

THE COMPREHENSIVE CHILD WELFARE INFORMATION SYSTEM FINAL 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 (S/TACWIS) in response to amendments to the Social Security Act providing title IV-E funding for statewide automated child welfare information systems. State and tribal title IV-E agencies have the option to build a S/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. As of May 2016, 36 states have a SACWIS and no tribe has requested funding for a TACWIS.

In the intervening years, child welfare practice and technology have changed considerably. It has become challenging for title IV-E agencies to support practices that may vary within a jurisdiction with a single comprehensive information system, as required by S/TACWIS regulations. Additionally, information technology (IT) has advanced, providing title IV-E agencies with new tools to share data easily among systems, negating the need for the large, one-size-fits-all S/TACWIS model.

This Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) final rule addresses these changes, and provides agencies with increased flexibility to build smaller systems that more closely mirror their practice models. A CCWIS is a case management information system that title IV-E agencies may develop to support their child welfare program needs. If a state or tribe elects to build a CCWIS, the federal government will provide a more favorable cost allocation than is provided for non-CCWIS systems. 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 FINAL RULE

The final 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 CCWIS final rule requires, if practicable, title IV-E agencies to exchange data 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 final rule also requires agencies to take corrective action to address identified problems.

3. REDUCE MANDATORY FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS: While the S/TACWIS regulations require that the system supports a minimum of 51 functional requirements, CCWIS only has 14 requirements. The final 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 CCWIS final 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 systems defined by functions specified by the federal government.