

**AFCARS ASSESSMENT REVIEW FINDINGS: General Requirements**  
**State: Florida**

Item No.	Requirement	Findings	Rating Factor
<b>Foster Care Population</b>			
1	<p>Each State's data transmission must include all children in foster care for whom the State title IV-B/IV-E agency has responsibility for placement, care, or supervision (45 CFR 1355.40(a)(2)).</p> <p>The State agency shall transmit semi-annually information on each child in foster care during the reporting period (45 CFR 1355.40 (b)(1)).</p> <p>The population to be included in this reporting system includes all children in foster care under the responsibility of the State agency administering or supervising the administration of the title IV-B Child and Family Services State plan and the title IV-E State plan; that is, all children who are required to be provided the assurances of section 422(b)(10) of the Social Security Act (Appendix A to Part 1355--Foster Care Data Elements, Section II--Definitions).</p>	<p>The following agencies are included under the Department of Children and Families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult Protective Services</li> <li>• Child Care</li> <li>• Domestic Violence</li> <li>• Access</li> <li>• Child Welfare</li> <li>• Homelessness</li> <li>• Refugee Services</li> <li>• Strengthening Families</li> <li>• Substance Abuse</li> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul> <p>DCF is the lead agency responsible for Child Protection and Welfare and for providing services within child welfare, domestic violence, substance abuse, mental health, homelessness, and other areas.</p> <p><u>Program Code, LNs 25 – 164.</u></p> <p>The program code selects all the records where the episode type is “1” (out-of-home placement) and the episode end reason is blank. The program code also checks if the begin date of the removal episode is prior to the end of the report period. Also, if there is a discharge from foster care date, the program code checks that it is within the report period.</p> <p>The program code does not exclude records of children whose only placement is a hospital or a locked facility. The program code will need to be modified to exclude records of children whose only placement while under the agency’s responsibility for placement and care is a hospital or a locked facility. For additional information on how to report records of children whose first placement is a locked facility or hospital and the child is placed in a foster care setting afterward see foster care elements 18 – 21.</p> <p>The State is incorrectly including children who are removed from a custodial parent and directly placed with a non-custodial parent in the AFCARS reporting population.</p> <p>As a result of the case file review, the review team identified an inconsistency in how the court orders were written identifying who had placement and care responsibility for the child. There were some records identified in which it was not clear that DCF had placement and care</p>	2

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		<p>responsibility of the child. In all of the cases identified during the review the child was placed with a relative. This was an issue that was also identified in the State’s title IV-E eligibility review that was conducted February 26 – March 2, 2007. One of the findings of that eligibility review was “Agency supervision of a child in the legal custody of a relative does not equate with the agency’s placement and care responsibility.” As a result of the review the State entered into a Program Improvement Plan (PIP), which the State completed and a final report was issued in November, 2008. The State provided supplemental documentation and it was determined for the review and the PIP that the State had placement and care of these children. Additionally, as part of the PIP the State was to provide training and technical assistance to the agency attorneys and judges regarding specificity in the wording of the court orders. When this issue came up as part of the AFCARS onsite review, the agency’s attorneys indicated the intent is that the children whom the agency placed with relatives are in the agency’s responsibility for placement and care even when legal custody was given to the relative. The State indicated they had provided training and that the attorneys were to use the model language developed after the title IV-E review. It is the belief of the State team that there is a need to revisit the language and to conduct training with the agency attorneys as well as with the judges to ensure consistency in the language in the court orders. During the post-site visit phase the State has begun work on clarifying the language to be used in the court orders and initiated training. The State has shared with the Federal team its plan of action and model language. The Children’s Bureau supports the work the State has done thus far to address the issue identified during the eligibility review and AAR and expect the State to continue to put in place measures to correct the concern/deficiency. The Children’s Bureau also strongly urges the State to incorporate a review of its court orders as part of its regular quality assurance work and to provide refresher training as needed.</p>	
2	This includes American Indian children covered under the assurances in section 422(b)(10) of the Act on the same basis as any other child (45 CFR 1355.40(a)(2)).	<p><u>Program Code</u> The only logic in the program code that references American Indians is that related to determining racial categories. There is no selection logic specifically addressing this issue.</p>	4
3	For children in out-of-State placement, the State placing the child and making the foster care payment submits and continually updates the data (45 CFR 1355.40(a)(2)).	<p><u>Program Code</u> The program code only selects children who are under the responsibility of the State of FL and are recorded as such in the FSN system’s episode records.</p>	4
4	This population includes all children supervised by or under the responsibility of another public agency with which the title IV-B/IV-E State agency has an agreement under title IV-E and on whose behalf the State makes title IV-E foster care maintenance payments (Appendix A to Part 1355--Foster Care Data Elements, Section II--	<p>Florida has an inter-agency agreement with Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. The last agreement information indicates the validity of the agreement until July 2011. The staff indicated that the agreement is still in effect.</p> <p>The State is not including the records of the Juvenile Justice (DJJ) youth for whom the State is paying title IV-E funds. Florida DCF had been including the JJ youth under the Interagency</p>	2 1

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	Definitions).	agreement but then stopped reporting them. They use to append the JJ file to the AFCARS file. The State must begin including these youth in the foster care file.	
5	The reporting system includes all children who have or had been in foster care at least 24 hours.	<p><u>Screen: Out-of-Home Placement; Removal/Placement Tab</u> The screen has a section "Child Removal From Home." This section includes the date fields for removal start and end dates as well as a time.</p> <p><u>Program Code</u> The program code checks the time fields associated with the removal episodes.</p>	4
6	Foster care does not include children who are in their own homes under the responsibility of the State agency.	<p>See the findings in item #1 regarding the State's court order language.</p> <p>If the child has never been removed from his or her home, and the agency has protective supervision, these children are correctly excluded from the AFCARS population.</p>	4
7	<p>A title IV-E agency that takes the option to extend assistance to youth age 18 or older must collect data and report data to the AFCARS on such youth receiving a title IV-E foster care maintenance payment (45 CFR 1355.40, PI).</p> <p>Includes youth over the age of 18 if a payment is being made on behalf of the child (Child Welfare Policy Manual, Section 1.3).</p>	<p>The age of majority in Florida is 18.</p> <p>The State defines a youth up to the age of 18 and the State does not claim title IV-E funds for children 18 and older.</p> <p>As of the onsite AAR the State <u>has decided</u> not to exercise the option to extend title IV-E foster care maintenance payments to youth beyond the age of 18. If the State chooses to exercise the option in the future, the AAR IP will be modified accordingly.</p>	4
8	Include all children who are in the placement, care, or supervision responsibility of the title IV-B/E agency that are on "trial home visits" (Child Welfare Policy Manual, Section 1.3).	See findings in foster care elements #23, 24, and 41. There are instances in which the child is placed back home and the agency still has care and placement responsibility.	3
<b>Adoption Population</b>			
9	<p>[D]ata are required to be transmitted by the State on all adopted children who were placed by the State title IV-B/IV-E agency, and on all adopted children for whom the State agency is providing adoption assistance (either ongoing or for nonrecurring expenses), care or services directly or by contract or agreement with other private or public agencies. (45 CFR 1355.40(a)(3))</p> <p>All children adopted who had been in foster care under the responsibility and care of the State child welfare agency and who were subsequently adopted whether</p>	<p><u>Program Code: LNs 20 – 113:</u> The program code looks for children whose adoption records indicate a finalized adoption within the reporting period. It reports both public and private (if available) adoption data for children for whom the state is providing adoption assistance.</p>	4

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	special needs or not and whether subsidies are provided or not (Appendix B to Part 1355--Adoption Data Elements, Section II - Definitions).		
10	For a child adopted out-of-State, the State which placed the child submits the data.	<p><u>Program Code</u> The program code only includes adopted children who are identified in the FSFN episode tables or private_adoption tables. There is no logic that specifically excludes out of state children placed within the state.</p>	4
11	<p>The State must report on all children who are adopted in the State during the reporting period and in whose adoption the State title IV-B/IV-E agency has had any involvement.</p> <p>All special needs children who were adopted in the State, whether or not they were in the public foster care system prior to their adoption and for whom non-recurring expenses were reimbursed; and All children adopted for whom an adoption assistance payment or service is being provided based on arrangements made by or through the State agency.</p>	<p><u>Program Code: LNs 503 – 532.</u> The program code includes private adoption data located in the system in a separate table named private_adoptions.</p>	4
<b>Technical Requirements</b>			
12	<p>The data must be extracted from the data system as of the last day of the reporting period and must be submitted in electronic form as described in appendix C to this part and in record layouts as delineated in appendix D to this part.</p> <p>For foster care information, the child-specific data to be transmitted must reflect the data in the information system when the data are extracted (45 CFR 1355.40(b)(2)).</p> <p>Provide data for all children who were discharged from foster care at any time during the reporting period, or in the previous reporting period, if not previously reported (Appendix D, 45 CFR 1355 Foster Care and Adoption Record Layouts Section A.1.b(5)).</p>	<p><u>Program Code: LNs 542 – 555, 638 – 649 and 703 – 706.</u> The report date is manually entered. It is a parameter passed to the program from a command line argument. Records are selected based on their relevance to the report period indicated by these dates.</p> <p>The program code is incorrectly including events that occur after the end of the reporting period. For example, during the case file review, there was a record with a discharge date of October 4, 2011 incorrectly reported for element #56.</p> <p>Line #160 appears to have a greater than sign. Should it have been &lt;?</p> <p><u>For subsequent submission:</u> See the test case findings for case scenarios #IV, VI, and IX.</p> <p>Because the program code does not always check for the date of an occurrence, events that occur after the report period being extracted are being included in the AFCARS files. Also, since there are no dates associated with the diagnosed conditions, if the State resubmits a file this</p>	2

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		element will not always be reflective of the circumstances of the child for the prior report period. There may be other circumstances where data could be overwritten that needs to be maintained in order to reflect a historical report of the child’s involvement in foster care. The agency needs to make sure that the program code accurately reports the information in subsequent files.	
<b>45 CFR 1355.40(b)(1) and section (b)(3)</b>			
13	<p>The State agency shall transmit semi-annually information on each child adopted during the reporting period.</p> <p>Adoption data are to be reported during the reporting period in which the adoption is legalized or, at the State's option, in the following reporting period if the adoption is legalized within the last 60 days of the reporting period. For a semi-annual period in which no adoptions have been legalized, States must report such an occurrence.</p>	<p><u>Program Code: LNs 20 – 113.</u> The program code looks for children whose adoption records indicate a finalized adoption within the reporting period. For subsequent submissions this should guarantee that only records for the specified reporting period are included. However, the frequency report indicates there are records with a finalized adoption that was prior to 2011.</p> <p>If an adoption occurs at the end of a report period and is not entered prior to the report period being submitted, it is never picked-up in the next report period. A flag or some other means needs to be implemented to ensure all adoptions are reported.</p>	2
14	<p>A summary file of the semi-annual data transmission must be submitted and will be used to verify the completeness of the State's detailed submission for the reporting period.</p> <p>The values for these data elements are generated by processing all records in the semi-annual detailed data transmission and computing the summary values for Elements 1 and 3-22. Element 2 is the semi-annual report period ending date. In calculating the age range for the child, the last day of the reporting period is to be used.</p>		4
15	Data file must be in ASCII format.		4
16	Elements must be comprised of integer (numeric) value(s).		4
17	All records must be a fixed length.		4
18	Provide data for all children who were discharged from foster care at any time during the reporting period, or in the previous reporting period, if not previously reported (Section A.1.b(5)).	<p><u>Program Code</u> Children are selected for the AFCARS reporting population based in part based on the latest foster care discharge transaction date. This should ensure that if a child was discharged during the previous reporting period but was not reported they will be reported in the current one.</p>	<del>3</del> 4

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19	State extracts all records based on the transaction date of discharge (foster care element #57) or the date of latest removal (foster care element #21), if the child has not been discharged.	<p><u>Program Code</u>                      The program code includes the transaction dates for discharge and latest removal in the selection logic that filters records for the current reporting population.</p>	4
20	State must use correct file name for transmission.		4
<b>Data Quality – Conversion</b>			
21	State transferred historical information on open cases. Specifically, it included information on: date of first removal, total number of removals, and whether the child’s mother was married at the time of the child’s birth. If the case was open at the time of conversion, information on the number of placement settings was included.	<p>The State’s current system, Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN), replaced a prior legacy system, Home Safe Net (HSN) which in turn replaced an older system, Florida Hotline Abuse Information System (FAHIS). The conversion effort for FSFN addressed all of the existing HSN system such that existing cases and those documented in HSN were converted (both open and closed) to FSFN. Also, the history of removals and placements needed for federal reporting was accumulated in a screen known as the Pre-HSN Summary – only the summed totals of removals and placements that had been manually input (from hard copy files?), the date of first removal, current placement and the discharge and discharge transaction dates .</p> <p>Data was brought over in temporary structures known as “interim child” data and included in the CA_MAIN table.</p> <p>An additional legacy system that ran in parallel with both HSN and FSFN is ICWSIS (Integrated Child Welfare Services Information System) which was the system of record for financial transactions relating to child welfare and adoption assistance.</p>	4
22	The information system has the capability of recording historical information. This should apply to both open cases in which historical information must be entered, and for closed cases that re-open after conversion and must be entered into the system.		4