

Case File Summary Report State: Florida

Background

The purpose of the case file review is to assess the accuracy of the data reported to AFCARS by comparing what is found in the child's paper file to what was reported to AFCARS. A sample of 80 foster care records and 30 adoption records was selected from the most recent AFCARS report period prior to the onsite review. The process involved all members of the State and Federal teams, technical and program.

For States that have converted information from an older information system (or a paper recordkeeping method) to a new electronic case file, the case file review process identifies any issues with the accuracy of the data due to conversion. The information that is submitted to AFCARS should reflect what is in the paper case records. The case file review is the only means for the Federal team to assess the accuracy and the level of completeness of the State's conversion process from a paper or legacy system to its new information system.

Since the case file review is the only means to assess conversion, the cases selected for the review were primarily those in which the most recent removal date, or the first removal date, precedes the date the State's system went operational. If the State phased in its operational status, then the sample may reflect these dates.

The Children's Bureau has found that while there may be challenges to identifying the information in the paper file, the process provides very valuable information to the review teams. The findings often provide additional information that increases the Federal team's understanding of the data reported to AFCARS. Also, this process allows the review team to assess how well records are being kept up-to-date, the accuracy of the AFCARS data, and usage of the State's information system. Typically, this process does not identify new problems, but confirms findings from the other components of the AAR.

Summary

This summary report provides information on the number of cases selected in the sample, the number of cases reviewed, and any relevant general information regarding the analysis of the results. The matrices that follow provide detailed findings. There are six columns in the matrices, they are:

- AFCARS Element - This is the name of each AFCARS element with the corresponding values.
- Data in AFCARS Matches Paper File - The number of records in which the reviewer found that the data submitted to AFCARS matched what was found in the paper file.
- Data in AFCARS Does Not Match Paper File - The number of records in which the reviewer found that the data submitted to AFCARS did not match what was found in the paper file.
- Questionable - The number of records where either the reviewer was not sure whether the data were the correct or based on final analysis there was some type of inconsistency

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between what was reported and what was noted by the reviewer. Comments are provided in the comment column for these situations.

- Not Found - Indicates that the reviewer was not able to locate the information pertaining to the element in the paper file. This can either be due to a missing file or sections of the file, or the data are now only recorded in the information system and there are no paper documents with the data. This is not considered a negative finding.
- Comments - This column includes findings regarding the errors that were identified in the column “Data in AFCARS Does Not Match Paper File” as well as any other pertinent information pertaining to the element and the findings.

Foster Care

Number of Cases in Sample	80
Number of Cases not Sent to Office	2
Number of Cases Reviewed	75
Number of Cases Analyzed	75

Date of the most recent periodic review (data element #5)

There were errors identified that may relate to timely data entry. Also, since reviewers also found dates that were before the one reported to AFCARS there may be an issue with what the extraction code is checking as a periodic review. It may also be that the documentation was not in the paper file and the reviewer only had the older review to go by for determining when the review was held.

Child Hispanic/Latino Origin (data element #9)

There was a high number of errors for this element. The reviewers identified in 13 records (22%) that the response for AFCARS should have been “no” (the child is not of Hispanic/Latino Origin. The AFCARS data for these records indicated “unable to determine.”

Number of placement settings in this episode (foster care element #24)

Some of the error cases related to fewer placements were due to the first placement being a hospital setting. Consequently, the placement should not have counted since the child had not yet entered a foster care setting.

Circumstances associated with removal (foster care elements #26 – 40)

In all but two of the elements the reviewers found errors. The majority of the errors were due to the item not being selected as a condition that contributed to the child’s removal from home.

Most recent case plan goal (foster care element #43)

There were 14 errors in which the AFCARS data indicated a case plan goal had not been established but the reviewers did find a case plan goal. In all of these cases the child had been in care at least 60 days and in some instances for a couple of years. There were three records reported with a goal of “reunification” instead of “adoption” or “guardianship.”

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Adoption

Number of Cases in Sample	30
Number of Cases Reviewed	28
Number of Cases in Analyzed	28

Primary basis for special needs (adoption element #10)

There were four error cases that were reported to AFCARS as blanks but the reviewers did find that the child was determined to be special needs and was receiving an adoption subsidy.

Was mother married at time of child's birth? (adoption element #18)

In three error cases the AFCARS file reflected "unable to determine." In one of the cases, the reviewer found that the mother had been married. In the other two cases, the reviewers found that the mother was not married at the time. There was one error case that the AFCARS field was blank but the reviewer was able to determine that the mother had been married at the time of the child's birth.

Mother's parental rights termination date (adoption element #19)

In six of the error cases, the reviewers found later TPR dates than those submitted in the file. In four of the error cases, the reviewers found earlier TPR dates than those submitted in the file. In one of the cases, the mother's TPR date was overwritten with the father's TPR date.

Father's parental rights termination date (adoption element #20)

In four of the error cases, the reviewers found later TPR dates than those submitted in the file. In three of the error cases, the reviewers found earlier TPR dates than those submitted in the file. In one of the error cases, the file was incorrectly marked with a date instead of being left blank (legal parent was single).

Relationship of the child to the adoptive parents (adoption elements #19 – 32)

There were several errors for the two elements that identify if the child was adopted by a foster parent and/or a non-relative. There were seven records that should have indicated the child was adopted by a foster parent.