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**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
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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: Data Dissemination for the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS)--Report #1

LEGAL AND RELATED REFERENCES: Section 479 of Title IV-E of the Social Security Act; 45 CFR 1355.40 Appendices.

PURPOSE: This memorandum is intended to inform the States of the availability of data collected on children in foster care.

BACKGROUND: In response to the need for better data collection, Congress, in 1986, approved an amendment to title IV-E of the Social Security Act (section 479) requiring that an advisory committee be established and submit a report to Congress and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) with recommendations for establishing, administering and financing a system for collecting data on adoption and foster care in the United States. The advisory committee submitted its final report in 1987, with detailed recommendations for a mandatory system that would collect data on all children covered by the protections of title IV-B of the Social Security Act (section 427). On September 27, 1990, HHS published proposed regulations, based largely on the May, 1989 "Adoption and Foster Care Data Collection" report, to implement the data collection system, which has become known as the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). On December 22, 1993, HHS published in the **Federal Register** final rules implementing AFCARS (45 CFR 1355.40). On August 9, 1995, an amendment to the AFCARS was published in the **Federal Register**. This amendment added a financial data element to the appendices of the regulation (45 CFR 1355).

Under the final AFCARS rules, States are required to collect case-specific data on all children in foster care for whom the State child welfare agency has responsibility for placement, care or supervision, regardless of their eligibility for title IV-E. Further, States were required to collect data on all adopted children who were placed by the State child welfare agency or placed by the

private agencies under contract with the public child welfare agency. States were encouraged to report other adoptions that are finalized in the State. States will report data to HHS twice a year. The first reporting period was October 1, 1994 - March 31, 1995, and the first transmission of data was due May 15, 1995.

INFORMATION: Based on the May 15, 1995 submission, five tables from the initial submission of data of children in foster care as of December 31, 1994 are available. These tables are the: 1) gender, 2) age by specific category, 3) age in mean and median years, 4) length of stay in months and, 5) race/ethnicity distribution of children in foster care.

The number of children in foster care are from States that submitted data for the first AFCARS reporting period and met the selection criteria. Only those States whose universe of cases had at least 75 percent of their cases with a valid "date of latest removal" were considered for the analysis. Ten States submitted AFCARS data that were rejected for the analysis.

The reasons for rejection were: (1) missing "dates of latest removal", (2) failing a "dates of latest removal" edit check, (3) reporting data for children in care inconsistent with the AFCARS reporting period, and (4) reporting on an insufficient percentage of the total number of children in care. The ten States/jurisdictions which did not meet the selection criteria are Indiana, Maryland, Minnesota, North Carolina, North Dakota, Puerto Rico, South Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, and Wisconsin. The National Estimate of 469,073 in foster care as of December 31, 1994 was developed using the VCIS data from these States to make a projection from the AFCARS data reported for the last day of calendar year 1994.

INQUIRIES:

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/s/

Olivia A. Golden
Commissioner
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Tables:

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