

ACF

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**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Administration for Children, Youth and Families**

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INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

TO: State Agencies Administering or Supervising the Administration of Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act.

SUBJECT: Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System Reissuance of Technical Bulletins.

LEGAL AND RELATED REFERENCES: Section 479 of the Social Security Act; 45 CFR 1355.40, and appendices to 45 CFR 1355.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Information Memorandum (IM) is to distribute to States new and revised technical bulletins and software utilities pertaining to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

BACKGROUND:

Federal regulations at 45 CFR 1355.40, which implement section 479 of the Social Security Act (the Act), set forth the AFCARS requirements. The purpose of AFCARS is to collect uniform, reliable information on children who are under the placement and care responsibility of the State title IV-B/IV-E agency, and children adopted under the auspices of the State public child welfare agency. As of October 1, 1994, States were required to collect and submit AFCARS data semi-annually to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF).

INFORMATION:

The Children's Bureau has delivered technical assistance (TA) to States since the implementation of the AFCARS in 1994. TA has been provided in several forms: technical conferences, site visits, and telephone conferencing, in addition to developing several technical assistance resources. Some of these resources have included a "Guide to the Elements", which is a users' dictionary of the AFCARS data elements; software utilities that States can use to check their data

for compliance with the AFCARS standards and the quality of the data; and detailed technical bulletins.

The technical bulletins have been distributed periodically over the course of AFCARS' operation. The technical bulletins provide the States' system staff with information ranging from how to format the States AFCARS files to installing the software utilities used to check the data. During the operation of AFCARS there have been two major changes to the data reporting system. The first major change was in 1996 requiring States to use four digits for reporting the year (ACYF-IM-CB-96-08). The second major change has been the recent requirement by the Office of Management and Budget to allow respondents to identify with more than one race (see Federal Register (62 FR 58782) published October 30, 1997, ACYF-CB-PI-99-01, and 65 FR 4019). The revised standards have a minimum of five categories for data on race that Federal agencies requesting race information are required to have: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White. Given that changes to the race data reporting required modification to the software utilities (the Data Compliance Utility and the Data Quality Utility) and the technical bulletins that accompany them, the Children's Bureau took this opportunity to review and revise all of the existing technical bulletins.

Previously, there were fourteen technical bulletins, which have now been consolidated and reduced to ten. The content of the technical bulletins remains the same, and technical bulletins that addressed the same subject were combined into one technical bulletin. The changes reflect technical corrections or modifications to make the information more clear. A new technical bulletin has been added that addresses the process for receiving the AFCARS reports from the Federal system. Listed in the chart below is a column with the old technical bulletins by name and number, and a column of the revised and new technical bulletins.

Old Technical Bulletin	Revised Technical Bulletin
Technical. Bulletin #1: AFC BBS/AFCARS Support Menu (Deleted)	Technical Bulletin #1: ACF Electronic Data Transmission (Previously Technical Bulletin #4)
Technical Bulletin #2: File Format	Technical Bulletin #2: AFCARS File Format
Technical Bulletin #3: Optional Explanatory Footnotes	Technical Bulletin #3: Optional Explanatory Footnotes and Questions to Guide Footnote Preparation (Previously Technical Bulletins #3 and #11)
Technical Bulletin #4: Electronic Data Transmission (Revised Technical Bulletin #1)	Technical Bulletin #4: Encryption Guidelines & Algorithms for State Use (Previously Technical Bulletins #6 and #9)
Technical Bulletin #5: CONNECT:DIRECT Contacts (Deleted)	Technical Bulletin #5: Record Identifier Encryption/Decryption Utility (Previously Technical Bulletin # 10)
Technical Bulletin #6: Encryption Versus	Technical Bulletin #6: FC Data Element

Sequencing (Combined with Technical Bulletin #9 as Revised Technical Bulletin #4)	Standards (Previously Technical Bulletin #8)
Technical Bulletin #7: Adoption Data Element Standards	Technical Bulletin #7: Adoption Data Element Standards
Technical Bulletin #8: FC Data Element Standards (Revised Technical Bulletin #6)	Technical Bulletin #8: State Data Compliance Utility (Previously Technical Bulletin #12)
Technical Bulletin #9: Encryption Guidelines & Algorithms (Combined with Technical Bulletin #6 as Revised Technical Bulletin #4)	Technical Bulletin #9: Data Quality Utility Version 1.0 (Previously Technical Bulletin #14)
Technical Bulletin #10: Record Identifier Encryption/Decryption Utility: C Version (May 26, 1995) COBOL Version (Revised Technical Bulletin #5)	Technical Bulletin #10: Receipt of AFCARS Report (New)
Technical Bulletin #11: Questions to Guide Footnote Preparation (Combined with Technical Bulletin #3 as Revised Technical Bulletin #3)	Technical Bulletin #11: Acceptance Test Guidance (Previously Technical Bulletin #13)
Technical Bulletin #12: State Penalty Calculation Utility (Revised Technical Bulletin #8)	
Technical Bulletin #13: Acceptance Test Guidance (Revised Technical Bulletin #11)	
Technical Bulletin #14: Data Quality Utility Version 1.0 (Revised Technical Bulletin # 9)	

We encourage staff to review each of these bulletins. If you or your staff have any questions, you can contact us at AFCARSWeb@acf.hhs.gov, or by calling Angelina Palmiero at (202) 205-7240. Additionally, this information and other resources regarding AFCARS are available on the AFCARS web site. The address is:

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/index.htm#afcars.

/s/

Patricia Montoya
Commissioner
Administration on Children, Youth and Families

Enclosures:

Technical Bulletins #1-11
Diskettes (2)

Note: Enclosures not available online