Local Agency (foster care element #3) must be the county or county equivalent unit that has responsibility for the case. The 5-digit Federal Information Processing (FIPS) code, or other Children's Bureau's agency identifier must be used.

B. Internal Consistency Check #2: If the Date of Latest Removal From Home is less than or equal to nine months prior to the Report Period Ending Date (foster care element #2) then the Date of Most Recent Periodic Review (Element #5) *may*¹ be left blank.

C. Internal Consistency Check #3: If the Date of Latest Removal From Home is greater than nine months prior to the Report Period Ending Date (foster care element #2) then the Date of Most Recent Periodic Review (foster care element #5) must not be more than nine months prior to the Report Date (foster care element #2).

D. Internal Consistency Check #4: If a child is identified as having a disability(ies) (foster care element #10), at least one Type of Disability Condition (foster care elements #11-15) must be indicated. Enter a zero (0) for disabilities that do not apply.

E. Internal Consistency Check #5: If the Total Number of Removals From Home to Date (foster care element #19) is one (1), the Date Child Was Discharged From Last Foster Care Episode (foster care element #20) must be blank.

F. Internal Consistency Check #6: If the Total Number of Removals From Home to Date (foster care element #19) is two or more, then the Date Child Was Discharged From Last Foster Care Episode (foster care element #20) must *not* be blank.

G. Internal Consistency Check #7: If the Date the Child was Discharged From Last Foster Care Episode (foster care element #20) exists, then the date entered for foster care element #20 must be a date prior to the Date of Latest Removal From Home (foster care element #21).

H. Internal Consistency Check #8: The Date of Latest Removal From Home (foster care element #21) must be equal or prior to the Date of Placement in Current Foster Care Setting (foster care element #23).

I. Internal Consistency Check #9: At least one element between foster care elements #26 - #40 must be answered by selecting a "1" (applies). Enter a zero (0) for conditions that do not apply.

J. Internal Consistency Check #10: If Current Placement Setting (foster care element # 41) is a value that indicates that the child is not in a foster family or pre-adoptive home, then foster care elements #49 - 51, #53 and #55 must be zero (0); and foster care

¹ If a periodic review has been conducted during the first six months the child is in foster care, the title IV-E agency should report the date.

elements #52 and #54 may be a combination of all blanks and zeros (0s).

K. Internal Consistency Check #11: At least one element between foster care elements #59 - 65 must be answered by selecting a "1" (applies). Enter a zero for sources that do not apply.

L. Internal Consistency Check #12: If the answer to the question, "Has this child ever been adopted?" (foster care element #16) is "1" (Yes), then the question, "How old was the child when adoption was legalized?" (foster care element #17) must have an answer from "1" to "5".

M. Internal Consistency Check #13: If the Date of Most Recent Periodic Review (foster care element #5) is not blank, then Manner of Removal From Home For Current Placement Episode (foster care element #25) cannot be option 3, "Not Yet Determined."

N. Internal Consistency Check #14: If Reason for Discharge (foster care element #58) is option 3, "Adoption," then Parental Rights Termination dates (foster care elements #47 and #48) must not be blank.

O. Internal Consistency Check #15: If the Date of Latest Removal From Home (foster care element #21) is present, the Date of Latest Removal From Home Transaction Date (foster care element #22) must be present and must be later than or equal to the Date of Latest Removal From Home (foster care element #21).

P. Internal Consistency Check #16: If the Date of Discharge From Foster Care (foster care element #56) is present, the Date of Discharge from Foster Care Transaction Date (foster care element #57) must be present and must be later than or equal to the Date of Discharge From Foster Care (foster care element #56).

Q. Internal Consistency Check #17: If the Date of Discharge from Foster Care (foster care element #56) is present, it must be after the Date of Latest Removal from Home (foster care element #21).

R. Internal Consistency Check #18: In elements #8, 52, and 54, race categories ("a" through "e" and "f. Unable to Determine") cannot be coded "0," (does not apply). If any of the race categories apply and are coded as "1" (applies), then "f. Unable to Determine" cannot also apply.

ADOPTION

A. Internal Consistency Check #1: The Child's Date of Birth (adoption element #5) must be later than both the Mother's and Father's Year of Birth (adoption element #16 and #17), unless either of these is unknown.

B. Internal Consistency Check #2: If the title IV-E agency has determined that the child is a special needs child (adoption element #9), then "the primary basis for determining that this child has special needs" (adoption element #10) must be completed. If "the primary basis for determining that this child has special needs" (adoption element #10) is answered by option "4," then at least one element between adoption elements #11-15, "Type of Disability," must be selected. Enter a zero (0) for disabilities that do not apply.

C. Internal Consistency Check #3: Dates of Parental Rights Termination (adoption elements #19 and #20) must be completed and must be prior to the Date Adoption Legalized (adoption element #21).

D. Internal Consistency Check #4: If "Is a monthly financial subsidy being paid for this child" (adoption element #35) is answered negatively (2, no), then adoption element #36 must be padded with zeroes (0) and "Is the subsidy paid under title IV-E adoption assistance" (adoption element #37) must be a "2" (no).

E. Internal Consistency Check #5: If the "Child Was Placed By" (adoption element #34) is answered with option 1, "Public Agency," then the question, "Did the title IV-E Agency Have any Involvement in this Adoption" (adoption element #4) must be "1".

F. Internal Consistency Check #6: If the "Relationship of Adoptive Parent(s) to the Child - Foster Parent" (adoption element #31) is selected, then the question, "Did the title IV-E Agency Have any Involvement in This Adoption" (adoption element #4) must be "1" (Yes).

G. Internal Consistency Check #7: If "Is a monthly financial subsidy being paid for this child?" (adoption element #35) is answered "1" (Yes), then the question, "Did the title IV-E Agency Have any Involvement in This Adoption" (adoption element #4) must be "1" (Yes).

H. Internal Consistency Check #8: If the "Family Structure" (adoption element #22) is option 3, Single Female, then the Mother's Year of Birth (adoption element #23), the "Adoptive Mother's Race" (adoption element #25) and "Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity" (adoption element #26) must be completed. Similarly, if the "Family Structure" (adoption element #22) is option 4, Single Male, then the Father's Year of Birth (adoption element #24), the "Adoptive Father's Race" (adoption element #27) and "Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity" (adoption element #28) must be completed. If the "Family Structure" (adoption element #22) is option 1 or 2, then both Mother's and Father's "Year of Birth" (adoption elements #23 and #24), "Race" (adoption elements #25 and #27) and "Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity" (adoption elements #26 and #28) must be completed.

I. Internal Consistency Check #9: In elements #7, 25, and 27, race categories (“a” through “e” and “f. Unable to Determine”) cannot be coded “0,” (does not apply). If any of the race categories apply and are coded as “1”, then “f. Unable to Determine” cannot also apply.

Appendix B:
Sample Reports

Date: 2/3/2012
File: Test_File.dat

AFCARS Foster Care
Data Compliance Detailed Report (Version 3.1)

Report Period: March, 2012

<----- Field Number ----->

0 10 20 30 40 50 60
123456789 0123456789 0123456789 0123456789 0123456789 0123456789 0123456

Record #

1	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
3	.....	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
4	.....	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
5	.....	.....	.....	.....2.....	.....	.....	.....
6	.....	.....	.....	.....2.....	.....	.....	.....
7	.....	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
8	.....	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
9	.....	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
10	.....	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
11	.....	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
17	.....1.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
18	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
19	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
20	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
21	.....1.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
22	.....R.	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
23	.....R.	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
24	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....2	.....	.....
25	.....1.	.....	.....	.....2.....	.....	.....	.....
26	.....1.	.....	.....	.....2.....	.....2	.....	.....
27	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....222	.....
28	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....2.R2	.....
29	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....R.R2	.....
30	.....1.	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
31	.....R.	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
32	.....1.	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
33	.....2.	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
34	.....2.	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
35	.....2.	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
36	.....2.	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
37	.....2.	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
38	.....2.	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
39	.....2.	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
40	.....2.	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
41	.....2.	.....	.....	.....J.....J	JJJJJJ	.....	.....
42	.....2.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
43	.....2.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
44	.....2.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
45	.....2.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
46	.....12.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
47	.....12.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
48	.....2.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
49	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
50	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....R.	.....
51	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....R.	.....

52	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
53	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
54	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
55	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....2.....	.....
56	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....R.....	.....
57	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
58	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....J.....J JJJJJJ.....	.....
59	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....J.....J JJJJJJ.....	.....
60	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....2.....	.....
61	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....2.....	.....
62	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....1.....	.....
63	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....2.....	.....
64	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....1.....	.....
66	.....R.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....R.....	.....

Legend:

- 1 = Missing.
- 2 = Out of range.
- 3 = Timeliness error.
- A = Foster care data internal consistency #1.
- B = Foster care data internal consistency #2.
- C = Foster care data internal consistency #3.
- D = Foster care data internal consistency #4.
- E = Foster care data internal consistency #5.
- F = Foster care data internal consistency #6.
- G = Foster care data internal consistency #7.
- H = Foster care data internal consistency #8.
- I = Foster care data internal consistency #9.
- J = Foster care data internal consistency #10.
- K = Foster care data internal consistency #11.
- L = Foster care data internal consistency #12.
- M = Foster care data internal consistency #13.
- N = Foster care data internal consistency #14.
- O = Foster care data internal consistency #15.
- P = Foster care data internal consistency #16.
- Q = Foster care data internal consistency #17.
- R = Foster care data internal consistency #18.

AFCARS Foster Care
Data Compliance Summary Report

Report Period: March, 2012

Format Errors

Error Description	Error
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 7	X
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 8	X
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 9	X
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 10	X
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 12	X
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 13	X
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 14	X
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 15	X
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 17	X
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 18	X

Data Errors

Data Element	Missing Data	Out-of-Range	Internal Consistency	Total Errors	Subject Records	Percent Failing	Exceeded Standard
1	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
2	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
3	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
4	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
5	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
6	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
7	2	0	0	2	66	3.03	
8	6	16	27	49	66	74.24	X
9	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
10	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
11	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
12	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
13	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
14	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
15	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
16	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
17	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
18	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
19	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
20	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
21	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
22	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
23	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
24	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
25	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
26	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
27	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
28	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
29	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
30	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
31	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
32	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
33	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
34	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
35	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
36	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
37	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
38	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
39	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
40	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
41	2	7	23	32	66	48.48	X
42	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
43	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
44	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
45	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
46	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
47	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
48	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
49	0	1	23	24	66	36.36	X
50	0	0	23	23	66	34.85	X
51	0	0	23	23	66	34.85	X
52	0	3	27	30	66	45.45	X

53	0	1	23	24	66	36.36	X
54	0	2	26	28	66	42.42	X
55	0	2	23	25	66	37.88	X
56	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
57	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
58	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
59	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
60	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
61	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
62	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
63	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
64	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
65	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	
66	0	0	0	0	66	0.00	

Total Data Errors: 260

Timeliness Errors

Data Element	Total Errors	Subject Records	Percent Failing	Exceeded Standard
22	0	66	0.00	
57	0	66	0.00	

* * * * *

As reflected in this report, data submitted by the title IV-E agency does not meet the AFCARS standards specified in 45 CFR 1355.40 (e).

* * * * *

Date: 2/3/2012
File: Test_File.dat

AFCARS Adoption
Data Compliance Detailed Report (Version 3.1)

Report Period: March, 2012

<----- Field Number ----->

0 10 20 30
123456789 0123456789 0123456789 01234567

Record #

000000000002	.....	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000003	.....	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000004	.....	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000005	.....	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000006	.....	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000007	.....	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000008	.....	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000014	.....	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000015	.....	.....	.....I.....	.....
000000000016	.....	.....	.....I.....	.....
000000000017	.....1..	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000018	.....I..	.....	.....	.....
000000000019	.....I..	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000020	.....I..	.....	.....	.....
000000000021	.....I..	.....	.....I.....	.....
000000000022	.....1..	.....	.....	.....
000000000023	.....I..	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000024	.....I..	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000025	.....I..	.....	..2.....	.....
000000000026	.....1..	.....	..2.....	.....
000000000027	.....I..	.....	..2.....	.....
000000000028	.....I..	.....	..1.....	.....
000000000029	.....1..	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000030	.....1..	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000031	.....I..	.....	.....I.....	.....
000000000032	.....I..	.....	.....I.....	.....
000000000033	.....	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000034	.....2..	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000035	.....2..	.....	.....2..	.....
000000000036	.....2..	.....	.....	.....
000000000037	.....2..	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000038	.....2..	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000039	.....2..	.....	.....2..	.....
000000000040	.....2..	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000041	.....2..	.....	.....2..	.....
000000000042	.....2..	.....	.....2..	.....
000000000043	.....2..	.....	.....2.2..	.....
000000000044	.....2..	.....	.....2..	.....
000000000045	.....2..	.....	.....	.....
000000000046	.....2..	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000047	.....2..	.....	.....2..	.....
000000000048	.....2..	.....	.....	.....
000000000049	.....I..	.....	.....	.....
000000000050	.....I..	.....	..HHHHHHH.	.....
000000000051	.....I..	.....	.....2..	.....

```

0000000000052 .....I.. .....
0000000000053 .....I.. ..... HHHHHHHH. ....
0000000000054 .....I.. ..... HHHHHHHH. ....
0000000000055 .....I.. ..... 2.....
0000000000056 .....I.. ..... HHHHHHHH. ....
0000000000057 .....I.. ..... 2.....
0000000000058 .....I.. ..... 2.....
0000000000059 .....I.. ..... 2.2..
0000000000060 .....I.. ..... 2.....
0000000000061 .....I.. .....
0000000000062 .....I.. ..... HHHHHHHH. ....
0000000000063 .....I.. ..... 2.....
0000000000064 .....I.. .....

```

Legend:

- 1 = Missing.
- 2 = Out of range.
- 3 = Timeliness error.
- A = Adoption data internal consistency #1.
- B = Adoption data internal consistency #2.
- C = Adoption data internal consistency #3.
- D = Adoption data internal consistency #4.
- E = Adoption data internal consistency #5.
- F = Adoption data internal consistency #6.
- G = Adoption data internal consistency #7.
- H = Adoption data internal consistency #8.
- I = Adoption data internal consistency #9.

AFCARS Adoption
Data Compliance Summary Report

Report Period: March, 2012

Format Errors

Error Description	Error
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 6	X
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 7	X
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 8	X
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 9	X
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 11	X
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 12	X
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 13	X
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 15	X
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 16	X
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 17	X
Inconsistent Summary File: Age 18	X
Inconsistent Summary File: Age over 18 years old	X

Data Errors

Data Element	Missing Data	Out-of-Range	Internal Consistency	Total Errors	Subject Records	Percent Failing	Exceeded Standard
--------------	--------------	--------------	----------------------	--------------	-----------------	-----------------	-------------------

1	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
2	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
3	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
4	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
5	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
6	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
7	5	15	27	47	64	73.44	X
8	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
9	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
10	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
11	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
12	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
13	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
14	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
15	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
16	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
17	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
18	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
19	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
20	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
21	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
22	1	3	25	29	64	45.31	X
23	0	0	25	25	64	39.06	X
24	0	0	25	25	64	39.06	X
25	0	8	28	36	64	56.25	X
26	0	0	25	25	64	39.06	X
27	0	8	27	35	64	54.69	X
28	0	0	25	25	64	39.06	X
29	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
30	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
31	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
32	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
33	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
34	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
35	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
36	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	
37	0	0	0	0	64	0.00	

Total Data Errors: 247

* * * * *

As reflected in this report, data submitted by the title IV-E agency does not meet the AFCARS standards specified in 45 CFR 1355.40 (e).

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Appendix C:
Programming Logic Diagram













