

THE COMPREHENSIVE CHILD WELFARE INFORMATION SYSTEM PROPOSED RULE: OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

In December 1993, the Department of Health and Human Services published the existing regulations for Statewide and Tribal Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (SACWIS/TACWIS) in response to amendments to the Social Security Act providing title IV-E funding for statewide automated child welfare information systems. States and Tribes have the option to build a SACWIS/TACWIS to support the case management and data collection needs of children receiving foster care and adoption services provided by the title IV-E agency.

The original SACWIS/TACWIS regulations defined a large function based application that all social workers would use to track and manage their child welfare caseloads. In the intervening years, child welfare practice and technology have changed considerably. It became challenging for title IV-E agencies to support practices that may vary within a jurisdiction with a single comprehensive information system. Additionally, information technology (IT) has advanced, providing title IV-E agencies with tools to share data easily among systems, negating the need for the large, one-size-fits-all SACWIS/TACWIS model.

This Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) addresses these changes, and provides agencies with increased flexibility to build smaller systems that more closely mirrors their practice models. Interested parties may submit comments about the NPRM to <http://www.regulations.gov/> during the public comment period, which is open until October 13, 2015 11:59PM ET.

A CCWIS, as proposed in the NPRM, is a case management information system that states and tribes may develop to support their child welfare program needs. If a state or tribe elects to build a CCWIS, the federal government will provide additional funds to help pay for it. However, the system must be designed to support social workers automation needs to organize and record quality case information about the children and families receiving child welfare services.

KEY PROVISIONS OF THE PROPOSED RULE

This proposed rule is the first comprehensive revision of SACWIS/TACWIS regulations since 1993. The proposed rule will: (1) promote data sharing with other agencies; (2) require quality data; (3) reduce mandatory functional requirements; and (4) allow agencies to build systems tailored to their needs.

1. PROMOTE DATA SHARING WITH OTHER AGENCIES: The proposed rule requires, if practicable, data exchanges with other health and human service agencies, education systems, and child welfare courts. Data exchanges will help coordinate services, eliminate redundancies, improve client outcomes, and improve data quality.

2. REQUIRE QUALITY DATA: Title IV-E agencies implementing a CCWIS must develop and implement data quality plans and processes to monitor data quality. The rule also requires agencies to take corrective action to address identified problems.

3. REDUCE MANDATORY FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS: While the SACWIS/TACWIS regulations require that the system supports a minimum of 51 functional requirements, CCWIS only has 14 requirements. The proposed rule allows agencies to build functions in the CCWIS or collect needed data through exchanges with other systems.

4. ALLOW AGENCIES TO BUILD SYSTEMS TAILORED TO THEIR NEEDS: The proposed rule focuses federal requirements for this optional system on quality data and exchanges between related information systems. This will allow agencies to build systems tailored to their unique business needs rather than on functions defined by the federal government.