

ACF

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Administration for Children, Youth and Families

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PROGRAM INSTRUCTION

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

SUBJECT: Change in the State AFCARS File Name

LEGAL AND RELATED REFERENCES:

Section 479 of the Social Security Act; 45 CFR Part 1355; AFCARS Technical Bulletin #2

PURPOSE:

This Program Instruction provides guidance on the file name States use when submitting the AFCARS data files. The Children's Bureau is requiring a revision in the States' AFCARS data file name in order to better identify the type of files the State is submitting and process the data in a more Efficient manner. This is a technical revision only.

BACKGROUND:

The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) is a Federally mandated data collection system (title IV-E, section 479 of the Social Security Act). AFCARS data Encompasses information on children in foster care and children adopted under the auspices of the State's public child welfare agency. The requirements for AFCARS are codified in Federal regulation at 45 CFR 1355.40. As of October 1, 1994, States were required to collect and submit the AFCARS data to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). The purpose of AFCARS is to collect uniform, reliable information on children who are in foster care and children that have been adopted. The AFCARS data are used for many purposes at the Federal level. For instance, the AFCARS data are being used by the Children's Bureau for the allocation of Chafee funds; as a basis for determining States' performance when measuring outcomes;

to identify the number of finalized adoptions for which a State may be awarded adoption incentive funds; and as the data source for samples drawn of case records for various program reviews conducted by ACF.

The AFCARS data are submitted semi-annually, in May and November¹. The data are submitted electronically as an ASCII file, and are transmitted via a direct link from the State system to the Federal AFCAR system. The requirements for the data transmission can be found in Appendices "C" and "D" to 45 CFR Part 1355 and in AFCARS Technical Bulletins #1, #2 and #10. There are four files that are transmitted for each semi-annual submission, the foster care summary file, the foster care detail file, the adoption summary file, and the adoption detail file. These files are to be concatenated and submitted in the order listed.

Until recently, ACF made no distinction among the AFCARS data files received from States in regard to when they were received or for what purpose they were transmitted or re-transmitted. During Federal Fiscal Years (FFYs) 1995 through 1997, data submitted were not assessed for non-compliance, therefore, the date a file was submitted had no bearing on how it would be processed or stored. If a State submitted a file for the report period ending March 31, 1996 on July 1, 1997, the file was processed and stored in the database as a regular AFCARS file.

As of FFY 1998, the AFCARS data are assessed for compliance using a set of requirements outlined in 45 CFR 1355.40(e). A failure to meet these specific standards will result in penalties. In July, 1998 the ACF implemented corrective action for AFCARS. States that fail to meet the AFCARS requirements in 45 CFR 1355.40 and Appendices to 45 CFR Part 1355 are afforded an opportunity to submit a corrected AFCARS data file(s) prior to the final assessment of non-compliance and penalties. As a result of this action, and re-transmissions due to the Adoption Incentive Payments Program, there have been substantial increases in the number of data files submitted to ACF.

This change in practice caused a need to create a new process that would enable the Federal staff to process and store the data in a more efficient, systematic manner. As a result of assessing compliance, the implementation of corrective action, and the desire on the part of State staff to improve the data beyond the minimal requirements in AFCARS, files are now categorized based on the function they serve.

INFORMATION

Data that are submitted for the first time for a current report period are considered to be a "regular" data file. Because determinations of compliance are made on these files, there can be only **one** regular data file per report period. The file that is stored in the Federal database is the file that is used to determine compliance for that report period. The same is true for those States that participate in corrective action. The data files that are used to determine if a State has come into compliance with the AFCARS standards are then determined to be "corrected" and, likewise, there can be only **one** corrected data file per report period. If a State transmits its data more than once during the respective "regular" and "corrective" transmission periods, all data are archived and saved, but only the designated "regular" and/or "corrected" file(s) are stored in the active database.

States may also re-submit data, regardless if the original (regular) or corrected file was compliant. States often continuously "clean-up" the data bringing it up to 100% of the standards. These files are considered "subsequent" files.

In addition, the two AFCARS regular report periods are referred to as "A" and "B". The "A" report period is the first six months of the Federal fiscal year (October 1 through March 31) and the "B" report period is the second six months (April 1 through September 30).

The staff in the ACF Office of Information Services (OIS) have been labeling the data files transmitted for FFYs 1998-2000 by modifying the file name of the processed data files. The process, however, would be more efficient if States were to label the files according to the type of data file. Consequently, the Children's Bureau is requiring a technical change in the State's AFCARS data file name in order to eliminate the need for the State to notify the Federal AFCAR System Administrator in advance of the type of file being submitted. Additionally, by having States identify the type of files they are submitting, the possibility of error by the Federal staff in identifying the file will be minimized.

INSTRUCTION

The AFCARS data files will now be categorized as: Regular (R), Corrected (C), Subsequent (S), or Test (T) files. The definition of each of these types of submissions is listed below.

States are required to use the new naming convention with all data files submitted beginning October 1, 2001. The Federal AFCAR system will be modified to read the new naming convention. Files that are submitted in the old file name will not be read by the system, and therefore, cannot be processed. Technical Bulletin #2 has been revised to include the new file naming convention and is attached.

The State must use the definitions provided to determine the type of file they are sending. If a State has questions regarding the type of file it is submitting, it should contact Angelina Palmiero of the Children's Bureau at (202) 205-7240 [begin_of_the_skype_highlighting](#) (202) 205-7240 [end_of_the_skype_highlighting](#).

Definitions

Regular Data File

An AFCARS State data file(s) for a current report period that is submitted during the appropriate transmission time frame, April 1 - May 15 and October 1 - November 14.

Corrected Data File

If the file is to replace a non-compliant regular file, then any submission that is received after the AFCARS due dates for the regular report (May 15 or November 14) and before the end of the corrective period (September 30 or March 31) is considered a corrected file.

Subsequent Data File

Submissions that are received after the AFCARS due dates for a regular report (May 15 or November 14), or any corrective due date (September 30 or March 31), if applicable, are considered subsequent data files.

Test Data File

An AFCARS file that is submitted for testing purposes and is not to be used for the Federal AFCARS database. Examples may include: testing the Connect:Direct connection, testing the extraction and transmission process, record format, etc.

Data Set File Name

The old file name was:

VVG1YY9.PAFC.NDM.ss.HB.DT.Dyymmdd.Thhmm
or
VVG1YY9.PAFC.SIM.ss.SM.DT.Dyymmdd.Thhmm

Where,

NDM or SIM refers to the mode or type of transmission, with NDM the Connect:Direct (C:D) identifier, and SIM the identifier for Kermit transmissions
ss is the State code
HB stands for a HUB connection, SM for Kermit transmissions
DT stands for data
yymmdd is the year, month, and day
hhmm is the hour and minutes the State transmits the file

The new file name is:

VVG1YY9.PAFC.NDM.ss.Zyyyy.Xyymmdd.Thhmm
or
VVG1YY9.PAFC.SIM.ss.Zyyyy.Xyymmdd.Thhmm

Where,

NDM or SIM refers to the mode or type of transmission, with NDM the Connect:Direct (C:D) identifier and, SIM the identifier for Kermit transmissions
ss is the State code
Z = report period A or B, yyyy is the report year
X = type of submission R, C, S, or T
yymmdd is the year, month, and day
hhmm is the hour and minutes the State transmits the file

The following are general guidelines States should follow when naming the AFCARS data files.

1. Regular data files should always be concatenated.

2. If both foster care and adoption data files fail the compliance standards, and the State makes corrections to both files, then the corrected files should be concatenated.
3. When only one file fails the AFCARS standards, the State should re-submit only that file for corrective transmissions.
4. If a State modifies and plans to re-transmit only one file for a subsequent transmission, then only that file should be transmitted.
5. The date and time in the file name **must** reflect the date and time the files are transmitted.

Examples

The following are examples of different types of submissions.

1. Indiana submits its AFCARS data for the report period ending March 31, 2001 on May 10th at 4:15 p.m. The State must submit concatenated foster care and adoption data files. The filename would be:

VVG1YY9.PAFC.NDM.IN.A2001.R010510.T1615

2. The State of North Dakota was out of compliance with the foster care and adoption standards for the report period ending March 31, 2001. North Dakota submits corrected foster care and adoption data files on September 1, 2001 at one o'clock. The State must submit concatenated foster care and adoption data files. The filename would be:

VVG1YY9.PAFC.NDM.ND.A2001.C010901.T1300

3. The State of Arizona was out of compliance for foster care for the report period ending September 30, 2001. In addition to correcting the foster care data file, the State makes corrections to its compliant adoption file. The State submits these files on February 27, 2002 at 2:00 p.m.

In this scenario, Arizona must submit each data file separately, since a file can be submitted using only one file name type. The foster care file would be named:

VVG1YY9.PAFC.NDM.AZ.B2001.C020227.T1400.

The adoption data file would be sent separately. The name for the file would be:

VVG1YY9.PAFC.NDM.AZ.B2001.S020227.T1401.

Note that the time of the file transmitted is a minute later than the time of the foster care file.

4. The State of Connecticut's foster care and adoption data file were compliant with the AFCARS standards for the report period ending September 30, 2001. Connecticut makes corrections to both the adoption and foster care data files and submits subsequent files on December 10, 2001 at 1:00 p.m. The filename of the resubmitted file would be:

VVG1YY9.PAFC.NDM.CT.B2001.S011210.T1300

5. Vermont does not submit the regular file for the report period ending March 31, 2001 by May 15, 2001. Instead, the file is submitted June 15, 2001 at 11:00 a.m. Since the State did not submit a regular 2001 "A" file during the appropriate transmission time frame, the file submitted June 15th is considered a corrected file. The State would use the filename:

VVG1YY9.PAFC.NDM.VT.A2001.C010615.T1100

6. The State of Kansas was found out of compliance for the 2002 A foster care data file. The State is afforded an opportunity to submit a corrected file, which is due by September 30, 2002. The State submits the 2002 A foster care file on October 1, 2002 at 8:00 a.m. This file is submitted late and would be considered a subsequent file. The filename would be:

VVG1YY9.PAFC.NDM.KS.A2002.S021001.T0800

7. The State of Maryland has fully implemented its Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS). In order to check the Extraction routine, the staff want to submit a test file of AFCARS data. The State uses the first full report period from the SACWIS, which is the report period ending September 30, 2002. The test file is submitted December 10, 2002 at 1:00 p.m. The filename would be:

VVG1YY9.PAFC.NDM.MD.B2002.T021210.T1300

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2001

/s/

James A. Harrell

Acting Commissioner

Administration on Children, Youth and Families

¹ AFCARS report periods are based on the Federal fiscal year. Report periods are October 1 - March 31 (data are due by May 15) and April 1 - September 30 (data are due by November 14).

Attachment - Technical Bulletin #2