



Illinois

NYTD Review Final Report

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ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES



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Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Overview of the NYTD Review	1
1.3 Requirements Subject to Review and Rating Factors.....	2
2. Findings	
2.1 Overview of the Onsite Phase in Illinois.....	6
2.2 Overview of Findings.....	6
2.2.1 Data Collection on Youth Demographics.....	8
2.2.2 Data Collection on Independent Living Services	9
2.2.3 Data Collection on Youth Outcomes	14
2.2.4 Sampling and File Reporting.....	21
2.2.5 Data Quality, Analysis and Use.....	22
3. Conclusion and Next Steps	24
3.1 Conclusion	24
3.2 NYTD Improvement Plan	24
Appendix A. Test Case Findings	26
Appendix B. Case Review Findings.....	31
Appendix C. Illinois NYTD General Requirements and Elements— Final Ratings and Findings	40
Appendix D. NYTD Improvement Plan General Requirements and Data Elements Final Ratings and Findings to Address	76

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1. Overview of the NYTD Review Phases	2
Figure 2. General Requirements	3
Figure 3. NYTD Review Rating Factors	4
Figure 4. Percentage of youth receiving independent living services in FY 2018 and FY 2019, Illinois, and United States	11
Table 1. Summary Ratings for General Requirements and Data Elements.....	7
Table 2. Summary of Baseline Survey Effort to Date in Illinois	17
Table 3. Summary of Follow-Up Survey Effort to Date in Illinois	19
Table 4. Comparison of Cohorts 1, 2, and 3; Youth Outcomes at Ages 17, 19, and 21 in Illinois and the United States	20
Table 6. Illinois NYTD Youth who Received Services by Fiscal Year	40
Table 7. Reported data from NYTD and AFCARS	44
Table 8. Participation Rate at Baseline	45

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (the Chafee Program) at section 477 of the Social Security Act provides states with flexible funding to carry out programs that assist youth in making the transition from foster care to self-sufficiency.¹ This law required the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to develop a data collection system to track Independent Living (IL) services states provide to youth and develop outcome measures to assess states' performance in operating IL programs. The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) was implemented by [regulation](#) in 2008. Consistent with the regulation, states engage in two data collection activities for NYTD. First, states collect information on youth and the IL services they receive that are paid for or provided by the state agency that administers the Chafee Program. Second, states collect outcomes information on youth in foster care at age 17 whom the state follows and collects additional outcome information for at ages 19 and 21. The collected information allows ACF to track which IL services states provide and assess the collective outcomes of youth. NYTD also provides a new source of data to assist in determining the effectiveness of IL programs nationwide. In addition, states must use a common identifier for youth reported to both NYTD and the [Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System \(AFCARS\)](#); this enables ACF to analyze the information related to a youth's foster care experiences reported to AFCARS along with their services and/or outcome information reported to NYTD.

1.2 Overview of the NYTD Review

To ensure that data are available to be used for the purposes outlined above, it is important to periodically assess the accuracy of the child welfare data submitted by states. The Children's Bureau's primary way to monitor NYTD data quality is through our semiannual review of state NYTD data files. The NYTD regulation lists compliance standards to assess whether state data meets minimal standards for timeliness and quality (45 CFR § 1356.85). For this reason, the Children's Bureau also specified in the regulation at 45 CFR § 1356.85(d)(2) that the agency may use other monitoring tools or assessment procedures to determine whether a state is meeting all NYTD requirements.

The purpose of the NYTD Review is to evaluate comprehensively the Chafee agency's policies and practices related to collecting and reporting timely, reliable, and accurate data on youth in transition. To do so, the state's NYTD data collection processes are assessed against the NYTD requirements in the [federal regulation](#), policy issuances, and the [NYTD technical bulletins](#) by:

¹ Public Law 106–169 established the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP). Public Law 115–123, enacted on February 9, 2018, renamed the program the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood.

- Validating and verifying that the state’s child welfare information system can collect, manage, and report required data on youth in transition, including confirming that states operating a Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) that receive federal financial participation (FFP) are collecting and managing NYTD data consistent with federal requirements;
- Evaluating the state’s survey methodology, including validating the instruments used to collect outcomes data and reviewing the state’s approach to locating and engaging youth in the survey; and
- Assessing the timeliness, accuracy, reliability, and completeness of data.

The NYTD Review has three distinct phases: pre-onsite, onsite, and post-onsite, summarized in Figure 1. During the **pre-onsite phase**, the state and federal team conduct a series of pre-onsite planning calls with the state. The state prepares and submits documentation describing how it has implemented NYTD requirements. The **onsite phase** includes demonstrations of key aspects of the state’s data collection system and a review of a sample of case records. The federal team conducts stakeholder interviews during the review with youth, caseworkers, and service providers. During the onsite phase, the federal team learns about the state’s capacity to collect accurate data consistent with the definitions of the data elements specified in the NYTD regulation and document its readiness to use NYTD data for program management and evaluation. Following the onsite review, a report is prepared to document findings, list suggested resources and supports if technical assistance needs are identified, and explain the state’s actions to improve the quality and accuracy of data collection for NYTD as part of the **post-onsite phase**.

Figure 1. Overview of the NYTD Review Phases

Pre-onsite phase	Onsite phase	Post-onsite phase
Planning conference calls System and survey documentation Test cases Case record review sample Requirements Workbook <i>Duration:</i> 16 weeks	Entrance and exit conference System demonstration Case record review Stakeholder interviews CQI discussion <i>Duration:</i> 4 days	Debrief conference call Final report Improvement plan <i>Duration:</i> Up to 3 years to complete the improvement plan

1.3 Requirements Subject to Review and Rating Factors

There are two major areas assessed during the review: the **general requirements** for NYTD data collection and reporting and the 58 NYTD **data elements**. The general requirements include the populations to be reported to NYTD, the technical requirements for constructing a data file, and data quality, shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. General Requirements

1. The state reports information on all youth in the served population.
2. The state reports information on all youth in the baseline population.
3. The state reports information on all youth in the follow-up population.
4. The state implements an appropriate survey methodology to collect youth outcomes data.
5. The state follows ACF's sampling procedures (*applicable to states opting to sample only*).
6. The state reports NYTD data files following ACF's specifications.
7. The state conducts quality assurance to ensure NYTD information can be analyzed and used.

During a NYTD Review, the 7 general requirements and the 58 data elements are assessed against the requirements in the regulation and other policy and technical issuances. The state's NYTD data are evaluated for quality. The federal team determines data quality by the timeliness, accuracy, completeness, and reliability of the entered data. Findings and observations from each review component are analyzed to determine a rating factor for each general requirement and each data element (see Section 2.7 for more information).

The rating factors used to evaluate NYTD requirements and data elements are listed in Figure 3. A state must improve each requirement/element identified in the final report if the state did not receive a rating factor of "4" (i.e., the state does not fully meet the requirement). These improvements may involve making changes to the information system, extraction routine, and/or data entry to fully satisfy the requirement. In other cases, we may recommend improved training or clarifying guidance or documentation. A "4" rating factor (i.e., the state fully meets the NYTD requirement) is not assigned until all system issues and data quality issues have been addressed in the improvement planning phase. While there is not an expectation that data be 100% accurate for every element, there is an expectation that the data be of a significant level of completeness without inconsistency errors. The state would also maintain this quality over a number of report periods.

Figure 3. NYTD Review Rating Factors

Rating Factor	General Requirements Definition	Data Elements Definition
4	<p>The requirement has been met and the state has developed and implemented policies/practices that support the collection and reporting of high-quality data to the NYTD system. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state has collected accurate, timely, and complete information on required reporting populations. • The state has implemented a survey methodology using a valid survey instrument and has achieved a high survey participation rate. • The state has followed all technical guidance in conducting sampling and reporting the NYTD file. • There are quality assurance processes in place to ensure all NYTD data are accurately entered into the system and to identify and resolve data quality issues. 	<p>The requirement has been met and the state has sustained a high level of quality data for the element. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state's methodology for collecting, extracting, and reporting information for an element is consistent with NYTD requirements. • The state has a process to keep data elements up-to-date, even for a youth exiting foster care. • The state has reported consistently high-quality data for the element over time.
3	<p>There are practice or design issues affecting data quality. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is inadequate training for workers to understand how to collect NYTD data. • The state has reported missing or logically inconsistent responses from youth on the NYTD survey. • There are inadequate supervisory controls for ensuring timely and accurate data entry. 	<p>There are data quality issues identified for a data element. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are data errors or data quality advisories flagged for the element in NYTD reports. • Information for the element is not consistently entered by workers. • There are incorrect or ambiguous instructions, definitions, data entry screens, or forms for the element.

Rating Factor	General Requirements Definition	Data Elements Definition
2	<p>There are technical problems prohibiting the system from meeting the requirement. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The system requires modification to collect accurate, timely, and complete information on required reporting populations. • The state's survey instrument contains incorrect questions/response options, or contains misleading information that hinders a youth's participation in the survey. 	<p>There are technical problems prohibiting the system from collecting information consistent with NYTD requirements. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state's data collection method and/or information system has the capability to collect the data, but the program logic used to construct the NYTD file has errors. • The state uses default values for blank information for the element. • Information for the element is coming from the wrong module or field in the system. • The system needs modification to encompass all conditions or possible values to collect information on the element. • The extraction code for the NYTD report selects and reports incorrect information for the element.
1	<p>The requirement has not been implemented. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state is not collecting and reporting information on a required reporting population. • The state does not conduct quality assurance on NYTD data. 	<p>The data element is not collected or reported in the system. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state's data collection method and/or information system does not have the capability to collect the correct information for the element (i.e., there is no data field on the screens or form). • There is no program logic to extract information on the element.
0	<p>State operating a CCWIS for which it received federal financial participation (FFP) found not to be collecting or managing NYTD data in its system consistent with federal requirements.</p>	<p>State operating a CCWIS for which it received federal financial participation (FFP) found not to be collecting or managing NYTD data in its system consistent with federal requirements.</p>

2. Findings

2.1 Overview of the Onsite Phase in Illinois

On June 25–28, 2019, the Children’s Bureau conducted the onsite NYTD Review in collaboration with Illinois’s NYTD implementation team in the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). The Illinois NYTD Review federal team consisted of representatives from the Children’s Bureau Central Office, Region 5 Office, NYTD Help Desk, and Young Adult NYTD Reviewers who are consultants from JBS International, Inc.

Before the onsite NYTD Review, the Children’s Bureau expressed concerns to Illinois over the quality of their data reporting related to independent living services, which were based on several years of data submissions. We discussed these concerns during the site visit and how Illinois will need to address the concerns in the improvement plan.

The onsite visit began with a demonstration of the state’s child welfare information system, the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS). Prior to the onsite NYTD Review, the Children’s Bureau provided test case scenarios to the state on March 12, 2019. The state could enter, extract, and report these test data from the SACWIS before the onsite review demonstration. We discussed the findings from the test cases during the onsite review system demonstration. Next, we completed the case review using a sample of 30 case records reported in the 2017B file (April 1, 2017, to September 30, 2017) for youth in the baseline and 2018B (April 1, 2018, to September 30, 2018) for youth who received independent living services and at survey follow-up (age 21). Finally, we interviewed over 28 individuals, including caseworkers, providers, and foster parents. We also conducted focus groups with youth in foster care and young adults formerly in foster care.

2.2 Overview of Findings

This section contains a summary of the significant reporting and data quality issues we identified as part of the comprehensive assessment. As part of the post-onsite phase, we assessed Illinois’s documents, data, case file review findings, and onsite notes to determine the final findings. Where applicable, the data element, test case number, or case review sample number applicable to each finding is in parentheses. The state should carefully review all the findings in this report since the Children’s Bureau has changed the findings and rating factors issued in the preliminary assessment on June 1, 2020.

For additional information, refer to the appendices.

- Appendix A lists information for the test case findings.
- Appendix B lists the findings from the case record review that was conducted during the onsite visit.
- Appendix C lists detailed information on the 7 General Requirements and the 58 data elements.
- Appendix D outlines the findings to be addressed by the state in their NYTD improvement plan.

Overall, Illinois should improve the challenges in practice and technical issues related to the NYTD reporting. Table 1 summarizes the ratings for the general requirements and the data elements. The state did not receive a “4” rating on any of the general requirements. Illinois also only received a “4” rating for 30% of the data elements. Having reliable and accurate data on youth characteristics is an important component in assessing the adequacy and quality of services provided to meet the youth’s unique needs in transition.

Table 1. Summary Ratings for General Requirements and Data Elements

Rating	Number of 7 General Requirements With a Rating	Number of 58 Data Elements With a Rating
4	0	17
3	4	7
2	2	18
1	1	16
0	0	0
Not applicable	0	0

Illinois commissioned Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago to examine the state’s implementation of NYTD. In June 2018, Chapin Hall issued a report entitled “Improving Compliance with the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Reporting Requirements in Illinois,”² which is referred to in this report as “the Chapin Hall report.” While most of the report focused on youth engagement in the survey effort, the researchers also interviewed and examined the reporting of service data. The Chapin Hall report issued several other findings consistent with the findings from the federal NYTD review.

Illinois is known for being a national leader in the services and supports to transition-age youth (many of them supported by state dollars). Illinois was one of the first states to extend foster care after the age of 18 and develop different placement options for youth (transitional living programs and independent living option (ILO) programs that give greater freedom to youth as they transition.

Finally, we note that since the NYTD Review in 2019, Illinois has worked to make changes to the SACWIS, the survey instruments, and practice. As applicable, we noted these changes in the Illinois NYTD Final Report and Appendix C.

² Dworsky, A., & Gitlow, E. (2019). Improving compliance with the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) reporting requirements in Illinois. Chicago: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

2.2.1 Data Collection on Youth Demographics **(General Requirements 1, 2 and 3; Data Elements 4–19, 36)**

For **General Requirements #1, #2 and #3**, the state reports important demographic information on all youth in the served, baseline, and follow-up populations. Illinois struggles with reporting the information identified under **General Requirement #1** and received a “1” rating due to data quality issues resulting from technical and design issues. The data elements that are associated with the youth demographics are **elements 4–19 and 36**, which include: foster care status (**element 14 and 36**), local agency (**element 15**), federally recognized Tribal membership (**element 16**), adjudicated delinquent (**element 17**), last grade completed (**element 18**), and special education status (**element 19**). These data elements provide critical information on the youth’s basic characteristics reported to NYTD that can help Illinois understand the delivery of independent living services across the state.

The following is a summary of the reporting issues:

Race and Ethnicity System Logic Issues. Illinois needs to correct the system logic in SACWIS for the youth’s race and ethnicity elements. The system prevents data from being collected as required. For **elements 6–11** (race and ethnicity information), the state cannot report multi-race youth; the system is only reporting the youth’s “primary race.” For **element 12** (race- declined), the SACWIS system is incorrectly reporting “unknown” and “declined.” When a youth is asked to identify their race, the race should be updated and reported as specified by the youth in NYTD.

Foster Care Status Is Incorrectly Reported. For NYTD, foster care status is a critical data element that impacts a range of data reporting and data quality issues in NYTD. Since foster care status is related to the type of placement a youth is in, the SACWIS or other system responsible for this determination must be able to report only those youth who are or were in the placement and care of the state in accordance with 45 CFR § 1355.20. During the NYTD Review, we found several areas where the state will need to make changes to report foster care status as required by NYTD.

Hardcoded Elements. During the pre-onsite NYTD technical meetings, we determined that **element 15**, local agency, and **element 16**, federally recognized Tribal membership, were hardcoded in the system. Hardcoded data collection prevents accurate data collection. For **element 15**, local agency, Illinois, hardcoded this element only to report the “Centralized unit.” Hardcoded elements for **element 15** do not allow the state to enter the state and county FIPS code accurately (either for the agency with primary responsibility for the placement for the youth or information on the jurisdiction providing services for youth no longer in foster care). For **element 16**, federally recognized Tribe, Illinois has hardcoded this information to “no,” which does not allow for reporting Tribal membership or pending Tribal membership. Since the NYTD Review, the state has started to report the local agency (**element 15**). During the NYTD Improvement Planning process, the Children’s Bureau will assist the state in quality assurance for those data elements.

Reporting Accuracy. **Element 17**, adjudicated delinquent, **element 18**, education status, and **element 19**, special education, are not collected accurately. For **element 17**, adjudicated

delinquent is reported manually in every part of Illinois except for Cook County. For areas in the state where caseworkers must manually enter the information, caseworkers may not be updating the data regularly. We note that even when there is an electronic exchange, the state remains responsible for the data's accuracy. The state is also struggling to report educational information accurately. **Element 18**, last grade completed, and **element 19**, special education, can be bypassed by the caseworkers, which leads to a high level of the data being blank since the caseworker is not directed to enter the information. In addition, the education screens in SACWIS are cumbersome, and the fields and response choices are confusing. We learned from the NYTD Review and prior file submissions that the state must do an extensive amount of clean-up for the NYTD file to be in compliance at submission.

Many of the data elements in NYTD that Illinois is struggling with are also common data elements in AFCARS 2020. We urge the state to work across the two reporting systems to make changes to accurately report the data as distinctly required by each reporting system.

2.2.2 Data Collection on Independent Living Services (General Requirement 1; Elements 20–33)

NYTD collects information on independent living services provided to youth in data **elements 20–33**. Given NYTD's goal of providing data to help determine which services are related to youth's positive outcomes, complete and accurate service data are vital. Illinois has notable room for improvement in collecting NYTD independent living services as very few youths are reported as receiving services. The state went from reporting 1,281 unduplicated youth receiving services to 240 youth in 2018 (see Table 6 – Illinois NYTD Service Data by Fiscal Year in Appendix C.)

According to the data reported in the state's Annual Progress and Services Reports (APSR), Illinois has many services, programs, and supports that youth/young adults can access to prepare them for the transition from foster care to adulthood. In the APSR alone, we can review data points that indicate how many youths are receiving services that should be reported to NYTD. Therefore a primary purpose of the onsite phase on the NYTD Review was to help the state problem-solve for solutions to report NYTD services data accurately.

In our review of the state's materials, it is clear that the state has defined policies and procedures that outline how "life skills training" should be provided and how to link services to the youth's service plan. Illinois encourages youth between the ages of 14 to 20 to receive services that support their transition to adulthood in their home or other environments. Youth can complete more traditional "life skills training" if they cannot learn the skills in their "home" environment. Illinois contracts with five providers to provide an array of one-on-one, hands-on, and group instruction focused on the individual plans developed from the youth's life skills assessment.

Because of the state's focus on youth learning independent living skills in a more normative environment, caseworkers are required to enter any NYTD services. Since the caseworker is responsible for coordinating and monitoring the youth's case, they are best suited to input the NYTD service information into the SACWIS. Per the policy, caseworkers should enter services

into SACWIS within 30 days and include recording those services delivered by the caseworker, the foster parent, a provider, or the youth's placement in Illinois.

However, during the system demonstration and the case record review, we found that NYTD services information data entry is cumbersome, not intuitive, and contributes to data entry challenges. At the time of the review, the reporting of NYTD services data is located in the SACWIS system that is generally in a silo from the other types of information a caseworker would be reporting. Per the state, additional training, focus, or oversight has been attempted in the past but has led only to short-term improvements in the reporting of the data.

While the state may attempt additional training again, we urge the state to consider how the reporting of NYTD independent living services supports the strong service planning process. During the onsite review, we also encouraged the state to consider where other oversight processes might be in place to support caseworkers entering in NYTD independent living services information, such as reports to the court, contractual oversight, and general continuous quality improvement (CQI). We urge the state to consider improving data reporting.

In addition, the Chapin Hall report and our stakeholder interviews showed that it was unclear if caseworkers know that: 1) there is a requirement to enter this data and 2) where the data must be logged to be reported to NYTD. From the case record review, we found an extensive under-reporting of NYTD Services. Reviewers found the information in the file (physical documents and/or in electronic notes) that supported a youth who received services.

While the screen where NYTD Services are reported contains a place for the caseworker to provide a narrative about the NYTD Service, case record reviewers often found this left *blank*. The case record reviewers looked through the entire file during the case record review to determine why the caseworker reported the NYTD Service. For 25 percent of the reported services, reviewers failed to find any information to support the service provided (10 out of 40 reported services).

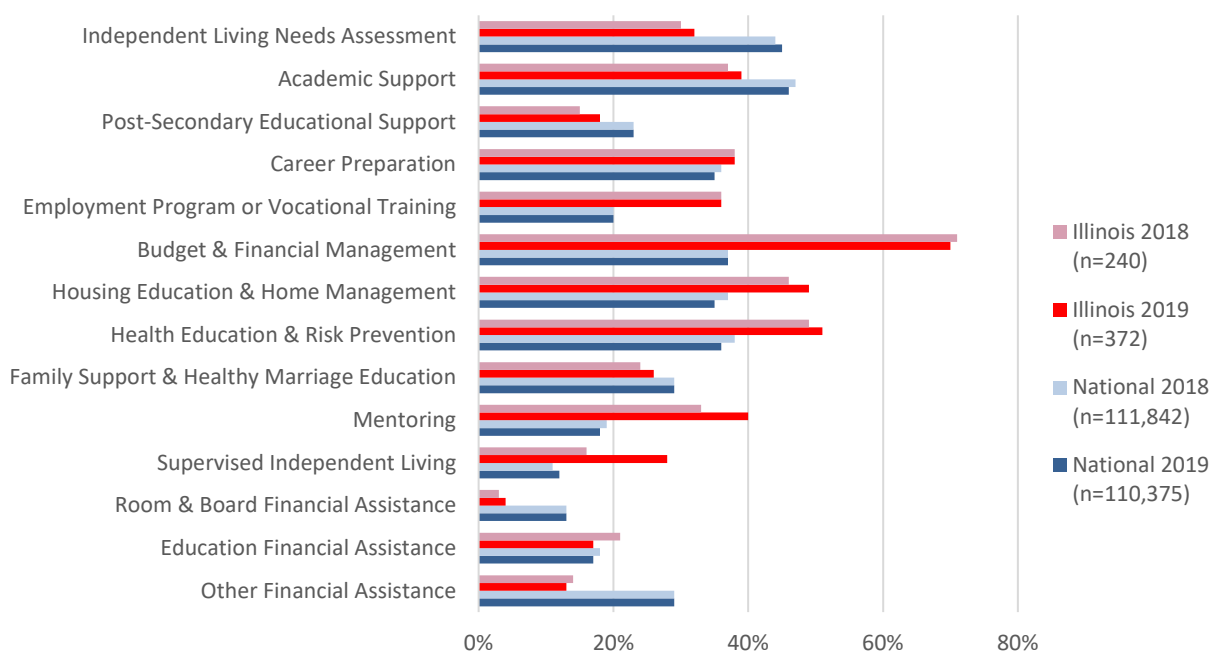
A number of clearly defined programs support Illinois' Chafee/transitional living services program. However, there is no clear guidance on if the caseworkers should report programs to NYTD and under what categories. As mentioned above, case record reviewers often found documentation in the case file that the youth participated in a program or services, but the caseworkers did not enter it into the screen that reports to NYTD. The programs include: Youth in College (YIC) stipend, the Employment Incentive Program (EIP), Supervised Independent Living Programs/independent living options (ILOs), Teen Parent Service Network (TPSN), Youth Housing Assistance (advocacy and cash assistance), and the "Countdown to 21 Fund."

Many of these programs represent a significant investment in a youth's life to help them transition to adulthood and support them in education and/or employment. The state has lost an opportunity to report the independent living services delivered to youth and to better understand who receives these programs/services. We urge the state to consider and coordinate the reporting of independent living services youth are receiving where programs, scholarships, or other services are offered by the statewide office or other organizations.

During the NYTD Review, we also learned that the state is not reporting youth to NYTD whose cases are closed but who are still receiving services. The state will need to develop a process to report those services as required by NYTD. Since Illinois has additional state programs that serve youth after age 21, it is important that this information is captured and reported by the state. These services are in addition to the federal Education and Training Voucher program (up to age 26) and the election of selective Chafee services to age 23.

Figure 4 compares the percent of youth receiving independent living services in Illinois and the United States in FY 2018 and FY 2019. For the most part, Illinois follows the national trend of youth receiving services as youths in the rest of the nation, with a few notable exceptions. The percentage of youth in Illinois receiving “other” financial assistance or room and board financial assistance is much lower than youth nationally. However, the percentage of youth receiving health education and risk prevention, housing education and home management, and budget and financial management is much higher than the rest of the nation.

Figure 4. Percentage of youth receiving independent living services in FY 2018 and FY 2019, Illinois, and United States



In summary, due to the long-standing concern related to extensive under-reporting of NYTD services, the state received the lowest rating possible on this General Requirement. Addressing these concerns must be the top priority in the NYTD Improvement Plan. Since the NYTD onsite review, Illinois has begun to explore opportunities to build in reporting of NYTD services into service planning.

Feedback from Stakeholders Regarding the Independent Living Program

During the NYTD Review, Illinois coordinated interviews with over 28 stakeholders who either work with youth in foster care or are involved in the provision of independent living/transitional services. The interviews included caseworkers, providers, foster parents, and young people. In stakeholder interviews, we spoke with many professionals and others who had not heard about the state's NYTD data collection efforts or reviewed the state's data. From these interviews, we learned that the outcomes or the efforts to administer the survey are not shared with them in the form of data reports that summarize the survey participants' experiences.

Overall from stakeholder interviews, it was clear that the interviewees understood the challenges most youth in or transitioning out of foster care encounter. Without support, youth experience negative outcomes. Many of the stakeholders recognized the impact of trauma, family separation, and community violence on adolescent development. The stakeholders identified specific references to gang violence, substance abuse, and lack of placements as some of the most pressing issues that the state needs to address to improve child welfare outcomes. In particular, placements designed to meet youth needs and support to keep those youth in placements successfully were common themes (mental health). The stakeholders also identified the lack of family supports for transition-age youth. One judge indicated they had developed a program to connect youth to a mentor and saw the youth's personal connection as a critical component to their success. The stakeholders indicated that more mentors and positive family support as a service are needed.

The stakeholders also raised the importance of a stable and effective caseworker. Caseworker turnover is another issue of concern (especially when moving between agencies where there is direct impact). One stakeholder believed that caseworkers tend to change agencies due to disparities between salaries and workloads, which can be detrimental to the youth's well-being.

Many senior DCFS officials, including the child welfare director, are passionate advocates for youth and young adults. DCFS leaderships recognize that youth in foster care and transitioning out of foster care need more assistance, and the use of data, including NYTD data, is key to success. Leadership recognizes that Illinois may have programs available to young people, but if there is no uptake of these programs, they aren't serving youth. DCFS leadership acknowledges gaps in services for specific populations (adopted or kinship youth) but that using data could address the disparity between youth with different outcomes. Overall they acknowledge that NYTD data use must be a priority as the state moves forward.

From the interviews with the stakeholders, we learned of mixed responses and confusion about how youth are referred to or receive transitional services. Caseworkers and other stakeholders note that some caseworkers refer youth directly to services while other caseworkers do not refer youth to services. Some caseworkers stated the differences in foster care placements. In some instances, families are providing services while in other cases, caseworkers felt that they needed to provide the services directly to youth. Caseworkers also identified that the service availability greatly varied in urban and rural parts of Illinois, impacting how services are delivered and received. Throughout our interviews, we heard that caseworkers are often assisting the youth with college or job applications, legal documentation, referrals to programs,

transportation, and other additional services. In the interviews, we note that many supervisors did not know how Illinois evaluates the quality of services it provides. We asked the caseworkers about entering the independent living services into SACWIS that youth receive (foster parents, providers, or in their placement) or that they provide; they stated that the system isn't user-friendly. Because the SACWIS isn't user-friendly, it contributes to services not being correctly entered or often not entered at all.

When we asked about data entry, one supervisor noted that caseworkers are probably spending a lot of time surfing among contact notes, case notes, emails, and reports to find the information they are looking for or where to best report all the information as required. The supervisor believes that the NYTD services information is captured in so many different places that it is probably not getting to the right area for NYTD purposes. Supervisors were clear that independent living needs are being assessed through Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM), but the data entry challenges led to few services reported to NYTD. One supervisor stated, "Only about 1 in 10 services that are offered are being captured in the system." Eliminating extra work and creating convenience in the SACWIS system was indicated as the only way to help caseworkers document more frequently.

DCFS leadership noted that they felt like it takes about 2 years to become a proficient caseworker. The leadership indicated that the high turnover of caseworkers has implications on data quality and reporting. Illinois does have mandatory NYTD training. However, stakeholders noted that the state hasn't always done a good job communicating and stressing the importance of training and that information is not consistently shared.

Across the board, stakeholders expressed that they must earn relationships with youth. They noted that youth do well when adults, caseworkers, and other staff take the time to get to know the youth. The established relationships between the youth and the caseworkers build trust, which creates an ongoing supportive relationship. Many stakeholders noted that they had developed or seen youth programs based on mentoring or supportive relationships.

Youth/Young Adult Focus Group

We spoke to youth in foster care and youth formerly in foster care during a specialized focus group. When we asked the young people about NYTD, the youth noted that they did not know anything about NYTD or how the information collected could help the state see trends and better understand youth outcomes.

The youth felt that the state could do more to engage youth, especially once they leave foster care. The youth said that independent living classes were important, and they wished there were more classes. There were mixed statements on how youth received services from their caseworkers. Some youth noted that their caseworker provides services directly while other caseworkers referred them to other service providers. The youth were able to name some known services in Illinois and identify future services they may need. The youth also indicated that they felt they needed more programs to develop relationships with mentors and other supportive adults. During the youth focus group, many youth brainstormed ideas and shared their thoughts on improving the system.

Regarding the survey, the youth gave feedback that was remarkably similar to the Chapin Hall report. In many cases, the youth felt the caseworker gave the survey to them “just” to take. The youth often had no idea why they took the survey and what the state would do with the information they provided. When caseworkers administered the survey, the youth indicated that it was important to make sure they had fun or food. They felt that networking, contact, and engagement with youth at follow-up were especially important. Another wanted the survey's information to help youth with information and services, such as an employment fair, casual dinner, or meet-up for young people based on the state's learning from the survey.

In summary, we encourage the state to use NYTD data as an indicator to benchmark its performance on serving youth in transition and establish a feedback loop with young people, local agencies, and other stakeholders. This feedback loop will help the state learn how NYTD data can inform their understanding of young people's experiences. Our interviews show that youth and other stakeholders are interested in this data and partnering with the state to improve practice.

2.2.3 Data Collection on Youth Outcomes **(General Requirements 2–4; Elements 34, 35 and 37–58)**

States are required to collect outcomes information using the survey questions listed in Appendix B of the NYTD regulation on a *baseline population* of youth in foster care at age 17 and a *follow-up population* cohort of 19 and 21-year-old youths. While the NYTD survey questions are listed in the NYTD regulation, states are responsible for crafting a survey instrument and selecting a method for administering the survey. The NYTD Review documents and assesses the state's efforts to appropriately administer the NYTD survey, from invitation to survey completion, to ensure that outcome data are collected accurately. The state's outcome data collection methods reflect best practices in survey administration and youth engagement. During the onsite review, we discussed Illinois's process for administering the baseline and follow-up surveys, including the state's efforts to locate and engage youth in this outcome data collection effort.

General Information on the State's Survey Effort

In Illinois, the administration of the NYTD survey is by caseworkers and other contracted case management staff. Caseworkers and others administer the survey using all possible avenues: (1) in person (paper), (2) over the phone, or (3) online (through a web survey). Caseworkers can administer the survey in person with the youth during an office hour or a home visit. If conducting the survey in person is not feasible, the social worker may use the downloaded paper-based survey over a phone call. An alternate approach to administering the survey is online. Instead of using the downloaded survey from D-Net, the social worker can email the link to the youth.

There are various ways in which the completed survey is entered into the SACWIS system to be reported to NYTD. A caseworker can enter a paper survey or email the paper survey to the NYTD Coordinator. If the caseworker sends the survey to the NYTD Coordinator, it is their

responsibility to enter the survey in SACWIS. It can also be entered directly into the SACWIS system if completed over the phone with the youth.

Eligible youth do have access to an online/web survey. If interested, the caseworker provides the youth with a link to complete the NYTD survey online. Then the youth enters their first and last name into the survey to access the survey. However, youth who take the survey online do not have any “hover-overs,” “prompts,” “scripts,” or other help-aids to assist in completing the survey online.³ The state did not design the web survey for optimal mobile device viewing. From the NYTD Review, it is unclear if youth take the survey independently online. The web surveys are loaded into the SACWIS system once completed by the youth.

Over the years, the statewide office has taken a greater role in coordinating and informing caseworkers and others about the need to survey a youth (NYTD Survey Coordinator). This effort includes a detailed email to caseworkers and supervisors. The email informs them of eligible youth in addition to any ticklers in the SACWIS system. The email contains links to resources and documents and walks the caseworker through administering the survey. We note that at the time of the NYTD Review, the NYTD Survey Coordinator's duties are in addition to their other responsibilities expected by this statewide position.

Illinois samples at follow-up. The state works closely with the Children's Bureau to identify the follow-up population from the sample provided. A majority of youth remain connected to the foster care system after the age 18 of in Illinois, especially in Cook County and surrounding counties. It is still the caseworker's responsibility to administer the NYTD survey to youth connected to a caseworker. For those who are no longer involved with the child welfare system, the statewide office (NYTD Coordinator) looks to determine where the youth may be receiving services and conducts outreach to the program to assist with contacting them and administering the survey. The state noted that the aftercare housing programs are generally helpful in assisting the state in administering the survey. Like most states, Illinois struggles with meeting the survey compliance standard for youth no longer in foster care. During the Chapin Hall report review, the researchers also acknowledged the difficulty of locating youth to participate in an interview to improve NYTD data collection.

The workforce has supports to administer the NYTD survey. The survey instruments' location is on the state's intranet (the D-Net), including the "NYTD Survey Instructional Guide." At the statewide level, there is assistance provided to support caseworkers to administer and enter the survey. The state has also offered training modules and other avenues to support individuals' knowledge to administer the survey. However, during the NYTD Review, caseworkers made suggestions to help ensure individuals in the workforce have access to the information they need when thinking about training around the NYTD Survey. These suggestions included creating separate modules for information on the NYTD Survey, specific to age 17 and then to the follow-up population.

³ To collect high-quality data, youth should have access to supports or resources to answer the question, if not administered in person.

If the caseworker administers the paper survey in person or over the phone, an opening script is provided with the paper survey to assist the caseworker in administering the survey. The opening script provides simple instructions for the caseworker to tell the youth, for example, “It is very important that you answer these questions truthfully.” The script also has a closing script thanking the youth for their honesty. We urge the state to work with youth/young adults to understand how this messaging may impact the survey’s participation. In response to Appendix C recommendations, the state has also added to the survey instruments information on their statewide hotline, Facebook, and website for youth to contact if they need services.

When a caseworker administers the survey on the phone or in person, they are responsible for entering the survey into SACWIS. Once the data is entered, SACWIS updates the NYTD record with the survey start and completed dates using a batch job. After the survey is entered, the caseworker is required to return to the “NYTD Survey” screen and indicate the “outcomes status” (options include death, incarcerated, parent declined, runaway/missing, unable to locate/invite, youth declined, youth incapacitated, and youth participated). From the NYTD Review, we note that the survey must be processed overnight before the state can enter outcome information. From interviews on site, it is clear that this two-step process creates barriers to reporting NYTD Survey data accurately, leading to potential penalties. Over the years, the state submitted *fewer* survey records without the “outcome reporting status” (element 34) completed. We learned from the state that a significant amount of work is done to enter the missing data.⁴ We know that some caseworkers never return to complete the outcome participation reason after the system has processed the survey overnight. This leaves the statewide NYTD Survey Coordinator to complete the information on behalf of the caseworker.

As recommended by best practice, Illinois is capturing information on how the survey is administered and who administers it. The additional information that the caseworker must complete is located on the NYTD Survey screen: “Completed by” screen (options include: caseworker, NYTD coordinator, youth), outcome data, and “Survey Method” (paper, phone, website). The NYTD Survey Coordinator can sort “Survey Status” to follow up with caseworkers and others to help administer and complete the survey.

The Chapin Hall report and the NYTD Review noted a concern for youth's inability to distinguish the NYTD survey from other child welfare agencies' activities, including assessments and other agency surveys. These concerns are similar to those outlined in other states. While it is critically important to collect information from youth, it is also important for the state to explain why it is being collected and how it will use the information.

⁴ At baseline, a 90% standard is expected for element 34, and if not met, a penalty is incurred by the state. In addition, for youth who participate at age 17 but the state fails to enter “participated” for this element, they do not enter the cohort at age 19. For follow-up, because the state must account for all youth in a follow-up population cohort by providing a valid value for element 34, the state’s data file would fail the outcomes universe standard and would potentially be subject to a 1.25% penalty. In addition, if the “missing” data error flagged in the records for element 34 causes the state to fail the 90% error-free standard at follow-up, the state would potentially be subject to an additional 1.25% penalty.

Finally, as part of the Illinois NYTD Review, the incentive policy was reviewed. Illinois provides a \$50 gift card incentive to youth who complete the NYTD survey. However, the incentive is only for young adults with closed foster care cases at follow-up, so not all youth were eligible for the incentive to take the survey. We encourage Illinois to review the incentive procedures recommended by youth and caseworkers and the Chapin Hall report's findings.

Since the NYTD Onsite Review, the state has worked closely with the Children's Bureau to revise their survey instruments to comply with the questions and the correct response choices. The Children's Bureau will work closely with the state's draft of the NYTD Improvement Plan to isolate the specific changes still needed.

Data Collection on Youth Outcomes at Age 17

Illinois's SACWIS system determines eligible youth for caseworkers and others for the baseline year survey participants. SACWIS identifies youth in foster care (legal status), their birthday, and youth turning 17 that day, and considers youth's placement as part of the query to add them as part of the baseline population using information from the Child and Youth Centered Information System (CYCIS).

When baseline youth are identified, SACWIS generates a link entitled the "NYTD Survey," which appears under the "Case Maintenance" screen. The system also creates a "tickler" where the caseworker also receives an email from the NYTD Survey Coordinator, which helps the caseworker complete the survey (this is a manual process).

During the NYTD Review, the Children's Bureau became aware of a few challenges involving identifying and reporting youth in the outcomes survey. The state is misreporting youth in the baseline population to NYTD (e.g., youth who are incarcerated). Other youth, however, are eligible for the survey but are not being reported (youth who enter foster care at some point during the 45 days that follow their 17th birthday) (see **General Requirement #2**).

Table 2 provides a summary of the baseline survey data to date. The state reported 818 youth in the baseline (cohort 1) population, and 551 are valid participants (participated in the survey while in foster care within 45 days of their birthday). The state's baseline cohort 3 is at a 75% response rate.

Table 2. Summary of Baseline Survey Effort to Date in Illinois

Cohort 1 at Age 17	Cohort 2 at Age 17	Cohort 3 at Age 17
67% 551 out of 818	63% 491 out of 780	75% 538 out of 717

The Children's Bureau provided detailed information in Table 8 – Participation Rate at Baseline in Appendix C that outlines the technical and programmatic issues that impact youth's robust participation at baseline. In reviewing this information, it is clear that a greater level of oversight at the state level has helped to import the collection and reporting of NYTD survey data. We acknowledge that the state has a few youths at baseline (only 12 in FY 2017) who the state reports as "unable to locate/invite." Since the youth are in foster care, the state should be able

to invite them to participate in the survey and has significantly improved this measure over time. Additionally, the state has made impressive strides in decreasing the number of youth who participate late in the survey, from 76 in FY 2011 to only 14 in FY 2017 (surveyed past the 45 days).

The state continues to have several youths decline to participate in the survey at age 17 across the cohorts. The Children's Bureau believes it is important to review the outreach and methods to engage youth to support their participation. While we respect a youth's ability to decline to take the survey, we want to ensure the right information is conveyed to youth to decide on participation.

Data Collection on Youth Outcomes at Ages 19 and 21

Illinois has elected to sample at follow-up. Like many states, Illinois struggles to administer the survey at follow-up and meet the participation rates, specifically for youth no longer in foster care. Illinois has a long history of foster care supports and services from the age of 18 until the age of 21. The state can often administer the survey for those youth who remain connected to the system through foster care or other aftercare services. However, several youths leave the foster care system at age 18 or older and never make contact with the state or their foster care provider.

The current caseworker of a youth still considered to be in foster care at follow-up administers the NYTD survey using the methods outlined above. The last caseworker of the youth who is no longer in foster care is expected to locate and administer the survey. The caseworker uses the youth's last contact information and social media to locate the youth.

We note that in the email to baseline youth at age 17, the NYTD Survey Coordinator flags for the caseworker that the youth may be selected to participate in the survey at age 19 or 21. It notes for the caseworkers that they should keep a record of contact information for the youth. We know from other state NYTD Reviews that complete and relevant contact information is critical to survey youth at follow-up. Therefore, we urge the state to develop a better process to collect contact information for youth and to determine if the collection of this type of information should be part of other efforts to keep contact with youth once they leave foster care and, in addition, to be located and engaged for the NYTD Survey.⁵

Illinois has received penalties for not meeting the 60% participation rate standard to survey youth out of foster care at follow-up during multiple reporting periods, including 2013B, 2015A, 2015B, 2016A, 2016B, and 2018B. During the submission of the "regular" file for the follow-up population, the "outcomes universe standard" is often flagged as a data error indicating that not all of the expected follow-up records have been submitted as expected by the NYTD system, causing a potential penalty. Illinois has previously corrected this error by submitting a "corrected

⁵ We acknowledge that state and federal benefits for programs can change. Reliable contact information for youth can be used when this occurs to inform young adults of changes and the potential of new benefits.

file” that ameliorates the “outcomes universal standard” but has resulted in a subsequent penalty related to the data standard for outcomes participation rate for discharged youth. Illinois has also collected and reported survey records of youth who are not in the sample. In response to the NYTD Review, Illinois has been developing a response to better indicate to the caseworkers who should participate in the survey at follow-up to prevent workers from surveying youth who are not in the survey population.

Table 3 provides a summary of the follow-up survey efforts of Illinois. Illinois has steadily increased the participation rate for youth in care and the participation rate for youth discharged from care. Illinois has seen the most significant improvement of the participation rate from Cohort 1 to Cohort 2 for youth at age 21 who had discharged from care, with increasing participation from 18% to 50%.

Table 3. Summary of Follow-Up Survey Effort to Date in Illinois

Reporting Period	Participation Rate for Youth in Care	Participation Rate for Youth Discharged From Care
Cohort 1 at Age 19 (FFY 13)	85% 144 out of 169	18% 8 out of 44
Cohort 1 at Age 21 (FFY 15)	87% 124 out of 143	18% 13 out of 72
Cohort 2 at Age 19 (FFY 16)	89% 146 out of 164	47% 24 out of 51
Cohort 2 at Age 21 (FFY 18)	N/A (no youth reported in care at age 21)	50% 103 out of 205
Cohort 3 at Age 19 (FFY19)	80% 124 out of 156	29% 23 out of 79

Table 4 shows the comparison of youth outcomes at age 17, 19, and 21 in Illinois and the United States for cohorts 1, 2, and 3. Illinois generally reports outcomes similar to those reported nationally. However, there are some noticeable differences between the outcomes of youth in Illinois and those in the nation. Youth at 19 and 21 in Cohort 1 receive more public assistance than youth do nationally. The youth in Cohort 1 in Illinois compared to youth nationally also shows that more youth in Illinois are employed and have finished high school or a GED program than in the rest of the nation. Similar to Cohort 1, youth in Cohort 2 show similar outcomes to the nation. However, youth who are 21 years old in Cohort 2 in Illinois had a lower outcome response of homelessness than the rest of the nation. In order to more fully illustrate

the data, we included the most recent data submissions.⁶ The findings in this report, however, are based on the findings from the onsite review.

**Table 4. Comparison of Cohorts 1, 2, and 3
Youth Outcomes at Ages 17, 19, and 21 in Illinois and the United States**

Cohort	Outcomes	Age 17 IL	Age 19 IL	Age 21 IL	Age 17 Nation	Age 19 Nation	Age 21 Nation
1	Employed full- or part-time	16% (n=551)	61% (n=152)	42% (n=137)	13% (n=15,597)	34% (n=7,845)	50% (n=6,985)
2	Employed full- or part-time	18% (n=492)	47% (n=170)	62% (n=103)	14% (n=16,480)	40% (n=8,898)	57% (n=7,799)
3	Employed full- or part-time	20% (n=538)	—	—	18% (n=16,260)	—	—
1	Receiving public assistance	N/A	63% (n=152)	46% (n=137)	N/A	36% (n=7,845)	38% (n=6,985)
2	Receiving public assistance	N/A	46% (n=170)	32% (n=103)	N/A	31% (n=8,898)	32% (n=7,799)
3	Receiving public assistance	N/A	—	—	N/A	—	—
1	Finished high school or GED	2% (n=551)	62% (n=152)	72% (n=137)	8% (n=15,597)	54% (n=7,845)	65% (n=6,985)
2	Finished high school or GED	2% (n=492)	57% (n=170)	74% (n=103)	5% (n=16,480)	58% (n=8,898)	70% (n=7,799)
3	Finished high school or GED	4% (n=538)	—	—	6% (n=16,260)	—	—
1	Attending school	93% (n=551)	58% (n=152)	31% (n=137)	94% (n=15,597)	54% (n=7,845)	31% (n=6,985)
2	Attending school	92% (n=492)	49% (n=170)	27% (n=103)	93% (n=16,480)	52% (n=8,898)	28% (n=7,799)
3	Attending school	93% (n=538)	—	—	93% (n=16,260)	—	—
1	Referred for substance abuse treatment	30% (lifetime) (n=551)	23% (past 2 years) (n=152)	9% (past 2 years) (n=137)	27% (lifetime) (n=15,597)	15% (past 2 years) (n=7,845)	10% (past 2 years) (n=6,985)
2	Referred for substance abuse treatment	31% (lifetime) (n=492)	21% (past 2 years) (n=170)	15% (past 2 years) (n=103)	27% (lifetime) (n=16,480)	14% (past 2 years) (n=8,898)	11% (past 2 years) (n=7,799)
3	Referred for substance abuse treatment	26% (lifetime) (n=538)	—	—	24% (lifetime) (n=16,260)	—	—
1	Incarcerated	27% (lifetime) (n=551)	19% (past 2 years) (n=152)	15% (past 2 years) (n=137)	36% (past 2 years) (n=15,597)	22% (past 2 years) (n=7,845)	22% (past 2 years) (n=6,985)

⁶ The Children's Bureau reviewed data from the 2019A and 2019B files as part of Final Report preparation. We found significant data issues with the Cohort 3 - age 19 outcome data and did not include these results in Table 4. The outcome data were either reported as 0% or 100%. For example, 100% of the 147 youth reported by the state were incarcerated in the last two years. Illinois is working on correcting this data and will need to address the overarching data quality concerns noted in the report and in its NYTD improvement plan.

Cohort	Outcomes	Age 17 IL	Age 19 IL	Age 21 IL	Age 17 Nation	Age 19 Nation	Age 21 Nation
2	Incarcerated	25% (lifetime) (n=492)	22% (past 2 years) (n=170)	20% (past 2 years) (n=103)	32% (lifetime) (n=16,480)	19% (past 2 years) (n=8,898)	19% (past 2 years) (n=7,799)
3	Incarcerated	27% (lifetime) (n=538)	—	—	30% (lifetime) (n=16,260)	—	—
1	Had children	6% (lifetime) (n=551)	12% (past 2 years) (n=152)	20% (past 2 years) (n=137)	7% (lifetime) (n=15,597)	12% (past 2 years) (n=7,845)	27% (past 2 years) (n=6,985)
2	Had children	6% (lifetime) (n=492)	9% (past 2 years) (n=170)	18% (past 2 years) (n=103)	5% (lifetime) (n=16,480)	10% (past 2 years) (n=8,898)	23% (past 2 years) (n=7,799)
3	Had children	5% (lifetime) (n=538)	—	—	5% (lifetime) (n=16,260)	—	—
1	Homeless	11% (lifetime) (n=551)	7% (past 2 years) (n=152)	10% (past 2 years) (n=137)	16% (lifetime) (n=15,597)	20% (past 2 years) (n=7,845)	28% (past 2 years) (n=6,985)
2	Homeless	14% (lifetime) (n=492)	14% (past 2 years) (n=170)	7% (past 2 years) (n=103)	17% (lifetime) (n=16,480)	20% (past 2 years) (n=8,898)	29% (past 2 years) (n=7,799)
3	Homeless	17% (lifetime) (n=538)	—	—	20% (lifetime) (n=16,260)	—	—
1	Connection to adult	96% (n=551)	88% (n=152)	86% (n=137)	93% (n=15,597)	90% (n=7,845)	87% (n=6,985)
2	Connection to adult	95% (n=492)	91% (n=170)	92% (n=103)	93% (n=16,480)	89% (n=8,898)	87% (n=7,799)
3	Connection to adult	96% (n=538)	—	—	93% (n=16,260)	—	—
1	Medicaid coverage	82% (n=551)	76% (n=152)	69% (n=137)	83% (n=15,597)	72% (n=7,845)	66% (n=6,985)
2	Medicaid coverage	81% (n=492)	72% (n=170)	63% (n=103)	85% (n=16,480)	77% (n=8,898)	70% (n=7,799)
3	Medicaid coverage	78% (n=538)	—	—	84% (n=16,260)	—	—

2.2.4 Sampling and File Reporting (General Requirements 5 and 6)

For **General Requirement 5**, the state follows ACF's sampling procedures, and for **General Requirement 6**, the state reports NYTD data files following ACF's specification; Illinois has room for improvement for both general requirements. The state received a 3 on these general requirements due to the practice and design issues affecting data quality.

Sampling

Illinois began sampling in FFY 2012. Illinois struggles with meeting compliance rates. Specifically, the state has been unable to meet the minimum participation rate of 60% for youth

no longer in foster care (2013B, 2015A, 2015B, 2016A, 2016B, and 2018B). Additionally, the state reported youth who were not in the sample in FFYs 2016 and 2019. It is important that the state only survey youth who are part of the follow-up population as other data collected is not utilized in the analysis.

File Reporting

The state has experienced challenges in the submission of the NYTD file according to ACF specification. Some minor challenges do not impact data (for example, [element 35](#) - date of outcome data collection). However, there are other ways that the system is structured that cause data challenges, impact the quality of the data, and require the state to resubmit a corrected file.

In addition to the missing data for the served population (such as [element 18](#) - last grade completed) or “out of range data,” the state also has submitted files with technical issues related to the outcome data. For example, there are reporting concerns with participants in the survey in [elements 34–36](#). Depending on the type of data missing in these critical survey elements, youth may not enter the survey cohort, even though they may have participated (see Table 8 – Participation Rate at Baseline in Appendix C). While the instances of this missing data have decreased over time, we believe that the NYTD Coordinator is dedicating a significant amount of work to resolving these issues. As discussed earlier, the fact that a caseworker must return to the survey the next day to “complete” the data entry is problematic.

We note that in the “clean-up” of the file to submit to ACF, the state should not “correct” the survey responses of youth to meet ACF’s file specifications ([NYTD Q&A 3.6](#) and [3.25](#)).

In developing the NYTD Improvement Plan, we urge the state to review and examine the Internal Consistency Checks (ICCs) generated by the NYTD system to improve the data quality. Illinois should review [Technical Bulletins 1](#) and [2](#) for additional information on file structure and compliance standards. The state can find specific detailed challenges on sampling and reporting data files to ACF’s specifications in Appendix C.

2.2.5 Data Quality, Analysis and Use (General Requirement 7)

General Requirement #7 examines if the state conducts quality assurance to ensure NYTD information can be analyzed and used. The state of Illinois received a 2 rating due to the state’s lack of data use.

During the NYTD Review, Illinois’ commitment to older youth’s needs and outcomes and using data to drive practice and system improvement was apparent in many conversations with leadership and stakeholders. Through these conversations, the federal team learned that Illinois is conducting quality assurance on NYTD data, including linking NYTD data to the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Program Improvement Plan. In addition, in discussions with the state’s CQI team and leadership, we learned that the state continues to make youth/young adult well-being a key outcome of its child welfare system. However, Illinois acknowledged that they need to develop a plan to utilize NYTD data. The state is not currently using NYTD data in a

meaningful way to understand the services provided to youth and outcomes achieved by youth; this is a goal outlined in the state's Child and Family Services Plan 2020-2024.

Illinois uses the NYTD Portal and the NYTD Data Review Utility (NDRU) as system tools to identify and address errors in youth records. The tools developed as part of the NDRU do not seem to be used to correct the identified Internal Consistency Checks (ICCs) and the Data Quality Advisories (DQAs). The errors that have been flagged since the first submission of NYTD often trigger penalties, as noted in detail in Appendix C, **General Requirement #6**.

We identified similar strategies for Illinois to analyze and use their data, as the "Improving Compliance with the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Reporting Requirements in Illinois" report produced by Chapin Hall recommends. We recommend integrating NYTD data with other administrative data, analyzing NYTD data with known service provider data, conducting analyses using different matrices and service data, developing a dissemination approach to stakeholders, and continuing youth-specific efforts tools. We encourage Illinois to raise the visibility of practice issues impacting transition-age youth and continue engaging with stakeholders and youth. The detailed list of recommended strategies is located in Appendix C.

3. Conclusion and Next Steps

3.1 Conclusion

As noted in Section 1.2, the NYTD Review is a comprehensive evaluation of a state's methodology for collecting and reporting NYTD data. This report summarizes NYTD findings to the extent to which the state meets all of the NYTD requirements and collects and reports the 58 NYTD data elements. The Children's Bureau will work with Illinois to assess options for system and business process improvements during the NYTD Improvement Plan phase.

3.2 NYTD Improvement Plan

In support of continuous quality improvement (CQI), states must complete and monitor a NYTD improvement plan based on the NYTD Review findings for any elements/general requirements that did not receive a rating factor of "4".

Although there has been a delay in Children's Bureau issuing the NYTD Final Report to the state, Illinois has begun improvement activities. We have outlined the improvements and activities in Appendix C. Upon issuing the NYTD Final Report; the state will need to submit its NYTD Improvement Plan. The NYTD Improvement Plan will address the unresolved items, or the state will submit to the Children's Bureau the documents to support the resolution of technical or programmatic issues.

The Children's Bureau will provide an improvement plan template for the state's use. However, the state may opt to use its own tool for this purpose, provided that it conveys the information necessary to monitor the state's action planning and progress. After receiving this Final Report, the state should evaluate the general requirements and data elements identified as needing correction and determine the length of time it will take to complete the item. Within 45 days of receipt of the Final Report, the state must submit the initial Improvement Plan electronically to the Children's Bureau with estimated dates for completing each action item. The Children's Bureau Regional Office will work with the state to determine whether technical assistance is needed and available to implement the plan. All items in the Improvement Plan must have a rating of "4" before the plan is considered completed. Once the Improvement Plan is completed and approved, the Children's Bureau will send a letter to the state acknowledging completion.

Upon receipt of the state's initial Improvement Plan, the Children's Bureau will review the due dates to ensure the state will implement the Improvement Plan in a timely manner. The state and the Children's Bureau will use an electronic version of the Improvement Plan to track changes, update progress notes, and indicate completed actions approved by the Children's Bureau. As the state makes changes to either the program code or screens, documentation noting the updates must be included with the electronic Improvement Plan. The documentation may consist of a revised program code or screenshots that reflect the changes made to the system.

The state must provide semiannual updates of its progress to the Children's Bureau. As updates are received and reviewed, the Children's Bureau will notify the agency of the next Improvement

Plan due date. Please note that the state must summarize its progress in implementing the NYTD Improvement Plan in its Annual Progress and Services Report⁷ (APSR) and, if applicable, the state's Advance Planning Document (APD) Update⁸ if changes are being made to the CCWIS.

⁷ Instructions for completing the APSR are published in a Program Instruction (PI) each year. See <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/laws-policies/policy-program-issuances> for more information or contact your Regional child welfare program specialist for more information.

⁸ Please contact your assigned Division of State Systems analyst for more information or visit <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/state-tribal-info-systems>.

Appendix A. Test Case Findings

As noted in Section 2.1, the Children's Bureau provided test case scenarios to the state on March 12, 2019. The state could enter, extract, and report these test data from the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) before our onsite phase.

We discussed findings from the test cases during the onsite review on June 25–28, 2019.

Maria – Test Case 1 Findings:

- **Element 11 – Race Unknown:** The state incorrectly reported “no” for this element. However, the state must be able to report “Race Unknown” in combination with other race elements ([elements 6–10](#)).
- **Element 13 – Hispanic or Latino (Ethnicity):** The state reported “no,” but the youth (or youth’s family) declined to provide information on Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. Therefore, “declined” should be reported.
- **Element 14 – Foster Care Status – Services:** The state reported “no,” but the youth entered foster care after being removed from her mother due to neglect on September 16, 2014, and remained in foster care during the reporting period. Therefore, the state should report “yes” to foster care status. (Because foster care information is stored in the CYCIS system (Child & Youth Centered Information System), the information wasn’t able to be reported in the test cases. While we note this discrepancy, this information will not be used to substantiate the finding for [element 14](#) in Appendix C).
- **Element 15 – Local Agency:** The state reported “centralized unit,” but states are required to provide the appropriate FIPS code for the county (or equivalent jurisdiction) with primary responsibility for placement and care for youth in foster care. Since the youth was in foster care at the time of service delivery, the state should have reported the FIPS code for Cook County (17023).
- **Element 18 – Educational Level:** The state reported “blank” for this element, but the last grade completed for this youth was 12th grade.
- **Element 24 – Employment Programs/Vocational Training:** The state reported “yes” for this element, but the youth did not receive services that meet the definition for this service (see 45 CFR § 1356.93(g)(24)).
- **Element 35 – Date of Outcome Data Collection:** The state reported May 8, 2019, the date that the test case survey was likely entered into the SACWIS system. In the test case scenario, the state administered the survey on April 29, 2018, and the April 29, 2018, date should have been reported as the date the youth took the survey.
- **Element 36 – Foster Care Status – Outcomes:** The state reported “no,” but the state should have reported “yes.” The youth was in foster care in Cook County at the time of the survey. (We believe that because foster care information is stored in the CYCIS system, the information wasn’t able to be reported in the test cases correctly).
- **Elements 42 – 44:** The state reported “no,” but “not applicable” should be reported. The state should only ask [Elements 42–44](#) (questions 42–44 on the survey) to youth who are no longer in foster care on the date of survey administration. As the youth is age 17 in the scenario, the state should report “not applicable.”

Martin - Test Case 2 Findings:

- **Element 14 – Foster Care Status: Services:** The state reported “no,” but the proper response is “yes” as Martin is a 19-year-old male in the state’s foster care program. (Because foster care information is stored in the CYCIS system (Child & Youth Centered Information System), the information wasn’t able to be reported in the test cases. While we note this discrepancy, this information will not be used to substantiate the finding for [element 14](#) in Appendix C.)
- **Element 15 – Local Agency:** The state reported “centralized unit,” but states are required to provide the appropriate FIPS code for the county (or equivalent jurisdiction) with primary responsibility for placement and care for youth in foster care.
- **Element 17 – Adjudicated Delinquent:** The state reported “no,” but based on the scenario, the correct answer is “yes” based on an incident in 2014. The state must report historical information for this element.
- **Element 18 – Education Level:** The state reported “blank.” The youth did not complete his first semester of college, so the last grade completed was 12th. The correct response should be “12th grade.”
- **Element 21 – Academic Support:** The state reported “yes,” but the youth did not receive academic support. As the youth had already completed high school prior to the reporting period, they cannot receive “academic support.”
- **Element 23 – Career Preparation:** The state reported “no,” but the caseworker helped the youth develop a resume and identify part-time job opportunities, which qualifies as services under “career preparation.” Therefore, the state should report “yes.”
- **Element 25 – Budget and Financial Management:** The state reported “yes,” but the budgeting and other financial management support were related to the youth attending college. Services related to helping youth attend and persist in post-secondary education should be reported as part of post-secondary support ([element 22](#)).
- **Element 26 – Housing Education and Home Management Training:** The state reported “no,” but the caseworker helped the youth find and apply for an apartment after he had to move out of his college dorm. Therefore, the state should report “yes.”
- **Element 29 – Mentoring:** The state reported “yes,” but the state did not provide mentor services. While the caseworker is a supportive adult in the youth’s life, this relationship does not meet the service definition of “mentoring.”
- **Element 30 – Supervised Independent Living:** The state reported “no,” but the answer is “yes.” During the reporting period, the youth was in on-campus housing that can be considered a supervised independent living setting.
- **Element 36 – Foster Care Status Outcomes:** The state reported “no,” but the answer should be blank because the youth is not part of the survey population.

Lorenzo - Test Case 3 Findings:

- **Element 14 – Foster Care Status – Services:** The state reported “no,” but the youth entered foster care and remained in foster care after February 18, 2016. (Because foster care information is stored in the CYCIS system (Child & Youth Centered Information

System), the information wasn't able to be reported in the test cases. While we note this discrepancy, this information will not be used to substantiate the finding for **element 14** in Appendix C.)

- **Element 15 – Local Agency:** The state reported “centralized unit,” but states are required to provide the appropriate FIPS code for the county (or equivalent jurisdiction) with primary responsibility for placement and care for youth in foster care.
- **Element 16 – Federally Recognized Tribe:** The state reported “no,” but the youth is eligible for membership in a federally recognized Tribe. Youth who are enrolled in or eligible for membership in a federally recognized Tribe should be reported as “yes” for this element.
- **Element 18 – Education Level:** The state reported “blank,” but the last grade completed must be reported.
- **Element 19 – Special Education:** The state reported “no,” but the youth received specialized IEP services during the reporting period.
- **Element 34 – Outcomes Reporting Status:** The state reported “participated.” The caseworker briefly discussed taking the NYTD survey, but the caseworker never clearly asked the youth to take the survey. Therefore, the correct answer is “unable to locate/invite” because the youth did not have an opportunity to “decline” to take the survey.
- **Element 35 – Date of Outcome Data:** Because the youth did not participate in the survey, this element should be reported as “blank.”
- **Element 36 – Foster Care Status:** The state reported that the youth was not in foster care on the day it was determined that he did not participate in the survey. However, he was in foster care during the entire reporting period. (We believe that because foster care information is stored in the CYCIS system, the information wasn't able to be reported in the test cases correctly.)
- **Element 37 – 58:** The state provided answers to these elements (survey questions) but all of these remaining elements should be blank as the young person did not participate in the survey.

Kris - Test Case 4 Findings:

- **Element 10 – Race – White:** The state reported “no,” but the youth is reported in the test case as both “White” and “African-American.” The youth was reported as “African-American” (“yes” to **element 8**) but not also “White.” The states must be able to report multiple races (**elements 6–11**).
- **Element 14 – Foster Care Status:** The state reported “no,” but the youth has been in foster care since 2015. (Because foster care information is stored in the CYCIS system (Child & Youth Centered Information System), the information wasn't able to be reported in the test cases. While we note this discrepancy, this information will not be used to substantiate the finding for **element 14** in Appendix C.)
- **Element 15 – Local Agency:** The state reported “centralized unit,” but states are required to provide the appropriate FIPS code for the county (or equivalent jurisdiction) with primary responsibility for placement and care for youth in foster care.

- **Element 16 – Federally Recognized Tribe:** The state reported “no,” but the youth has a Tribal membership pending. States must report “blank” as the appropriate response to this element when Tribal eligibility is pending.
- **Element 18 – Education Level:** The state reported “blank,” but the youth’s last grade completed was 11th grade.
- **Element 24 – Employment Programs or Vocational Training:** The state reported “yes,” but the youth did not participate in an employment program. The youth received a clothing voucher paid for by Chafee from an employment program, but there is no information showing that the youth received services from the program. Because it is a payment, it should be reported in **element 33** (Other Financial Assistance).
- **Element 29 – Mentoring:** The state reported “yes.” While youth has a mentor, it is not clear from the test case scenario whether the agency paid for or provided this service or if they simply made a referral for such a service already available in the community. Mentoring as a NYTD service should only be reported if a youth has been matched with a screened and trained adult for one-on-one relationships. This mentoring relationship must be facilitated, paid for, or provided by the state agency to meet the definition of a NYTD mentoring service.
- **Element 33 – Other Financial Assistance:** The state reported “no,” but the youth received a clothing voucher paid for by Chafee from an employment program. Because it is a payment, it should be reported in **element 33** (Other Financial Assistance), not in **element 24** (Employment Programs and Vocational Training).
- **Element 34 – Outcomes Reporting Status:** The state reported “participated.” However, the youth had a birthday within 45 days of the end of the 2018B period and was surveyed timely in the 2019A period (October 1, 2018). As a result, the “Outcomes Reporting Status” should be blank. As a result, **elements 34–58** should be left blank in the 2018B file, and the youth’s survey responses (**elements 35–58**) reported in the 2019A file.
- **Element 35 – 58:** The youth’s survey responses were reported by the state; however, the youth had a birthday within 45 days of the end of the 2018B period and was surveyed timely in the 2019A period (October 1, 2018). As a result, the youth’s survey responses should be blank in the 2018B file, and responses should be reported in the 2019A file.

Greg - Test Case 5 Findings:

- **Element 15 – Local Agency:** The state reported “centralized unit,” but a FIPS code is required for the county providing services to the youth (the youth is no longer in foster care).
- **Element 16 – Federally Recognized Tribe:** The state reported “no,” but the youth is an enrolled member of a federally recognized Tribe. Therefore the state should report “yes.”
- **Element 18 – Education Level:** The state reported “blank,” but the youth’s last grade completed was 11th grade (before completing his GED).
- **Element 26 – Housing Education and Home Management Training:** The state reported “yes,” but the answer is “no.” While the Aftercare manager helped the youth

choose and complete the paperwork for his dorm, the services should be reported as part of “Post-Secondary Educational Support” (**element 22**) because they are related to entering and completing college.

- **Element 28 – Family Support/Healthy Marriage Education:** The state reported “yes,” but the answer is “no.” There is no information in the test case scenario that the youth received this service.
- **Element 36 – Foster Care Status:** The state reported “no,” but the state should have left it blank. The youth was not in the outcomes reporting population.

Amalia - Test Case 6 Findings:

- **Element 11 – Race Unknown:** The state incorrectly reported “no” for this element. The state must be able to report “Race Unknown” as the only race reported.
- **Element 35 – Date of Outcome Data Collection:** The state reported 5/31/2019, but it is presumed that this is the date on which the survey was entered into the system rather than the date on which the survey was taken or on which it was determined that the youth would not participate.

Appendix B. Case Review Findings

As noted in Section 2, the Children's Bureau drew a random sample of 30 youth records (10 records from each reporting population from the last data file containing information on that population) and provided encrypted youth identification numbers to the state so these records could be made available for review during the onsite review. Illinois provided both the electronic records and paper records for these youth in support of the case review in all but one of the cases (case #29 was missing the paper file). The periods under review were April 1, 2017 – September 30, 2017, for youth in the baseline (survey at age 17) and April 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018, for youth who received NYTD independent living services and survey follow-up (at age 21) populations. Of the 30 records in the sample, we reviewed all 30 cases. The list below summarizes the findings from the case review.

Global Note: **Element 15: Local Agency.** During the pre-onsite phase, we determined that Illinois was incorrectly using the "Centralized Unit" for **element 15**. Therefore, during the case record review, the information was not evaluated and case records #1-10 and #41 are in error for this element.

Case Record 1 Findings:

- **Element 14 – Foster Care Status – Services:** The state reported "no" for this element. During the case record, review evidence was found to indicate that the youth was placed into a foster home from 2/27/18-7/30/18, which is within the reporting period under review (4/1/18-9/30/18). Therefore, the data found in the case record is "yes."
- **Element 17 – Adjudicated Delinquent:** The state reported "no" for this element. During the case record review, the case files showed an offense of theft, and CYCIS (Child & Youth Centered Information System) showed an identification number indicating that the youth had a prior conviction of delinquency adjudication. Therefore, data found in the case record indicates "yes."
- **Element 18 – Education Level:** Data reported by the state was "8th grade." During the period under review, no grade was reported in the file for the youth. Therefore, the system pulled the last grade recorded. The case record did show that the youth was in the 10th grade. Therefore, the case record data indicated the last grade completed is "9th grade."
- **Element 19 – Special Education:** The state reported "yes" for this element. The case record did not show any verifiable information that there was an IEP with active services during the reporting period. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates "no" for this element.

Case Record 2 Findings:

- **Element 14 – Foster Care Status – Services:** The state reported "no" for this element. The case record indicated the child was in foster care during the period under review. Therefore, the data in the case record indicates "yes."

- **Element 23 – Career Preparation:** During the period under review (4/18/2018), the foster parent had a local electrician come to the home to speak to the youth about his career for at least 45 minutes. This information was found in the child case notes. However, the state reported “no” for this service.
- **Element 24 – Employment Programs or Vocational Training:** The state reported “yes” for this element. There was no information in the case record to support the youth who received this service. Case notes indicated the child was attending a school with the word “vocational” in the name. Still, there was no information that the youth received services in this category paid for or provided by the agency. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “no” for this element.
- **Element 28 – Family Support/Healthy Marriage Education:** The state reported “yes” for this element. No supporting documentation/information was found in the case records during the period under review to support the youth receiving this service. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “no” for this element.
- **Element 29 – Mentoring:** The state reported “yes” for this element. While there was information in the case notes mentioning “mentoring,” there was no supporting documentation/information in the case records during the period under review to support the youth receiving this service. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “no” for this element.

Case Record 3 Findings:

- **Element 18 – Education Level:** The state reported “12th” grade as the highest grade completed during the reporting period (April 1, 2018, to September 30, 2018). Documentation in the file indicates the youth completed 12th grade in May 2019. Therefore, during the reporting period, “11th grade” was the highest grade completed.

Case Record 4 Findings:

- **Element 14 – Foster Care Status – Services:** The state reported “no” for this element. However, documentation in the CYCIS shows a foster home payment for the youth. Therefore, the data found in the case record is “yes” for foster care during the reporting period.
- **Element 18 – Education Level:** The state reported “6th grade” for this element. In the files, there was a grade 10 report card from a prep school in Chicago. Therefore, the data found in the case record suggests the last grade completed is “9th grade” and that the educational record had not been updated.
- **Element 32 – Education Financial Assistance:** The state reported “no” for this element. Reviewers found information indicating payment for a uniform for the youth’s prep school (in case notes dated 7/19/18).

Case Record 5 Findings:

- **Element 18 – Education Level:** The state reported that the youth had completed one semester of college. However, the case record information does not support that at least a semester of college was completed.

Case Record 6 Findings:

- **Element 30 – Supervised Independent Living:** The state reported “no” for this element. The case file indicated the youth was in an independent living setting during the period under review. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.
- **Element 31 – Room and Board Financial Assistance:** The state reported “no” for this element. The agency screen in the SACWIS revealed that the state made a room and board payment for the youth during the reporting period. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.
- **Element 32 – Education Financial Assistance:** The state reported “no” for this element. Case review indicated that the youth received ETV during the period under review for college tuition and books as shown on the payment screens. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.
- **Element 33 – Other Financial Assistance:** The state reported “no” for this element. The case file indicated that the youth received financial assistance for child care. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.

Case Record 7 Findings:

- **Element 19 – Special Education:** The state reported “yes” for this element. There was no documentation in the SACWIS or in the case file to support the youth receiving special education services during the reporting period. Therefore, the case record data does not support “yes” being reported for this element.
- **Element 29 – Mentoring:** The state reported “yes” for this element. No information or documentation showed any mentoring services provided.
- **Element 33 – Other Financial Assistance:** The state reported “yes” for this element. There was no documentation in the case file to support that financial assistance was provided. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “no” for this element.

Case Record 8 Findings:

- **Element 13 – Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity:** The state reported “no” for this element. However, the data entry in the SACWIS shows “not reported.” It is unclear what “not reported” means, whether the youth or youth’s family is “declining” to provide this information or the Hispanic or Latino ethnicity is not being reported.
- **Element 17 – Adjudicated Delinquent:** The state reported “no” for this element. The case file review revealed court records in case notes, SACWIS, and CYCIS that the youth was found to be delinquent in Cook County (JD). Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.
- **Element 24 – Employment Programs or Vocational Training:** The state reported “no” for this element. We found the youth was participating in vocational training at Center Stone (his foster care placement). This information was found in the SACWIS, case notes, and case file. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.

- **Element 27 – Health Education and Risk Prevention:** The state reported “No” for this element. On 8/20/18, this service was found in the paper record as part of the plan through the youth’s placement that the youth asked for help regarding mental health supervision and medication management and that support was provided. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.

Case Record 9 Findings:

- **Element 18 – Education Level:** The state reported “college” for this element. Case files revealed that the youth graduated high school in 2017 and started college. However, there is no indication that the youth completed at least one semester of college. Therefore, the case record data indicates “12th grade” as the highest grade completed.
- **Element 20 – Independent Living Needs Assessment:** The state reported “no” for this element. In the case file, a copy of the IL assessment completed on 4/3/2018 was found. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “Yes” for this element.
- **Element 23 – Career Preparation:** The state reported “yes” for this element, but there was no documentation of career preparation being provided to the youth. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “no” for this element.
- **Element 28 – Family Support and Healthy Marriage Education:** The state reported “yes” for this element but there was no documentation of the services delivered. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “no” for this element.

Case Record 10 Findings:

- **Element 18 – Education Level:** The state reported “college” for this element. During the period under review, the youth was working to achieve his GED. Therefore, the state should report the last grade the youth completed before he began the GED program.
- **Element 26 – Housing Education and Home Management Training:** The state reported “no” for this element. Notes in the case file indicate the agency helped the youth receive assistance from a housing advocate, including assisting with appointments. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.
- **Element 28 – Family Support and Healthy Marriage Education:** The state reported “no” for this element. Information in the case record supports that the youth was enrolled and actively participating in the Teen Parent Service Network (TPSN) program. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.
- **Element 33 – Other Financial Assistance:** The state reported “no” for this element. The documentation showed that bus passes were provided to the youth. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.

Case Record 11 Findings:

- **Element 35 – Date of Outcome Data Collection:** The youth’s birthday was 9/5/2000. Because the youth’s birthday is within 45 days of the end of the reporting period, the state has the full 45 days to determine if the youth will participate in the baseline survey. If the youth is taking the survey before the end of the reporting period (9/30/2017), it is

reported in that reporting period (2017B). However, the youth was determined not to have been located/invited to participate in the baseline survey on 10/20/2017. Because these youth turned age 17 during the 2017B period and because the state had not surveyed the youth during the 2017B period, the youth records are to be reported in the 2017B file with “blanks” for **elements 34–58** until survey data are collected and reported in the 2018A period (see **NYTD Q&A 2.55**).

Case Record 12 Findings:

- **Element 20 – Independent Living Needs Assessment:** The state reported “blank” for this element as the youth was not reported as part of the served population (the youth was pulled as part of the baseline sample). However, the case contained a Casey Life Skills Assessment in the file dated 7/24/17 (during the reporting period). Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.
- **Elements 42–44 – Public Financial/Food/Housing Assistance:** The youth was asked and responded to these survey questions (“no” to all). This element was reported as “not applicable.” These questions should not have been asked of the youth because the youth was still in foster care. The state should not change the answers of youth to conform to NYTD Reporting.

Case Record 13 Findings:

Elements 42–44 – Public Financial/Food/Housing Assistance: The youth was asked and responded to these survey questions (“no” to all). This element was reported as “not applicable.” These questions should not have been asked of the youth because the youth was still in foster care. The state should not change the answers of youth to conform to NYTD Reporting.

Case Record 14 Findings:

Elements 42–44 – Public Financial/Food/Housing Assistance: The youth was asked and responded to these survey questions (“no” to all). This element was reported as “not applicable.” These questions should not have been asked of the youth because the youth was still in foster care. The state should not change the answers of youth to conform to NYTD Reporting.

Case Record 15 Findings:

- **Element 25 – Budget and Financial Management:** The state reported “blank” for this element as the youth was not reported as part of the served population (the youth was pulled as part of the baseline sample). However, case notes dated 6/30/17 indicate discussions about budgeting and other financial management items (savings accounts). Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.

Case Record 16 Findings:

- No findings.

Case Record 17 Findings:

- **Element 22 – Post-Secondary Educational:** The state reported “blank” for this element as the youth was not reported as part of the served population (the youth was pulled as part of the baseline sample). Case notes in the file indicate the foster parents were taking the child on multiple campus tours during July-August 2017). Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.
- **Element 25 – Budget and Financial Management:** The state reported “blank” for this element as the youth was not reported as part of the served population (the youth was pulled as part of the baseline sample). Notes in the case file indicate the foster parent helped the youth understand budgeting and cost of public transportation, and engaged in active conversations about financial management. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.
- **Element 27 – Health Education and Risk Prevention:** The state reported “blank” for this element as the youth was not reported as part of the served population (the youth was pulled as part of the baseline sample). We found case notes that indicate discussions about birth control dated during the reporting period. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.
- **Element 32 – Education Financial Assistance:** The state reported “blank” for this element as the youth was not reported as part of the served population (the youth was pulled as part of the baseline sample). During the reporting period, the youth received a laptop to help complete college applications and grant applications. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.

Case Record 18 Findings:

- **Element 35 – Date of Outcome Data Collection:** The state reported a date of 6/26/2017 for this element. However, the youth declined to participate in the NYTD survey, and therefore this element should be left blank.

Case Record 19 Findings:

- **Element 6 – Race: American Indian or Alaska Native:** The state reported “no” for this element. In the case file, the Casey Life Skills Assessment revealed that the child indicated that he considers himself American Indian, Black/African American, and White (dated on 2/1/16). When a youth is asked to identify their race and/or ethnicity, the information should be updated to be reported in NYTD. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.
- **Element 10 – Race: White:** The state reported “no” for this element. In the case file, we found “White” indicated by the youth and Black/African American and American Indian. When a youth is asked to identify their race and/or ethnicity, the information should be updated to be reported in NYTD. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.

- **Element 35 – Date of Outcome Data Collection:** The state reported a date of 8/24/2017 for this element. However, the youth declined to participate in the NYTD survey, and therefore this element should be left blank.

Case Record 20 Findings:

- **Element 21 – Academic Support:** The state reported “blank” for this element as the youth was not reported as part of the served population (the youth was pulled as part of the baseline sample). Reviewers found a payment voucher for IVY League tutoring on 8/31/17. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.
- **Element 35 – Date of Outcome Data Collection:** The state reported a date of 7/14/2017 for this element. However, the youth declined to participate in the NYTD survey, and therefore this element should be left blank.

Case Record 22 Findings:

- **Element 35 – Date of Outcome Data Collection:** The state reported a date of 6/13/2018 for this element. However, the youth declined to participate in the NYTD survey, and therefore this element should be left blank.

Case Record 23 Findings:

- **Element 35 – Date of Outcome Data Collection:** The state reported a date of 9/28/2018 for this element. However, the youth declined to participate in the NYTD survey. Therefore this element should be left blank.

Case Record 25 Findings:

- **Element 34 – Outcomes Reporting Status:** The state reported “Participated” for the outcome reporting status. However, the state reported that the youth “declined” all questions (**elements 37–58**). Youth should not be reported as “participated” if they decline to answer all the questions.

Case Record 26 Findings:

- No findings.

Case Record 28 Findings:

- **Element 30 – Supervised Independent Living:** The state reported “blank” for this element as the youth was not reported as part of the served population (the youth was pulled as part of the follow-up survey at age 21). Reviewers found documentation that the youth was in the “Youth in College (YIC)” program. The place the youth was living in Indiana could be considered a supervised independent living setting. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.
- **Element 32 – Education Financial Assistance:** The state reported “blank” for this element as the youth was not reported as part of the served population (the youth was

pulled as part of the follow-up survey at age 21). Reviewers found receipts for \$511.00/month for rent as a part of the youth's participation in the "Youth in College" program. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates "yes" for this element.

Case Record 29 Findings:

- **Element 35 – Date of Outcome Data Collection:** The state reported a date of 9/28/2018 for this element. However, the youth declined to participate in the NYTD survey, and therefore this element should be left blank.

Case Record 30 Findings:

- **Element 25 – Budget and Financial Management:** The state reported "blank" for this element as the youth was not reported as part of the served population (the youth was pulled as part of the follow-up survey at age 21). Reviewers found completed monthly budgets noted in the service plan during the reporting period indicating the caseworker was working with the youth around budgeting and financial management. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates "yes" for this element.
- **Element 30 – Supervised Independent Living:** The state reported "blank" for this element as the youth was not reported as part of the served population (the youth was pulled as part of the follow-up survey at age 21). Reviewers found case notes stating that the youth was in an ILO (Independent Living Option) Program during the reporting period. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates "yes" for this element.
- **Element 31 – Room and Board Financial Assistance:** The state reported "blank" for this element as the youth was not reported as part of the served population (the youth was pulled as part of the follow-up survey at age 21). Reviewers found case notes about a rent payment deducted from the youth's emancipation fund (paid for by the state). Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates "yes" for this element.
- **Element 35 – Date of Outcome Data Collection:** The state reported a date of 9/28/2018 for this element. However, the youth declined to participate in the NYTD survey, and therefore this element should be left blank.

Case Record 40 Findings:

- **Element 10 – Race: White:** The state failed to report any race information for the youth (**elements 6–12**). Reviewers found information in the file that indicates the youth identified as white.
- **Element 35 – Date of Outcome Data Collection:** The state reported a date of 9/28/2018 for this element. However, the youth declined to participate in the NYTD survey, and therefore this element should be left blank.

Case Record 41 Findings:

- **Element 17 – Adjudicated Delinquent:** While there was no actual adjudication order in the file, numerous items indicate the youth was likely adjudicated delinquent before she came into foster care.

- **Element 18 – Education Level:** The state reported “no” for this element. However, “no” is not an acceptable value.
- **Element 20 – Independent Living Needs Assessment:** The state reported “no,” but the youth completed the Casey Life Skills Assessment on 06/12/2018.
- **Element 21 – Academic Support:** The state reported “yes” that the youth received this service. During the reporting period, the youth had already received a high school diploma (therefore, the youth cannot receive academic support).
- **Element 22 – Post-Secondary Educational Support:** The state did not report the youth's services under this category. The agency assisted the youth in completing her FAFSA during the reporting period (5/18/2018).
- **Element 23 – Career Preparation:** The state reported “no,” but the youth was part of the DCFS Work Incentive Program as of 6/12/2018. Case notes also indicate the caseworker helped the youth update her resume and research jobs.
- **Element 24 – Employment Program or Vocational Training:** No information was found to support that the youth received services in this category.
- **Element 26 – Housing Education and Home Management Training:** While the youth lived in an ILO (Independent Living Option), there was no information that services were provided to her in this category.
- **Element 29 – Mentoring:** The state reported that the youth received this service, but no information was found in the case record or notes to support that the service was provided.
- **Element 30 – Supervised Independent Living:** Reviewers found case notes stating that the youth was in an ILO (Independent Living Option) Program during the reporting period. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.
- **Element 33 – Other Financial Assistance:** The state reported “no” but reviewers found information that the youth received \$1,200 from the emancipation fund during the reporting period. Therefore, the data found in the case record indicates “yes” for this element.

Case Record 42 Findings:

- **Element 35 – Date of Outcome Data Collection:** The state reported a date of 9/28/2018 for this element. However, the youth declined to participate in the NYTD survey, and therefore this element should be left blank.

Appendix C. Illinois NYTD General Requirements and Elements— Final Ratings and Findings

General Requirement 1: The state reports information on all youth in the served population.

Rating: 1

Findings: The state of Illinois has long been known as a service-rich environment for youth transitioning out of foster care. As one of the first states to offer foster care to age 21 (under a state-funded program), and from a review of the state's documents it is clear that Illinois has a rich and diverse service array for youth and young adults. However, the state is not reporting these services to NYTD.

Illinois provides and coordinates a number of independent living services for transition-age youth directly through state staff, contracted case management providers, and other service providers. Over the years, the number of youth who have received NYTD services has been dramatically decreasing (see Table 6). Illinois reported that only 372 youth received serves in 2019 compared to 1,281 youth in 2011.

Table 6. Illinois NYTD Youth Who Received Services by Fiscal Year

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of Youth Who Received Services	1,281	791	697	739	645	362	287	240	372

The primary purpose of the Illinois NYTD Review was to determine why independent living services were no longer being captured and reported as required by 45 CFR § 1356.81(a). Based on a review of documents, the system itself, and conversations with state officials and frontline staff, the lack of reporting is due to a number of reasons, which fall into two general categories: challenges in practice and technical issues related to data elements.

Illinois has a SACWIS, simply named “SACWIS,” where all information is entered and reported for the purposes of NYTD. The state reported that caseworkers are required to enter any NYTD services provided within 30 days of delivery, including those delivered by the caseworker, the foster parent, a provider, or the youth’s placement. As the person who assesses the youth’s case, the caseworker should coordinate, monitor, and provide oversight, know this information, and input it into the SACWIS.

To enter a NYTD Service, the caseworker must go to the “Person” section on the “Case Maintenance” tab. Under the youth’s⁹ name on the bottom right of the tab/window, there is a “Services Provided” link that a caseworker must click on to report a NYTD Service. The link is available for youth ages 14 to 21. The “Services Provided” screen is part of the “Person” management section of the system and is different from where a caseworker would enter and complete information related to “Assessment” and “Planning” tabs in the system. Once the caseworker clicks the link, they go to the “Services Provided” screen, and there are 6 sections to complete: 1. Service Provided* (this drop-down lists the 13 NYTD service categories), 2. A description of those services (uses the heading “Describe” and a text box), 3. Service Hours*, 4. Service Date*, 5. Worker search, and 6. Provider search. Those items with an asterisk are mandatory, but, of note, a description of service is not.¹⁰

The SACWIS system has a function where all entered services will show up on a summary screen (also named “Services Provided” that lists the service date, the service provided by NYTD category, and agency). The summary screen has a link in the upper right-hand corner that indicates “Add NYTD Service.” This link takes the caseworker back to the “Services Provided” screen, where they can enter additional independent living services to be reported to NYTD.

During the system demonstration and the case record review, the federal team found how NYTD services information is entered to be cumbersome and not intuitive. The system design contributes to NYTD data entry challenges. Information is entered in one place but does not populate essential casework information elsewhere to support other reporting and case practice functions. Since the NYTD Review, the state has reported taking this feedback to redesign how the NYTD services data is entered and potentially align it to Service Plan reporting.

The state also employs the use of an intranet called the “DNET,” an internal site that directs workers to all resources related to NYTD: Updates, Background, Populations, FAQs, Training, the definitions of NYTD services, and a place to send an email if a caseworker has questions. This information related to NYTD is also covered in training available on the DNET where both the reporting on entering NYTD services and the survey are trained.

⁹ We note that the link to the “Services Provided” screen is available to a caseworker for any participant active in the case, including parents and other individuals.

¹⁰ The type of information required to be entered seems better suited to report youth attending transitional/independent life skills classes. From review of Illinois documents and interviews, it does not appear the majority of independent living skills are taught in a classroom environment.

For the case record review, 10 files from the served population are pulled for review. Of note, from the other 20 files pulled for the outcome population (baseline/follow-up survey) only one additional case contained services (record number #41 pulled to be part of the follow-up population at age 21).¹¹ Of the 11 records, there were a total of 40 services reported across the 13 service categories ([elements 20–33](#)). Of those 40 reported services, in 10 of those services, reviewers failed to find documentation to support the youth who received the service (this includes if there was no information in the “description” section on the “Services Provided” screen). Furthermore, 18 additional services were found in the case record or in electronic notes that a support service was provided but was not reported to NYTD (underreporting of services). In summary, 8 of the 11 records with reported services contained an error, either with a service that was not supported or underreported. Across the remaining 19 cases pulled for case record review for baseline/follow-up, 5 additional case records contained underreported services (12 total services not reported).¹² Additional information related to independent living services provided was found in the physical case records and the case record notes in SACWIS.

Notably, Illinois has many services, programs, and supports that youth/young adults can access. The state has defined policies and procedures to outline how “life skills training” should be provided and linked to the youth’s service plan. In Illinois, youth between the ages of 14 to 20 are encouraged to complete life skills training if the skills they need cannot be learned in their “home” environment. The Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) contracts with five providers to provide an array of one-on-one, hands-on, and group instruction focused on the individual plans developed from the youth’s life skills assessment.

However, there is no clear guidance on how these programs should be reported and under what categories. These programs include the Youth in College (YIC) stipend, the Employment Incentive Program (EIP), Supervised Independent Living Programs/independent living options (ILOs), Teen Parent Service Network (TPSN), Youth Housing Assistance (advocacy and cash assistance), and a “Countdown to 21 Fund.” In the case record review, we found incidences of youth utilizing these programs. Still, the lack of data entry in the “Services Provided” screen prevented it from being reported as a NYTD Service. This is a lost opportunity for the state to report on the independent living services they deliver to youth.

¹¹ While the NYTD services and outcome (survey) populations are separate, there is often a correlation between these populations. For example, it is expected that a number of youth who take the NYTD survey at age 17 will also be receiving services during the same reporting period.

¹² The CB was also concerned that there was a technical issue that was preventing the reporting of entered service data as part of NYTD. During the case record review, select case review teams verified all services ever reported for the records they reviewed. That is, when a record was pulled for review, all services ever entered into SACWIS (using the service log of NYTD services) were reviewed across historical information in federal NYTD files.

Before the review, the state of Illinois commissioned Chapin Hall to examine the state's implementation of NYTD, entitled "Improving Compliance with the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Reporting Requirements in Illinois¹³" (the Chapin Hall report). While most of the report focused on the engagement of youth in the survey effort, the researchers also interviewed and examined the reporting of service data. As outlined in the report and our case record review and interviews, caseworkers are not entering the data in the "Services Provided" screen. From the Chapin Hall report, many caseworkers lack a sense of proficiency in entering NYTD data into the appropriate screens.

In addition, when an independent living service (**elements 20–33**) is reported, the state must also report additional social-demographic information on the youth, including foster care status (**element 14**), local agency (**element 15**), federally recognized Tribal membership (**element 16**), adjudicated delinquent (**element 17**), last grade completed (**element 18**), and special education status (**element 19**). During pre-on-site technical meetings, we determined that at least two of those elements (local agency and federally recognized Tribal membership) were hardcoded in the system to produce inaccurate information. There were other technical and programmatic issues discovered with the other social-demographic elements. (Please see information listed in the Data Elements for more information.) As outlined in **NYTD Q&A 2.50**, the process of "defaulting" to a response is not allowed when information is not entered. The state anticipates that the defaulting for local agency (**element 15**) and federally recognized Tribal membership (**element 16**) will be resolved prior to the 2020B submission.

Finally, it was determined that services are not reported for those youth whose cases have been closed in the SACWIS system (typically if the youth is no longer receiving case management services). Since the state has opted to provide a limited number of Chafee-funded services to the age of 23, the state will need to develop a process to report these services. NYTD Services must be reported regardless of age and foster care status.

As a result, this general requirement and all independent living services (**data elements 20–33**) are rated as a "1."

General Requirement 2: The state reports information on all youth in the baseline population.**Rating: 3**

Findings: During a baseline year, the Illinois SACWIS runs a process to determine youth turning 17 that day and then adds them to the baseline population using information from the CYCIS system. The process determines if the youth is in foster care (legal status)

¹³ Dworsky, A., & Gitlow, E. (2019). Improving compliance with the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) reporting requirements in Illinois. Chicago: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

and their birthday, and considers youth’s placement as part of the query to add them as part of the baseline. A “tickler” also appears in the system to notify the worker that they have a youth eligible to take the NYTD Survey. During the technical meetings, the state provided a list of valid “SACWIS-CYCIS-Living Arrangements” for review. As part of the NYTD Improvement Plan, the state will need to review the list of placements to ensure they meet the foster care definition at 45 CFR § 1355.20 (for example, youth under the age of 18 in ILOs, hospitals, and unauthorized home of the parent). The state also reported an outcome reporting status of “incarcerated” (**element 34**) in the FY 2017 files for 9 youth. Youth who are incarcerated are not typically considered to be in foster care per 45 CFR § 1355.20.¹⁴

During the NYTD Review, we also learned that youth who enter foster care at any time during the 45 days after their 17th birthday are not being reported to NYTD as required in **NYTD Q&A #1.13**.

For baseline youth, a link entitled the “NYTD Survey” appears under the “Case Maintenance” Screen in SACWIS. To support youth taking the survey at baseline, an email from the State NYTD Coordinator is sent and provides information to the caseworker to assist them in completing the survey (this is a manual process). More information on the survey administration process can be found in **General Requirement #4**.

As part of the review, CB pulls data to determine how closely the youth reported in the NYTD baseline mirrors information reported to AFCARS for youth aged 17. Table 7 reports the information for Illinois.

Table 7. Reported data from NYTD and AFCARS

Cohort	NYTD	AFCARS	Percent
Cohort 1 (FY 2011)	818	896	91%
Cohort 2 (FY 2014)	781	836	93%
Cohort 3 (FY 2017)	717	748	96%

Another aspect of the NYTD Review is determining where data can be used to understand opportunities to increase youth participation in the survey. Table 8 provides the total participation rate at baseline and the reported reasons why youth are not surveyed, fail to enter the baseline, and other information to flag opportunities or improve survey administration.

¹⁴ While “incarcerated” is a valid response for all youth (ages 17, 19, and 21) a youth must be in foster care when the baseline survey is administered.

Table 8. Participation Rate at Baseline

Reason	Cohort 1 (FY 2011)	Cohort 2 (FY 2014)	Cohort (FY 2017)
Eligible	818	781	717
Participated	551	492	538
Percentage	67%	63%	75%
Declined	53	62	69
Unable to Locate/Invite	21	17	12
Parent Declined	0	0	0
Incapacitated	28	49	24
Incarcerated	10	10	9
Runaway	35	20	33
Death	0	1	0
Blank/Invalid	120	130	32
Blank: Late	76	54	14
Invalid: Missing Data (elements 34 and/or 35)	35	75	13
Invalid: No valid answer**	9	1*	5

* Includes a survey administered early.

** Invalid: No valid answer is where all **elements 37 to 58** have declined, but the state reported the youth participated.

With a large number of “blank/invalid” and “declined” responses, there are opportunities to increase the accurate reporting of youth’s responses and ways to garner participation.

During CB’s review of the state’s files, it was confirmed that the state does allow youth to take the survey more than 45 days after the youth’s 17th birthday, as specified in **NYTD Q&A #2.56** and **#5.9**.

Finally, Test Case #4, a review of Illinois baseline files, and Case Record #11 confirmed that the state is not reporting baseline records during the correct reporting period (during the reporting period submission that corresponds with the youth’s 17th birthday or the reporting period submission that corresponds with the reporting period in which the youth participated in the survey for youth who turn age 17 within 45 days from the end of the reporting period) (45 CFR § 1356.83(d); **NYTD Q&A #1.42, 2.56, 2.60**)).

As a result, this general requirement is rated as a “3.”

General Requirement 3: The state reports information on all youth in the follow-up population.

Rating: 2

Findings: Like many of the states, Illinois struggles to administer the survey at follow-up and meet participation rates. Most youth in Illinois continue to remain connected to the state through the extended foster care program and other supports. However, a number of youth leave the foster care system at age 18 or older and never make contact again with the state or their foster care provider.

The state samples at follow-up. Once the sample is determined, a “tickler” appears on the caseworker’s Dashboard in SACWIS for youth required to complete a survey. A manual email is also sent to the caseworker, with the supervisor copied from the NYTD Coordinator (same process as at baseline). If the youth is considered to still be in foster care at follow-up, the current caseworker administers the survey. The final caseworker is expected to locate the youth and try to administer the survey through last contact information, a diligent search, and social media for youth no longer in foster care. The state received a penalty for not meeting the 60% participation rate standard to survey youth out of foster care at follow-up in the following reporting periods: 2013B, 2015A, 2015B, 2016A, 2016B, and 2018B.

In the submission of the “regular” file for a follow-up population, it is often flagged with the “outcomes universe standard” data error, indicating that not all the records at follow-up have been submitted to NYTD (a 1.25% potential penalty). The state often corrects this error with the submission of a “corrected” file, which ameliorates the “outcomes universal standard” but often results in the penalty related to the data standard for outcomes participation rate for discharged youth (at 0.5% potential penalty).

The technical issues related to [elements 34](#) and [35](#), and [36](#), continue to impact the submission of the data related to the survey. In FY 2013, for the follow-up survey at age 19, two surveys were missing an outcome reporting status ([element 34](#)). Similarly, in FY 2018, in the follow-up survey at age 21, 55 records were missing [element 34](#). Most recently, in FY 2019, for the follow-up survey at age 19, 4 records were missing [element 34](#). We also note that across the NYTD files for follow-up, there are youth records that were reported as “participated” in the survey but weren’t part of the sample. The state has reported that they are working on a technical change to the SACWIS system so that a survey link will not be available for youth in the sample.

Once the state corrects the reporting of foster care status at the time of the survey ([element 36](#)), the state will need to determine how this will impact participation rates across those in foster care (80% requirement for youth in foster care and 60% requirement for young adults no longer in foster care).

We note in case record #29 that there were multiple contacts with the youth, but the survey was reported as “unable to locate.” While this is not a finding, we make this note because it represents potentially a missed opportunity to engage youth in taking the survey at follow-up.

Chapin Hall noted in their report that they also found it difficult to locate and engage youth at follow-up who were no longer in foster care. The report makes several recommendations the state should consider as part of the NYTD Improvement Plan (such as incentives and collecting better contact information).

Finally, we encourage the state to continue its efforts to locate and engage in the survey after the 6-month reporting period and report any additional conducted surveys in the corrected file.

In preparing the NYTD Final Report, data from the 2019A and 2019B NYTD files were pulled and examined for inclusion in the report to show the outcome data for Cohort 3 at age 19. However, the Children's Bureau found significant data issues with the outcome data at follow-up. The outcome data were at either 0% or 100% (as in 100% of the 147 youth reported being incarcerated in the last two years). This overarching concern is noted here in the report and will need to be addressed as part of the state's NYTD improvement plan. As a result of the ongoing penalties and the data reporting issues, this general requirement is rated as a "2."

General Requirement 4: The state implements an appropriate survey methodology to collect youth outcome data.**Rating: 3**

Findings: There are three methods the state uses to administer the survey to youth. Caseworkers and other contracted professionals can administer the survey using a paper survey, over the phone, and by providing a youth a link. If a youth wants to complete a survey online, the caseworker can send a link to a youth (although the entry screen and the survey are not optimized to be viewed on a mobile device). For the web survey, the youth needs only to enter their first and last name and their birthday to begin and complete the survey. A caseworker may also go to the D-Net and find a paper-based version of the survey and administer it to the youth during office or home visits. Finally, the caseworker can also use the paper-based version to administer over the phone or enter it directly into the system during the call. The survey can be completed (or entered) by clicking on the "Take Survey" link on the "NYTD" screen.

There is a 2-step process for a caseworker to enter a survey. Once the actual survey has been completed (paper surveys must be entered into the system), the entered survey must be processed by the SACWIS. The SACWIS then updates the NYTD record with the survey start and completed dates using a batch job. In a second step, the caseworker must return to the "NYTD Survey" screen and enter in the "outcomes status" (required and options include: death, incarcerated, parent declined, runaway/missing, unable to locate/invite, youth declined, youth incapacitated, and youth participated). The caseworker must also complete the "Completed by" screen (options include: caseworker, NYTD Coordinator, youth), outcome date, and "Survey Method" (paper, phone, website).

If a caseworker does not complete the second step to update the record to reflect that the youth has "participated" in the survey, the

NYTD Coordinator is responsible for entering this information in order to submit the file in compliance with NYTD. The NYTD Coordinator has access to the “NYTD Survey Log” screen in SACWIS. This screen allows the NYTD Coordinator to sort some information, including the “Survey Status,” to follow up with caseworkers and others to help administer and complete the survey.

At the time of the NYTD Review, the state did not have a clear policy to help caseworkers understand when to select the appropriate “outcome reporting status” (**element 34**), including that: “parent decline” is only applicable at age 17; how to consistently report “incapacitated”; and how to report a youth who “declined” all questions. As exemplified in Case Record #25, without clear information, caseworkers can select “participated” when the youth has not entered one valid response on the survey (**NYTD Q&A: 2.51**).¹⁵ In Case Record #26, the youth participated at ages 17 and 19 but was listed as incapacitated at age 21. While this is not a finding as the young adult may have become incapacitated at age 21, it is an example of why a consistent definition of when this outcome participation should be selected can be important.

The state has all survey instruments on the D-Net, including the “NYTD Survey Instructional Guide.” There is also a “Help” icon on the left side, but it is unclear if this assists youth and/or workers in completing or administering the survey. However, there are no “hover-overs,” “prompts,” “scripts,” or other help-aids to assist in completing the survey online.

The state does have an opening script on the paper survey. We note that it provides simple instructions and then tells youth, “It is very important that you answer these questions truthfully” and closes with a note thanking them for their honesty. We urge the state to work with youth/young adults to understand how this messaging may impact the survey's participation. We again reiterate the small number of youth contacted by the caseworker “decline” to participate at baseline and at follow-up (see General Requirements #2 and #3).

The state has developed training on how to administer the survey functionally. This training is part of an overall training on NYTD that provides information on both reporting of NYTD services and the NYTD survey. However, it does not address best practices in garnering the participation of youth in the NYTD Survey. This is important, as decreasing “declined” and entering data correctly is an important strategy for increasing participation rate both at baseline and at follow-up.

Of note, only young adults with closed foster care cases at follow-up are eligible to receive a \$50 gift card. The encouragement to review the incentive procedures was recommended in the Chapin Hall report and was recommended by both youth and

¹⁵ We also note that a caseworker may not actually view the responses of a youth who has taken the survey online so they might know the youth has declined all responses.

caseworkers. We also note the report flagged another concern heard during NYTD Reviews: the inability of youth to distinguish the NYTD survey from other child welfare agencies' activities, including assessments and other agency surveys. These concerns are similar to those outlined in other states.

Based on our detailed review and discussion about the state's NYTD survey instrument, we identified the following concerns on the survey:

- **Elements 42–44.** During the review, it was determined that **elements (questions) 42, 43, and 44** are being asked of youth in the baseline population (paper and online survey). The state must remove these questions from the baseline survey (paper and online survey). These questions are only applicable to youth *at follow-up who are not in foster care* when the survey is administered.
- **Elements 42, 49, 53, 54.** The questions being asked will need to be modified or reworded to reflect the wording in the Final Rule.
- **Elements 54–58.** The state is using “Do Not Know” instead of “Don’t Know” as a survey response option (baseline, follow-up, paper, and online).
- **Elements 55–58.** The question includes a response category for “Not Applicable,” which is not a valid survey response value for the youth (baseline, follow-up, paper, and online).
- **Skip Logic.** The state will need to update the skip logic between **elements/questions 55 and 56**. The state will also need to add skip logic to the paper survey between **elements/questions 56** and **elements/questions 57/58**.
- **Review of Responses.** We also note that once the question is answered on the online survey, a youth cannot return to it.

Since the NYTD Review, Illinois has changed the survey instruments, response options, and data entry fields. CB will work to reflect the final changes when the state submits the NYTD Improvement Plan.

The state had also implemented items to improve the survey, including:

- Providing all survey participants a designated point of contact at DCFS who can follow up on any concerns disclosed as part of the survey. The state does have a Youth Hotline, an email address, a Facebook, and Twitter page, and that information was added to the NYTD survey.

We encourage the state to build on the improvements made to its survey methodology and consider the following recommendations:

- Develop youth-friendly prompts on the paper survey to indicate the questions applicable to youth and for those who are administering the survey;

- Develop a place to collect contact information at the end of the survey and a place to record that information in the SACWIS;
- We note that if the foster care case is closed, prior surveys aren't available. It might be helpful to caseworkers who are trying to locate and engage youth to be able to review prior survey answers and results (for example, "participated")¹⁶;
- Partner with frontline caseworkers, service providers, and vendors who typically interact with youth to better market and distinguish the NYTD survey, especially between survey waves;
- Continue to consider ways in which technology may be better used to reach and survey youth (e.g., optimizing the online survey for mobile devices, using email and social media to connect with young people); and
- Review the "instructions" and other survey information to develop a youth-friendly introduction to the survey that explains the purpose, goals, and how the data will be used and protected as part of an informed consent protocol.

Finally, we encourage the state to leverage the expertise of the youth advisory board and other advocacy groups to market the survey and to provide input on addressing the findings described above.

Therefore, this requirement is rated as a "3."

General Requirement 5: The state follows ACF's sampling procedures (*applicable to states opting to sample only*).

Rating: 3

Findings: The state of Illinois has been sampling since fiscal year 2012. However, we note that the state has often received a penalty at follow-up for being unable to meet the minimum participation rate of 60% for youth who are no longer in foster care (2013B, 2015A, 2015B, 2016A, 2016B, and 2018B). While the state can continue to sample, we urge the state to determine if sampling meets the state's needs.

We also note that in many NYTD files, the state reported youth who were not in the sample (FY 2016: 4 youth; FY 2019: 9 youth). It is important that the state only survey youth who are part of the follow-up population, as other data collected is not utilized in the analysis.

The state is also reporting all youth records at follow-up at age 21. The outcome reporting status (**element 34**) "not in sample" is only applicable at follow-up at age 19. At age 21, records of youth should not be reported who are not in the sample. We note that since

¹⁶ For example, it may be helpful to determine if a youth participated at age 19 and the method of administration for participation at future date.

the NYTD Review, the state has indicated that they have addressed it. CB will review the 2021A file and supporting documents to confirm this is now submitted as required.

Due to the identified challenges in the sampling, this general requirement is rated as a “3.”

General Requirement 6: The state reports NYTD data files following ACF’s specifications.

Rating: 3

Findings: The state has historically experienced challenges that impact its ability to report NYTD data files according to ACF’s specifications. The following information outlines specific issues where files submitted by Illinois do not meet requirements of specifications, often flagged by Internal Consistency Checks (ICCs) and the Data Quality Advisories (DQAs):

- As outlined in the Data Element section for **elements 6–12**, the state cannot report multiple races of a youth. This includes the concerns that the state cannot report just “unknown” for race (**element 11**) even when selected as the primary race. (See Test Case #6 and case record #40.)
- The state also has no processes in the SACWIS to ensure that at least one race is reported for a youth (or “declined” as appropriate).
- As outlined in **element 18** (the last grade completed), the state has reported out-of-range data for this element (case record #41 reported “no” for this element).
- As detailed in **data element 34**, **General Requirements #2** and **#3**, the lack of a reporting relationship between the survey data (**elements 37–58**) and the “outcome reporting status” causes errors in submitting the file. ICC #11 checks that at least one of **elements 37–58** (excluding **elements 42–44** for baseline youth survey participants) must be other than “declined” or “not applicable” when **element 34** is reported as “participated.” We see this exemplified in case record #25 and data files 2011A, 2011B, 2013B, 2015B, 2016A, and 2017A.
- **Element 35**, “date of outcome data collection,” also presents a set of challenges for the state in reporting specific to the requirements outlined by ACF. For all youth in the baseline and the follow-up who “participate” in the survey (**element 34**), there should be a date reported in **element 35**. For youth who do not participate in the survey (other outcome reporting status (**element 34**) than “participate”), the state is to report this element as “blank.” While the state must still collect this data in their system to determine the reporting of **element 36** (“foster care status-outcomes”), it is not reported in the NYTD file. (The state has indicated this change has been made; CB will review the 2020B file for compliance.)
- For the 2018B file, the state submitted 785 records for youth, including 119 youth at age 21 follow-up, which should have been reported in the 2018A file (the youth’s date of outcome reporting status (**element 35**) was in the 2018A period).

- The state must report NYTD files according to ACF specifications; however, it should not “correct” the survey responses of youth to meet ACF’s file specifications ([NYTD Q&A 3.6 and 3.25](#)).

Finally, we note that when the state submitted Test Case #6 (a youth who was not receiving services but was in the follow-up at age 21), the state experienced technical issues. Upon further clarification, the state responded, “we have identified that we will need to make some changes to the code to pull cases like this, that only have a survey.” While the federal team asked for further clarification on this technical issue, no further information was provided. As a note, [element 14–33](#) (elements related to services) and [elements 34–58](#) (elements related to the outcomes survey) are mutually exclusive.¹⁷

Due to these challenges, this item is rated as a “3.”

General Requirement 7: The state conducts quality assurance to ensure NYTD information can be analyzed and used.**Rating: 2**

Findings: During the NYTD Review, a conversation was facilitated by CB’s Regional Office with the state of Illinois to talk about how the state is conducting quality assurance on NYTD data and also using NYTD data in the state of Illinois, including how to link NYTD data to the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Program Improvement Plan. During the entire NYTD Review, Illinois’ commitment to the needs and outcomes of older youth was apparent in many of the conversations with leadership and stakeholders. At the time of the NYTD Review, the state was working to develop “Drop-In Centers” where young adults formerly in foster care would have a place to go to secure resources, support, and other services. State leadership was also committed to using data to drive practice and system improvement.

The state is using NYTD system tools such as the NYTD Portal and the NYTD Data Review Utility (NDRU) to identify and address some errors in youth records. However, the tools developed as part of NDRU have not been used to correct the identified Internal Consistency Checks (ICCs) and the Data Quality Advisories (DQAs), many of them flagged since the first submission of NYTD files (with several specific and significant data quality challenges, particularly missing record information (see related findings below in [elements 18](#) and [General Requirement #6](#)) that often trigger penalties. Finally, we note that the concerns about the low reporting of NYTD services data have been an ongoing conversation with the state (see [General Requirement #1](#) for more information).

¹⁷ We require that if a youth is part of the services and the outcomes population, the state report the youth in one record. However, the reporting of services or outcome data should not be dependent on a relationship between the two populations. Similar issues have been found in SACWIS systems from the same developer. During the Illinois NYTD Review, no specific challenges were detected.

In discussions with the state's CQI team and leadership, we learned that the state continues to make youth/young adult well-being a key outcome of its child welfare system. However, the state was also transparent that they will need to develop a plan to utilize NYTD data as it is currently not being used meaningfully to understand the services provided to youth and outcomes achieved by youth (this is a goal outlined in the state's Child and Family Services Plan 2020-2024). We encourage the state to use NYTD data as an indicator to benchmark its performance on serving youth in transition. In stakeholder interviews, we spoke with many professionals and others who had not heard about the state's NYTD data collection efforts or reviewed the state's data. Also, from stakeholder interviews, we learned that the outcomes of the efforts to administer the survey are not shared with them in the form of data reports that summarize survey participants' experiences. We strongly encourage the state to establish a feedback loop with young people, local agencies, and other stakeholders to learn how NYTD data can inform their understanding of young people's experiences.

We note that the report completed by Chapin Hall, entitled "Improving Compliance with the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Reporting Requirements in Illinois," highlights many of the identified strategies below. To further the state's efforts to analyze and use NYTD data as part of a CQI framework, we recommend the following strategies:

- Integrating NYTD data with other administrative data sets like AFCARS;
- Analyzing NYTD data in conjunction with what else is known about services provided to youth (e.g., services not paid for or provided by Chafee, but paid for or provided by local mentoring programs, workforce development programs, etc.) to determine which services (type/dosage) lead to improved outcomes;
- Conducting analyses to identify different response rates to youth by demographic variable and by administration method (e.g., surveys conducted by phone versus surveys completed online) using the data collected in CCWIS;
- Conducting analysis of service data by locality to determine gaps in services or service needs;
- Disseminating NYTD data to state staff, youth, service providers, courts, foster parents, and other stakeholders;
- Continuing efforts to develop and use a youth-specific tool to conduct case reviews; and
- Developing performance measures using NYTD data to raise the visibility of practice issues impacting transitioning youth.

We also strongly encourage the state to engage young people as stakeholders in these CQI efforts by consulting with the Illinois DCFS Youth Advisory Boards and other state and local advocacy groups.

In preparing the NYTD Final Report, data from the 2019A and 2019B NYTD files were pulled and examined for inclusion in the report (outcome data for Cohort 3 at age 19). However, the Children's Bureau found significant data issues with the outcome data that should be part of the routine review of NYTD data to ensure accuracy.

Due to the identified challenges, this requirement is rated as a "2."

1. State**Rating: 4**

Findings: Data collection, mapping, reporting, and data quality for this element are sufficient.

2. Report Date**Rating: 4**

Findings: Data collection, mapping, reporting and data quality for this element are sufficient.

3. Record Number**Rating: 4**

Findings: Data collection, mapping, reporting and data quality for this element are sufficient.

4. Date of birth**Rating: 3**

Findings: Data collection, mapping, reporting and data quality for this element are sufficient.

In 28 of the 30 cases reviewed, the reviewers found 23 birth certificates or copies of the birth certificate. Additionally, reviewers found the following documentation to support the correct birth date entered into SACWIS: 1. File contained the permanent resident card for the youth; 2. Cases contained a copy of the state ID. Two files did not have a copy of the birth certificate or other documentation to support the birth date entered in the SACWIS (one record was missing the physical case file). Furthermore, the state has had to resubmit at least one NYTD file to correct the birth dates of youth in the NYTD file in order to correctly survey those at follow-up.

5. Sex**Rating: 4**

Findings: Data collection, mapping, reporting, and data quality for this element are sufficient.

6. Race: American Indian or Alaska Native**Rating: 2**

Findings: The SACWIS system allows a caseworker to indicate a “Primary” race. The caseworker can also select “other race.” However, during the technical meetings and review of system documents, it was determined that Illinois is only reporting the “Primary” race of the youth. Therefore, the state cannot report multi-race youth (**elements 6–11** in combination with each other).

Case Record Review: In Case Record #19, reviewers found a Casey Life Skills Assessment where the youth indicated that he considers himself American Indian, Black/African American, and White, but the Person Record was not updated to reflect this information. When a youth is asked to identify their race, the information should be updated to be reported in NYTD.

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has indicated the change has been made. CB will review the 2020B file and supporting documentation for compliance.

7. Race: Asian

Rating: 2

Findings: The SACWIS system allows a caseworker to indicate a “Primary” race. The caseworker can also select “other race.” However, during the technical meetings and review of system documents, it was determined that Illinois is only reporting the “Primary” race of the youth. Therefore, the state cannot report multi-race youth (**elements 6–11** in combination with each other).

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has indicated the change has been made. CB will review the 2020B file and supporting documentation for compliance.

8. Race: Black or African American

Rating: 2

Findings: The SACWIS system allows a caseworker to indicate a “Primary” race. The caseworker can also select “other race.” However, during the technical meetings and review of system documents, it was determined that Illinois is only reporting the “Primary” race of the youth. Therefore, the state cannot report multi-race youth (**elements 6–11** in combination with each other).

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has indicated the change has been made. CB will review the 2020B file and supporting documentation for compliance.

9. Race: Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Rating: 2

Findings: The SACWIS system allows a caseworker to indicate a “Primary” race. The caseworker can also select “other race.” However, during the technical meetings and review of system documents, it was determined that Illinois is only reporting the “Primary” race of the youth. Therefore, the state cannot report multi-race youth (**elements 6–11** in combination with each other).

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has indicated the change has been made. CB will review the 2020B file and supporting documentation for compliance.

10. Race: White

Rating: 2

Findings: The SACWIS system allows a caseworker to indicate a “Primary” race. The caseworker can also select “other race.” However, during the technical meetings and review of system documents, it was determined that Illinois is only reporting the “Primary” race of the youth. Therefore, the state cannot report multi-race youth (**elements 6–11** in combination with each other).

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has indicated the change has been made. CB will review the 2020B file and supporting documentation for compliance.

Test Case: Test Case #4 was in error; the youth was reported as “African-American” (“yes” to **element 8**) but not also “White” as indicated.

Case Record Review: In Case Record #19, the state failed to update the youth’s race to reflect that he also identifies as “White” (from the Casey Life Skills). When a youth is asked to identify their race and/or ethnicity, the information should be updated to be reported in NYTD. In Case Record #40, there was no race information reported (**elements 6–12**); however, in the case record, we found that the youth identifies as “White.”

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has indicated the change has been made. CB will review the 2020B file and supporting documentation for compliance.

11. Race: Unknown

Rating: 2

Findings: The SACWIS system allows a caseworker to indicate a “Primary” race. The caseworker can also select “other race.” However, during the technical meetings and review of system documents, it was determined that Illinois is only reporting the “Primary” race of the youth. Therefore, the state cannot report multi-race youth (**elements 6–11** in combination with each other). In addition, when the youth’s only race is reported as “unknown,” we are concerned that it is not being reported (we see it reported in the 2018B NYTD file but not in the 2019 A&B files).

Test Case: Test Case #1 was in error. The youth in the scenario was reported as both “White” and “Unknown.” The state was only able to report “White.” In Test Case #6, the state could not report the youth’s race as “unknown.” For this test case, no race information was reported.

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has indicated the change has been made. CB will review the 2020B file and supporting documentation for compliance.

12. Race: Declined

Rating: 2

Findings: During a walk-through of the state’s system, it was determined that a caseworker could select “declined” in combination with other race categories that may have been selected. However, when a parent or youth has declined to provide any race information, no race information should be recorded other than “declined.”

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has indicated the change has been made. CB will review the 2020B file and supporting documentation for compliance.

13. Hispanic or Latino ethnicity

Rating: 2

Findings: A state must also report “unknown” and “declined” for Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. While the SACWIS system does have the options of “unknown” and “declined” as part of the drop-down menu for “Ethnicity,” further investigation revealed that these two options are not extracted and reported to NYTD. Instead, the option of “unknown” and “declined” are reported as “no” (there is no logic or code in the system to report these values). In addition, the state has the other options of “not reported” and “could not be verified” that are unclear in the intent of these options.

Test Case: In Test Case #1, the youth (or youth’s family) declined to provide information on Hispanic or Latino (ethnicity). The state instead reported “no.”

Case Record Review: In Case Record # 8, the state reported the youth was not Hispanic (“no”). However, the selection on the “Ethnicity” drop-down in the IL SACWIS shows “not reported.” It is unclear what “not reported” means, if the youth or youth’s family is “declining” to provide this information or if that means the Hispanic or Latino ethnicity is not being reported.

14. Foster care status services

Rating: 2

Findings: During the onsite review, the state has demonstrated some challenges around accurately reporting foster care status. The SACWIS system is connected to a legacy system, the CYCIS system (Child & Youth Centered Information System). CYCIS maintains foster care information, and an interface between the two systems is used to generate the foster care information. Because foster care status is related to the type of placement a youth is in, the system must be able to report only those youth who are or were in the placement and care of the state in accordance with 45 CFR § 1355.20. Of note, youth under the age of 18 who are in a supervised independent living setting are not considered to be in foster care. In addition, while the state has elected to extend foster care under the federal option, only youth who are receiving a title IV-E foster care maintenance payment should be reported as “in foster care” for youth over the age of 18.

Test Cases: During the pre-onsite phase of the NYTD review, Illinois made us aware that reporting “foster care” status for the test cases would be difficult because it is exported from the CYCIS system. Therefore, it is not surprising that in all the test cases where the youth was in foster care, the state could not report it correctly (#1 to #4). While noted in Appendix A and under this element, our finding for this data element is not based on the test cases' results.

Case Record Review: Three of the files reviewed during case review (#1, #2, and #4) illustrated errors in reporting this element accurately. In all three cases, reviewers were able to determine that the youth under age 18 was in foster care at some point during the reporting period, but the state reported “no.”

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has indicated the change has been made. CB will review the 2020B file and supporting documentation for compliance.

15. Local agency

Rating: 2

Findings: During the pre-onsite activities, it was confirmed that the state had hardcoded this element only to report “Centralized Unit.” The state will need to develop functional reporting to report: 1) the FIPS code for the county that has primary responsibility for the placement and care of youth who are in foster care, 2) for youth who are not in foster care, the FIPS code for the county/jurisdiction that is providing services, and 3) for out-of-state youth placed in the state under the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC), the FIPS code that corresponds to the jurisdiction in the sending state with placement and care responsibility for the youth. Since the submission of NYTD files beginning in FY 2011, the NYTD system has flagged a “Data Quality Advisory” for this element, but no improvements were made to this data element.

Test Cases: This error was further demonstrated in all the Test Cases (#1-5) where this element is applicable.

Case Record Review: Due to the information outlined above, during the case record review, the “local agency” information was not evaluated but still found in error for this element (records #1-10, #41).

Update to the Onsite Review: Illinois is no longer reporting only “Centralized Unit” and is now reporting FIPS codes for this element. Therefore, we are changing this rating from a “1” to a “2.” During the Post-Onsite Phase, we will review code and other documents to determine if the correct value is being reported and implementation reporting of ICPC cases.

16. Federally recognized Tribe

Rating: 1

Findings: While the data system for Illinois does have a field to record and report Tribal information (“Basic Information” in the Person Management Screen) for purposes of NYTD file submission, this element is hardcoded to report “no.” This prevents the state from being able to report “yes” for youth who are a member of, eligible for, or “pending” membership in a federally recognized Tribe as required by NYTD. Additionally, this prevents the ability for this element to remain blank for youth whose Tribal membership is pending. While we understand that there aren’t any recognized Tribes in the state, it is a requirement of NYTD that the state can

report Tribal membership and pending membership because youth may be members of federally recognized Tribes outside of the state.

17. Adjudicated delinquent

Rating: 2

Findings: To report the adjudicated delinquency history of a youth, the legal history must be completed under the “Person” screen in SACWIS. During our technical discussion, it was determined that for youth who are in Cook County, this is a direct pull from Cook County Court Information to CYCIS to report this information for NYTD. However, for youth who are in downstate Illinois, the data are entered manually into CYCIS by workers who enter part of the youth’s legal history upon intake. For youth in Cook County, the data reported is only for youth whose adjudication is during the time the youth is open to foster care (historical adjudication is not reported). For areas in the state where the information must be manually entered, the data may not be updated regularly. NYTD requires that “yes” be reported for a youth who was found to be adjudicated delinquent. As outlined in [NYTD Q&A 2.50](#), the process of “defaulting” to a response is not allowed when information is not entered.

Test Cases: Test Case #2 demonstrated an error for this element (the youth had a prior adjudication of delinquency that was not reported).

Case Record Review: In Case Records #1 and #8, notes in the case record indicated a criminal history, and the CYCIS (Child & Youth Centered Information System) showed an identification number, indicating that the youth had a prior conviction of delinquency adjudication. In Case Record #41, there was no actual adjudication order in the file, but numerous items indicate the youth was likely adjudicated delinquent before she came into foster care.

18. Educational level

Rating: 1

Findings: In the Illinois system, there are two places to record education information that can be reported in NYTD. The first section on the “Education Screen” allows a caseworker to enter current education information, including the grade and the year. The second entry point is on the same screen under “Educational Program” information. This dropdown field is labeled “Last Known Grade Completed by the Youth.”¹⁸ During the technical meeting, it was determined that NYTD education information is only required if a caseworker were to open the Education tab. Once the Education tab is open, information about the “Grade in School” and “Year” is

¹⁸ We note that based on conversations and technical notes, our understanding is that the system is designed to pull “school grade” and then if no information is available, to check “Last Known Grade Completed by the Youth.”

mandatory to complete. During the pre-onsite phase, the state described the process to meet the 90% compliance rate for this element—an ongoing challenge for the state (every file submitted has been flagged for ICC #4 for this element).¹⁹ If the standard is determined to have not been met, a request goes out to the assigned worker to update the record. The state recognizes this as an ongoing issue and is attempting to work directly with the Board of Education to obtain youth educational information. For NYTD, a state must report the last grade completed and provide the educational information required by the NYTD allowable values (“GED” is not an acceptable value for NYTD). Therefore, if a youth has completed a GED, the state must report the last grade level a youth completed prior to earning a GED. For youth in college, the state must only report “college” when the youth has completed at least one semester.

Test Cases: Five test cases require “educational level” to be reported. While education information was reported in the test case scenarios, all 5 test cases (#1-#5) reported the information as “blank.”

Case Review: For the case record review, 11 cases were required to report this information. During case review, there were seven cases (#1, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, and 41) where **Element 18** was found in error, including the record not having been updated (#1, #4), current grade reported instead of the last grade completed (#3), the incorrect value reported (college was reported for youth who had not completed at least one semester (#5, #9), or educational information not supported (#10). Case Record #41 reported “no” for this element, which is not an acceptable value for this element.

19. Special education

Rating: 2

Findings: The state has difficulty reporting this element accurately. The special education for Illinois is reported from the system entitled “Program Type” field on the Education tab in the system. This field is not mandatory and contains a list of physical conditions (blind), attributes (English as a Second Language), and school status (Vocational Program). However, this data element is asking if, during the reporting period, the youth received special education services. As outlined in **NYTD Q&A 2.50**, the process of “defaulting” to a response is not allowed when information is not entered.

Test Case: In Test Case #3, the state did not report that the youth received special education.

¹⁹ ICC #4 flags when an element should not be blank. For this element, ICC #4 indicates the state has reported no information for this element (“blank”).

Case File: For both Case Records #1 and #7, the state reported “yes” for this element, but reviewers failed to find any information in the case record to verify that any special education services were received.

20. Independent living needs assessment

Rating: 1

Findings: This data element is intended to capture information on assessments that *systematically identify a youth’s independent living skills, strengths, and needs*.

As outlined in the state’s Procedures 302, Appendix M, the state requires the youth to complete the Casey Life Skills Assessment (an independent living needs assessment) at age 14, 16, and 6 months before case closure. We note the system is looking to implement a “tickler” in SACWIS to remind caseworkers when an independent living needs assessment is due. This will be a place where reporting on the assessment could support.

Case Record Review: In Case Record #9, #12, and #41, reviewers found a copy of a completed Casey Life Skills Assessment in the file that was not reported to NYTD.

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has indicated that capturing the information on Life Skills Assessment is part of the conversation on improving NYTD services’ reporting through system enhancement related to the Service Plan.

21. Academic support

Rating: 1

Findings: This data element is intended to capture services designed to help a youth *complete high school or obtain a GED*.

The state regularly assists youth in completing high school and/or provides help to obtain a General Equivalency Degree (GED). The state provides services to youth under the “academic support” category, including DCFS’ Project STRIVE (Strategies to Rejuvenate Interest and Value in Education); an Educational Access Project (EAP) in partnership with Northern Illinois University to provide educational advocacy and promote academic success, Education Liaisons; and DCFS Education Advisors. The state also requires the development of an “Education Plan” for youth as part of the Case Plan. The state should review their rich service array and determine which of these services meet the NYTD definitions (paid for or provided by) and how to best report these services in the NYTD categories, as appropriate.

Test Case: In Test Case #2, the state reported “academic support,” but the youth had already completed secondary education (this element is only applicable for youth receiving assistance to obtain a high school diploma or GED).

Case Record Review: In Case Record #20, reviewers found a payment voucher for IVY League tutoring, but this service was not reported to NYTD. For the youth in case #41, the state reported that the youth received this service, but the youth had already received their diploma by the reporting period.

22. Post-secondary educational support

Rating: 1

Findings: This data element is intended to capture services designed to help a youth *enter or complete college or other post-secondary education*.

As outlined in the state's Procedures 302, the state requires caseworkers and others to help youth enter or complete post-secondary education. In addition to the "academic support" that DCFS Education Advisors and Education Liaisons provide (and reported in [element 21](#)), their assistance to youth may also qualify as "post-secondary" support. Support can include helping a youth complete college applications, complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and register for required testing for colleges and universities. The state has also recently implemented the First Star College Prep Academy at Illinois State University. Finally, the state's policy and procedures outline the type of vocational and career planning that is expected to occur as part of the Youth-Driven Transition Plan. The state should review their rich service array and determine which of these services meet the NYTD definitions (paid for or provided by) and how to best report these services in the NYTD categories, as appropriate.

Case Record Review: Case notes in file #17 indicate the foster parents were taking the child on multiple campus tours during the reporting period that were not being reported. In case #41, the caseworker assisted the youth in completing the FAFSA, but the service was not reported.

23. Career preparation

Rating: 1

Findings: This data element is intended to capture services designed to help a youth *find, apply for, and retain appropriate employment*.

Notably, Illinois offers longstanding services that focus on developing youth and young adult skills related to employment. Lawrence Hall Mentoring Youth To Inspire Meaningful Employment (MY TIME) program is a unique job readiness and job placement program created especially for youth in care in Illinois. In addition, there are other programs in Cook and other counties throughout the state that assist youth in finding employment, writing resumes, and assisting with employment support (including the Building Futures Program). The state should review their rich service array and determine which of these services meet the NYTD definitions (paid for or provided by) and how to best report these services in the NYTD categories, as appropriate.

Test Cases: In Test Case #2, the state did not report that the caseworker helped the youth develop a resume and identify part-time job opportunities.

Case Record Review: In Case Record #2, the foster parent had a local electrician come to the home to speak to the youth about his career for at least 45 minutes, but the state did not report this service. Case Record #9 had no documentation of career preparation being provided to the youth to support why the services were reported to NYTD. The youth in case #41 was part of the DCFS Work Incentive Program, and case notes also indicate the caseworker helped the youth update her resume and research jobs. These services were not reported to NYTD.

24. Employment programs or vocational training

Rating: 1

Findings: This data element is intended to capture information on training designed to build a youth's *skills for a specific trade/vocation or participation in an apprenticeship, internship, or summer employment*.

In addition to the robust services provided under the NYTD service category of “career preparation” (**element 23**), the state of Illinois offers additional employment and/or vocational training programs paid for and provided by the state to specifically address the trade, vocation, or career needs of the youth/young adults. At least two programs in Illinois, “Hire the Future” and “Find Your Future,” likely qualify as programs under this NYTD category. There are also programs at youth’s placements. The state should review their rich service array and determine which of these services meet the NYTD definitions (paid for or provided by) and how to best report these services in the NYTD categories, as appropriate.

Test Case: In Test Cases #1 and #4, the state reported “yes” for this service category, but there was no information in the scenarios to support that the youth received services that met the service definition.

Case Record: For Case Record #2, there was no information in the case record to support the youth's receiving this service. Case notes indicated the child was attending a school with the word “vocational” in the name. Still, there was no information that the youth received services in this category paid for or provided by the agency. For Case Record #8, reviewers found that the youth participated in vocational training at Center Stone (his foster care placement), but it was not reported. There was no information found to support that the youth in case #41 received this service.

25. Budget and financial management

Rating: 1

Findings: This data element is intended to capture services designed to help a youth *access training or practice with living within a budget*.

There are many budgets and financial management services the state of Illinois offers to youth. For example, youth in Illinois can receive a payment to assist them when they exit out of foster care (Countdown to 21) if a youth completed financial training often provided by the Economic Awareness Council (EAC) as part of “Get Real: Financial Decisions in the Real World.” The state should review their rich service array and determine which of these services meet the NYTD definitions (paid for or provided by) and how to best report these services in the NYTD categories, as appropriate.

Test Case: In Case #2, the state reported “yes,” but the budgeting and other financial management support were related to the youth attending college. Services associated with helping youth attend and persist in post-secondary education should be reported as part of post-secondary support ([element 22](#)).

Case Record: In Case Record #15, #17, and #30, the state did not report the youth's services in this category. In Case Record #15, there were notes and discussions about budgeting and other financial management items (getting a savings account) with the youth. In addition, in Case Record #17, there were notes in the case file indicating the foster parent was helping the youth understand budgeting and cost of public transportation, and engaged in active conversations about financial management. Reviewers in case #30 found completed monthly budgets noted in the service plan indicating the caseworker was working with the youth around budgeting and financial management.

26. Housing education and home management training

Rating: 1

Findings: This data element is intended to capture information on *assistance or training in locating and maintaining housing or instruction in basic living activities such as food preparation, laundry, and housekeeping*.

Cook County in Illinois is known for its housing and advocacy services for youth transitioning out of foster care, including services under the “Youth Housing Assistance—Transition” (YHAT) and other crisis housing advocacy services. In fact, in the 2019 Annual Progress and Services Report, the state reported having referred over 250 youth to housing advocacy services in the state fiscal year 2018. The state should review their rich service array and determine which of these services meet the NYTD definitions (paid for or provided by) and how to best report these services in the NYTD categories, as appropriate.

Test Cases: In Test Case #2, the state did not report the services of the caseworker, helping the youth find and apply for an apartment after he had to move out of his college dorm. In Test Case #5, the youth received assistance to select a dorm (the state reported “yes” to this element, but because the service is related to college, it is better reported in “post-secondary educational assistance” ([element 22](#))).

Case Record Review: In Case Record #10, notes in the case file indicate the agency helped the youth receive assistance from a housing advocate, including assisting with appointments, but the service was not reported. The youth in case #41 lived in an ILO (Independent Living Option), but there was no information that services were provided to her that met the service category's definition.

27. Health education and risk prevention

Rating: 1

Findings: This data element is intended to capture information on services designed to *provide information about hygiene, nutrition, fitness, exercise, or the avoidance of health risks.*

The state of Illinois has detailed policy and procedures related to teaching and training youth about health and medical care, including youth's responsibilities to learn how to manage medication. The state should review their rich service array and determine which of these services meet the NYTD definitions (paid for or provided by) and how to best report these services in the NYTD categories, as appropriate.

Case Record: In case record #8, reviewers found information in the paper record that the youth's placement helped the youth with mental health supervision and medication management (per the youth's request). This service was not reported. Similarly, in case #17, reviewers found notes that the agency assisted the youth with obtaining reproductive-related services, but this was also not reported.

28. Family support and healthy marriage education

Rating: 1

Findings: This data element is intended to capture information on *education about safe and stable families, healthy marriage, and relationships.*

The state offers robust services for pregnant and parenting teens in foster care, including the nationally known Teen Parent Service Network (TPSN). The state should review their rich service array and determine which of these services meet the NYTD definitions (paid for or provided by) and how to best report these services in the NYTD categories, as appropriate.

Test Cases: For Test Case #5, the state reported that the youth received this service, but there is no information in the test case scenario that the youth received this service.

Case Record Reviews: In Case Record #2 and #9, there was no supporting documentation of information to support the youth who received those services. In #10, the youth received services from TPSN, but those services were not reported to NYTD.

29. Mentoring

Rating: 1

Findings: This data element is intended to capture information on whether a youth has been *matched with a screened and trained adult for a one-on-one mentoring relationship*.

In various state documents, Illinois reports their understanding of how critical it is for youth in foster care/young adults to be provided mentoring services. The UCAN Mentoring Program helps youth gain skills and confidence to reach their full potential through a meaningful and supportive mentoring relationship that inspires youths' educational and employment success, thereby facilitating youth development. Mentoring as a NYTD service should only be reported if the youth has been matched with a screened and trained adult for one-on-one relationships. This mentoring relationship must be facilitated, paid for, or provided by the state agency to meet the definition of a NYTD mentoring service. The state should review its array of mentoring programs to determine which of these programs meet the specific NYTD definition for mentoring.

Test Cases: In Test Cases #2 and #4, the state reported that the youth received mentoring services, but there was no information in the scenario to support that the mentoring meets the NYTD definition.

Case Record Review: In Case Records #2, #7, and #41, mentoring was reported as a service to the youth, but no information was found to support that any mentoring was being provided.

30. Supervised independent living

Rating: 1

Findings: This data element is intended to capture information on youth *living independently under a supervised arrangement that is paid for or provided by the state agency*.

Due to their longstanding history of serving youth over the age of 18, the state of Illinois has had a diverse range of placement options for youth, as outlined in Procedures 302, Appendix H. As outlined in these procedures; there are two basic types of "supervised independent living settings" in the state of Illinois, "TLPs" (transitional living programs) and "ILOs" (independent living options). The state should review their rich service array and determine which of these services meet the NYTD definitions (paid for or provided by) and how to best report these services in the NYTD categories, as appropriate.

Test Case: In Test Case #2, the youth lived in a dorm, which can be considered a supervised independent living setting.

Case Record Review: In Case Records #6, #28, #30, and #41, the youth was in a living arrangement that could be considered a supervised independent living placement consistent with NYTD; however, this service was not reported.

31. Room and board financial assistance

Rating: 1

Findings: This data element is intended to capture information on *payments paid or provided for room and board, including rent deposits, utilities, and other household start-up expenses.*

In relation to the state's extended foster care and the range of housing options, the state uses various types of funding to support youth in these placements. In addition to title IV-E for youth over the age of 18, the state also utilizes the option to use up to 30% of the state's Chafee allocation to provide room and board assistance to eligible youth. The state should review their funding and funding sources to determine how to report room and board financial assistance to NYTD, as appropriate.

Case Record Review: In Case Record #30, reviewers found case notes about a rent payment deducted from the youth's emancipation fund (paid for by the state) to assist the youth. This rental assistance payment was not reported to NYTD.

32. Education financial assistance

Rating: 1

Findings: This data element is intended to capture information on *payments paid or provided for education or training.*

In addition to the use of the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program, Illinois has the Youth in College/Vocational Training Program, which provides financial assistance to youth in college. The DCFS Scholarship Program is a competitive college scholarship program open to all DCFS youth in care, youth who aged out of care at age 18 or older, and youth who left care through guardianship or adoption. The Department awards 53 scholarships annually. The awardees receive a monthly grant and a tuition and mandatory fee waiver to an Illinois state public university or community college. In the 2019 APSR, 214 youth were reported to be in the DCFS Scholarship Program. Finally, the Community College Payment Program (CCPP) pays for the tuition, fees, books, supplies, and uniforms not covered by financial aid grants for those youth in care attending an Illinois community college. The state should review their funding, funding sources, and purpose of the payments to determine how to report educational, financial assistance to NYTD, as appropriate.

Case Record Review: In Case Record #4, the reviewers found information indicating payment for a uniform for the youth's prep school (in the case notes), but the financial support was not reported to NYTD. In Case #6, the youth was awarded an ETV that was not reported. In Case #17, the state paid for the youth to receive a laptop in order for the youth to complete a college application and apply for grants. In Case #28, the youth was in the YIC program, but it was not reported to NYTD.

33. Other financial assistance

Rating: 1

Findings: This data element is intended to capture information on *any other payments made to help the youth live independently*. The state provides a payment related to the “Countdown to 21” program, a one-time financial assistance payment as they exit care at 21. The state even offers an “Employment Incentive Program” to provide a financial supplement incentive to encourage youth/young adults to enter the workplace.

Test Cases: In Test Case #4, the state did not report that the youth received a clothing voucher paid for by Chafee from an employment program. Because it is a payment, it should be reported in **element 33** (other financial assistance), not in **element 24** (employment programs and vocational training).

Case Record Review: The youth in case records #6, #10, and #41 received financial assistance that was not reported to NYTD (#6: child care assistance; #10: bus pass; #41: the “Countdown to 21” payment). In case record #7, there was no documentation to support that other financial assistance was provided to the youth.

34. Outcome reporting status

Rating: 2

Findings: The state does not have a relationship between the completed survey and the “outcome reporting status” in the SACWIS. This causes several technical issues in the submission of NYTD files. In the baseline in FY 2011, FY 2014, and FY 2017, there are a number of records that are missing this critical data element (we note this has decreased over time). The mission information is also true in the file submitted in 2013, 2018, and 2019. Because of the 2-step process in entering a survey, there is a high level of work the NYTD Coordinator must do to enter the outcome status in order for it to be reported to NYTD (see **General Requirement #4** for more information). We believe that the increased role of oversight of the NYTD Coordinator has helped decrease the missing data, but examining the process of data entry must be addressed.

In addition, there is no consistent policy to help clarify when to select the appropriate outcome reporting status. The state also allows caseworkers to report “incarcerated” for youth at baseline (see **General Requirement #4** for more information). As a final note, the state is using “not in sample” at age 21. While Illinois does sample, “not in sample” should only be used as a valid response at age 19. Those records that are not part of the sample at age 21 are not reported.

Test Case: In Test Case #3, the state reported that the youth participated in the survey, but the youth was never invited to participate in the survey (see **NYTD Q& A: 2.51**). In Test Case #4, because the state has 45 days from the youth's birthday to report her survey information, this element should be left blank (see **General Requirement #2** for more information).

Case Record Review: In Case Record #25, the state reported participation for the outcome reporting status. However, the youth “declined” all questions (**elements 37–58**). Youth should not be reported as “participated” if they decline to answer all the questions.

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has indicated that they have developed a mechanism to identify cases missing the “Outcome reporting status” prior to submission. CB will review the 2020B file and supporting documentation for compliance.

35. Date of outcome data collection

Rating: 2

Findings: In all baseline submissions (FY 2011, FY 2014, FY 2017), the state had a number of youth where the date of outcome data collection was missing. Due to the missing data, these youth do not enter the follow-up population. There were also issues with submitting this element in files containing follow-up records (survey at age 19 or 21).

For youth who do not participate in the survey (a response other than “participated” for **element 34** - outcome reporting status), the “date of outcomes data collection” is to be reported as “blank.” While the state must record a date for this element in their system (in order to determine and report **element 36** - foster care status - outcomes), it is not reported in the NYTD file. We know that training materials for NYTD indicate that caseworkers should enter the date the youth completed the survey, not the date entered into the system. However, we remain concerned that labeling the field “outcome date” could be confusing re what date should be entered. On the paper survey, there is a line for “Date Survey Completed.”

In Test Cases #1 and #6, the test cases reported the date the survey was entered into SACWIS for the test cases.

Case Records: For Case Record #18, #19, #20, #22, #23, #29, #30, #40, and #42, the youth did not participate in the survey, and there this element should be reported as “blank.” Case Record #11 supports the finding related to reporting how to report a youth’s record when it is within 45 days of the end of the reporting period (see **General Requirement #2** for more information).

36. Foster care status—outcomes

Rating: 2

Findings: For youth over the age of 18, foster care status should be reported as “yes” only if there is a title IV-E foster care maintenance payment in a state that has exercised the option to extend foster care as Illinois has elected. For youth who are not in the baseline or follow-up population, this element must be left blank. Because of the relationship between this element and determining the baseline population, the state should review this information in tandem with the information outlined in **General Requirement #2**. In the FY 2017 baseline file, the state did not report “foster care status - outcomes” for 2 youth (this compliance standard is 100 percent).

Test Case: In both Test Case #2 and #5, this field should have been reported as “blank” as they were not the follow-up population. This error may be due to the reporting of the cases in a test environment. During the pre-onsite phase of the NYTD review, Illinois made us aware that reporting “foster care” status for the test cases would be difficult because it is exported from the CYCIS system. Therefore, it is not surprising that in all the test cases where the youth was in foster care, the state could not report it correctly (#1 to #3). While noted in Appendix A and under this element, our finding for this data element is not based on the test cases' results.

37. Current full-time employment

Rating: 4

Findings: Data collection, mapping, reporting, and data quality for this element are sufficient.

38. Current part-time employment

Rating: 4

Findings: Data collection, mapping, reporting, and data quality for this element are sufficient.

39. Employment-related skills

Rating: 4

Findings: Data collection, mapping, reporting, and data quality for this element are sufficient.

40. Social Security

Rating: 4

Findings: Data collection, mapping, reporting, and data quality for this element are sufficient.

41. Educational aid

Rating: 4

Findings: Data collection, mapping, reporting, and data quality for this element are sufficient.

42. Public financial assistance

Rating: 2

Findings: During the review, it was determined that **elements 42, 43, and 44** are being asked of youth in the baseline population (paper and online survey). The state must remove these questions from the baseline survey (paper and online survey). These questions are only applicable to youth *at follow-up who are not in foster care* when the survey is administered. We note that on the online survey, the state has not removed the clause “[The state may add and/or substitute the name(s) of the state’s welfare program].” As a note, the response option of “not applicable” is not a valid response option on the survey for young adults (see **NYTD Q&A 3.22**).

Test Case: In Test Case #1, the state reported “no” instead of “not applicable” (as provided in the scenario since the youth is in the baseline population).

Case Record Review: In at least Case Records #12, #13, and #14, the youth was asked this question and responded “no”; however, because the youth is in the baseline, they should not be asked this question. The youth’s answers should not be automatically changed or “corrected” (see [NYTD Q&A 3.6 and 3.25](#)).

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has submitted updated survey documents but is still in the process of making changes to its system. When the NYTD Improvement Plan is submitted, the data items related to the survey instruments will be finalized.

43. Public food assistance

Rating: 2

Findings: During the review, it was determined that [elements 42, 43, and 44](#) are being asked of youth in the baseline population (paper and online survey). The state must remove these questions from the baseline survey (paper and online survey). These questions are only applicable to youth *at follow-up who are not in foster care* when the survey is administered. As a note, the response option of “not applicable” is not a valid response option on the survey for young adults (see [NYTD Q&A 3.22](#)).

Test Case: In Test Case #1, the state reported “no” instead of “not applicable” (as provided in the scenario since the youth is in the baseline population).

Case Record Review: In at least Case Records #12, #13, and #14, the youth was asked this question and responded “no”; however, because the youth is in the baseline, they should not be asked this question. The youth’s answers should not be automatically changed or “corrected” (see [NYTD Q&A 3.6 and 3.25](#)).

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has submitted updated survey documents but is still in the process of making changes to its system. When the NYTD Improvement Plan is submitted, the data items related to the survey instruments will be finalized.

44. Public housing assistance

Rating: 2

Findings: During the review, it was determined that [elements 42, 43, and 44](#) are being asked of youth in the baseline population (paper and online survey). The state must remove these questions from the baseline survey (paper and online survey). These questions are only applicable to youth *at follow-up who are not in foster care* when the survey is administered. As a note, the response option of “not applicable” is not a valid response option on the survey for young adults (see [NYTD Q&A 3.22](#)).

Test Case: In Test Case #1, the state reported “no” instead of “not applicable” (as provided in the scenario since the youth is in the baseline population).

Case Record Review: In at least Case Records #12, #13, and #14, the youth was asked this question and responded “no”; however, because the youth is in the baseline, they should not be asked this question. The youth’s answers should not be automatically changed or “corrected” (see [NYTD Q&A 3.6](#) and [3.25](#)).

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has submitted updated survey documents but is still in the process of making changes to its system. When the NYTD Improvement Plan is submitted, the data items related to the survey instruments will be finalized.

45. Other financial support	Rating: 4
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Findings: Data collection, mapping, reporting, and data quality for this element are sufficient.

46. Highest educational certification received	Rating: 4
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Findings: Data collection, mapping, reporting, and data quality for this element are sufficient.

47. Current enrollment and attendance	Rating: 4
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Findings: Data collection, mapping, reporting, and data quality for this element are sufficient.

48. Connection to adult	Rating: 4
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Findings: Data collection, mapping, reporting, and data quality for this element are sufficient.

49. Homelessness	Rating: 3
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Findings: On the state’s paper survey for follow-up, the question is incorrect. The question must read, “In the past two years, were you homeless at any time?”

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has submitted updated survey documents but is still in the process of making changes to its system. When the NYTD Improvement Plan is submitted, the data items related to the survey instruments will be finalized.

50. Substance abuse referral**Rating: 4**

Findings: Data collection, mapping, reporting, and data quality for this element are sufficient.

51. Incarceration**Rating: 4**

Findings: Data collection, mapping, reporting, and data quality for this element are sufficient.

52. Children**Rating: 4**

Findings: Data collection, mapping, reporting, and data quality for this element are sufficient.

53. Marriage at child's birth**Rating: 3**

Findings: On the state's baseline and follow-up surveys (paper and online), the question is missing the required clause, "If you responded yes to the previous question."

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has submitted updated survey documents but is still in the process of making changes to its system. When the NYTD Improvement Plan is submitted, the data items related to the survey instruments will be finalized.

54. Medicaid**Rating: 3**

Findings: The state has included on the baseline and follow-up survey (paper and online) the prompt, "[or use the name of the state's medical assistance program under title XIX]." In addition, the state is using "Do Not Know" instead of "Don't Know" as a survey response option (baseline, follow-up, paper, and online).

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has submitted updated survey documents but is still in the process of making changes to its system. When the NYTD Improvement Plan is submitted, the data items related to the survey instruments will be finalized.

55. Other health insurance coverage**Rating: 4**

Findings: The state is using "Do Not Know" instead of "Don't Know" as a survey response option (baseline, follow-up, paper and online). In addition, the question includes a response category for "Not Applicable," which is not a valid survey response value for the youth (baseline, follow-up, paper, and online).

56. Health insurance type: Medical**Rating: 3**

Findings: On the paper surveys (baseline and follow-up), the skip logic should be clarified for this question. The survey indicates: IF Q19 [element 55 “other health insurance coverage”]²⁰ = YES, THEN GO TO Q20 [element 56 “health insurance type: Medical”] IF Q19 [element 55 “other health insurance coverage”] = NO, YOUR SURVEY IS COMPLETE.²¹ As a minor revision, if the youth answers “No,” “Don’t Know,” and “Declined” to the element/question 55, then the survey is complete. Only youth who answer “yes” to element/question 55 should answer element/question 56.

The state is using “Do Not Know” instead of “Don’t Know” as a survey response option (baseline, follow-up, paper, and online). In addition, the question includes a response category for “Not Applicable,” which is not a valid survey response value for the youth (baseline, follow-up, paper, and online).

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has submitted updated survey documents but is still in the process of making changes to its system. When the NYTD Improvement Plan is submitted, the data items related to the survey instruments will be finalized.

57. Health insurance type: Mental health**Rating: 3**

Findings: There is no skip logic on the paper surveys at baseline and follow-up. Youth should only answer questions/element 57 and 58 if the youth has indicated “yes” to both questions/elements 55 and 56.

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has submitted updated survey documents but is still in the process of making changes to its system. When the NYTD Improvement Plan is submitted, the data items related to the survey instruments will be finalized.

The state is using “Do Not Know” instead of “Don’t Know” as a survey response option (baseline, follow-up, paper, and online). In addition, the question includes a response category for “Not Applicable,” which is not a valid survey response value for the youth (baseline, follow-up, paper, and online).

²⁰ The information in the [] indicates the element number, as the state’s numbering of the NYTD questions is different from the numbering in the Appendix.

²¹ Brackets connote added language to help the prompt be understood in the context in the report.

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has submitted updated survey documents but is still in the process of making changes to its system. When the NYTD Improvement Plan is submitted, the data items related to the survey instruments will be finalized.

58. Health insurance type: Prescription drugs**Rating: 3**

Findings: There is no skip logic on the paper surveys at baseline and follow-up. Youth should only answer **questions/element 57** and **58**, if the youth has indicated “yes” to both **questions/elements 55 and 56**.

The state is using “Do Not Know” instead of “Don’t Know” as a survey response option (baseline, follow-up, paper, and online). In addition, the question includes a response category for “Not Applicable,” which is not a valid survey response value for the youth (baseline, follow-up, paper, and online).

Update to the NYTD Review: The state has submitted updated survey documents but is still in the process of making changes to its system. When the NYTD Improvement Plan is submitted, the data items related to the survey instruments will be finalized.

Appendix D. NYTD Improvement Plan General Requirements and Data Elements Final Ratings and Findings to Address

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1: The state reports information on all youth in the served population. Rating: 1

Findings to address:

- 1.1 The state must establish a business practice to consistently and accurately capture information on all independent living services paid for or provided by the state, including:
 - Services provided to youth by caseworkers, both public and private; foster parents, service providers, and placements;
 - Services provided to youth who are no longer in foster care or who are older than 21; and
 - The associated demographic for those reported as receiving services ([elements 14–19](#)).

2: The state reports information on all youth in the baseline population. Rating: 3

Findings to address:

- 2.1 The state is to modify its reporting process to include youth in the baseline who enter foster care at any point during the 45 days of their 17th birthday during a NYTD baseline year.
- 2.2 The state is to review their placement types to determine foster care status at baseline is accurately being reported.
- 2.3 The state is to review its process to determine opportunities to reduce the number of youth who decline and/or invalid data is reported.
- 2.4 The state is to modify its reporting process to ensure that baseline population youth records are reported both in the report period file that corresponds to the youth's 17th birthday and the report period file in which the youth was surveyed (see [NYTD Q&A 2.55](#)).

3: The state reports information on all youth in the follow-up population. Rating: 2

Findings to address:

- 3.1 The state is to review and modify its process to ensure elements 34, 35, and 36 are reported without error.

3.2 The state is to modify its reporting process to include outcomes information in the NYTD data file from youth in the follow-up population who were surveyed late.

3.3 The state will need to address the data quality issues in 2019A and 2019B NYTD files.

4: The state implements an appropriate survey methodology to collect youth outcome data.

Rating: 3

Findings to address:

- 4.1 The state must revise its NYTD survey instruments to include survey questions and valid response options as they appear in the NYTD regulation. ***This includes the paper, web-based, and data entry screens.***
- 4.2 We encourage the state to build on its survey methodology and consider the following recommendations:
- Develop a policy for element 34 (outcomes reporting status) to ensure consistent reporting.
 - Review the instructions and the prompts to ensure they are youth-friendly and accurate (i.e., the length of time to take the survey and information about confidentiality).
 - Consider incentives, especially for youth who are no longer in foster care.

5: The state follows ACF's sampling procedures (*applicable to states opting to sample only*).

Rating: 3

Findings to address:

- 5.1 The state must develop a process only to report those records as determined by the sample according to ACF.
- 5.2 The state must submit documentation to support that they have corrected the issue to only report "not in sample at age 19." (CB will review 2020 A and B files to make sure this is corrected).

6: The state reports NYTD data files following ACF's specifications.

Rating: 3

Findings to address:

- 6.1 The state must modify its process to report NYTD data files following ACF's specifications, including:
- Determining how to prevent out-of-range data
 - Reporting data element 35 according to ACF specifications.

7: The state conducts quality assurance to ensure NYTD information can be analyzed and used. **Rating: 2**

Findings to address:

- 7.1 The state must develop a quality assurance process to ensure that NYTD data are accurate, complete, timely, and consistent in definition and usage across the agency. Specifically, the state is to:
 - Develop a process to periodically examine the accuracy or completeness of data on youth served by the independent living program. (Please see note about 2019 A&B NYTD Files in Appendix C, **General Requirement #7.**)
 - Address logical inconsistencies in survey responses by consulting directly with the youth rather than automatically changing or “correcting” a youth’s responses (see **NYTD Q&A #3.25**).
- 7.2 The state is strongly encouraged to develop and plan to integrate NYTD data into its CQI framework to develop performance measures for its independent living program. To do so, the state should review the Children’s Bureau recommendations included in **General Requirement #7** findings above and engage young people in developing and implementing any plans.

DATA ELEMENTS

6. Race: American Indian or Alaska Native findings to address: **Rating: 2**

- 6.1 The state’s program code must be updated to enable the state to report more than one race for youth (e.g., the values captured in the “other race” menu in SACWIS must be reported).

7. Race: Asian findings to address: **Rating: 2**

- 7.1 The state’s program code must be updated to enable the state to report more than one race for youth (e.g., the values captured in the “other race” menu in SACWIS must be reported).

8. Race: Black or African American findings to address: **Rating: 2**

- 8.1 The state’s program code must be updated to enable the state to report more than one race for youth (e.g., the values captured in the “other race” menu in SACWIS must be reported).

9. Race: Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander findings to address: **Rating: 2**

- 9.1 The state’s program code must be updated to enable the state to report more than one race for youth (e.g., the values captured in the “other race” menu in SACWIS must be reported).

10. Race: White findings to address: **Rating: 2**

- 10.1 The state’s program code must be updated to enable the state to report more than one race for youth (e.g., the values captured in the “other race” menu in SACWIS must be reported).

11. Race: Unknown findings to address:**Rating: 2**

- 11.1 The state's program code must be updated to enable the state to report more than one race for youth (e.g., the values captured in the "other race" menu in SACWIS must be reported).
- 11.2 The state must review its program and extraction code to determine if an "unknown" race can be reported.

12. Race: Declined findings to address:**Rating: 2**

- 12.1 The state's system must be updated only to allow the selection of "declined" as the only choice for a youth who opts not to provide race information. It must then be the only reported race.

13. Hispanic or Latino ethnicity findings to address:**Rating: 2**

- 13.1 The state must develop logic to extract the response options of "unknown" and "declined."
- 13.2 The state should develop procedures to review and appropriately report other response options and how they should be reported (e.g., "not reported" and "could not be verified."

14. Foster care status services findings to address:**Rating: 2**

- 14.1 The state must accurately report the foster care status of youth in the served population. Of note, youth under the age of 18 who are in a supervised independent living setting are not considered to be in foster care. In addition, while the state has elected to extend foster care under the federal option, only youth who are receiving a title IV-E foster care maintenance payment should be reported as "in foster care" for youth over the age of 18.

15. Local agency findings to address:**Rating: 2**

- 15.1 The state must report the local agency's information to NYTD.
- 15.2 The state must report the "sending" state's local agency code for youth placed and served in Illinois from another state via the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC).

16. Federally recognized Tribe findings to address:**Rating: 1**

- 16.1 The state must modify its system to collect information on youths' Tribal membership. The state must ensure that SACWIS can collect information on the youths' membership (or eligibility for membership) in all federally recognized Tribes.
- 16.2 The state reports "blank" for this element when the federally recognized Tribal membership or membership eligibility is not known or is pending verification.
- 16.3 The state is to add supervisory controls to ensure that information on a youth's Tribal membership is entered/updated timely.

17. Adjudicated delinquent findings to address:**Rating: 2**

- 17.1 The state is to revise its data collection process to enable the reporting of whether or not a youth in the served population was ever adjudicated delinquent, regardless of placement type or foster care status.
- 17.2 The state is to add supervisory controls to ensure that information on a youth's delinquency is entered/updated timely.

18. Educational level findings to address:

Rating: 1

- 18.1 The state must develop a process to report correctly the last grade level completed by youth.
- 18.2 The state must make the following changes to its current mapping for the element:
- "GED" is not an acceptable value and must be corrected.
 - Youth who are in college must complete at least one semester for this to be reported.
- 18.3 The state is to establish supervisory controls to ensure that information on a youth's education record is entered/updated timely, especially for youth no longer in the state's custody.

19. Special education findings to address:

Rating: 2

- 19.1 The state must revise its business process for collecting data on special education, including:
- Remove the default "no" when a value has not been entered for the element.
- 19.2 The state is strongly encouraged to review if how the field is currently captured supports high-quality data reporting.
- 19.3 The state is to establish supervisory controls to ensure that information on a youth's special education status is entered/updated timely, particularly for youth no longer in the state's custody.

20. Independent living needs assessment findings to address:

Rating: 1

- 20.1 The state should conduct quality assurance to ensure independent living needs assessments are accurately reported during the reporting period in which they are delivered. The specific assessment conducted meets the definition provided in 45 CFR § 1356.83(g)(20).

21. Academic support findings to address:

Rating: 1

- 21.1 The state must revise its business process for collecting information on IL services to ensure that service information is consistently captured regarding activities and supports paid for or provided by the state (see General Requirement #1).
- 21.2 The state must revise its data mapping to ensure the activities reported as "academic support" are clearly defined and meet the definition of the element found at 45 CFR § 1356.83(g)(21).

22. Post-secondary educational support findings to address:

Rating: 1

- 22.1 The state must revise its business process for collecting information on IL services to ensure that service information is consistently captured regarding activities and supports paid for or provided by the state (see **General Requirement #1**).
- 22.2 The state must revise its data mapping to ensure the activities reported as “post-secondary educational support” are clearly defined and meet the definition of the element found at 45 CFR § 1356.83(g)(22).

23. Career preparation findings to address:

Rating: 1

- 23.1 The state must revise its business process for collecting information on IL services to ensure that service information is consistently captured regarding activities and supports paid for or provided by the state (see **General Requirement #1**).
- 23.2 The state must revise its data mapping to ensure the activities reported as “career preparation” are clearly defined and meet the definition of the element found at 45 CFR § 1356.83(g)(23).

24. Employment programs or vocational training findings to address:

Rating: 1

- 24.1 The state must revise its business process for collecting information on IL services to ensure that service information is consistently captured regarding activities and supports paid for or provided by the state (see **General Requirement #1**).
- 24.2 The state must revise its data mapping to ensure the activities reported as “employment programs or vocational training” are clearly defined and meet the definition of the element found at 45 CFR § 1356.83(g)(24).

25. Budget and financial management findings to address:

Rating: 1

- 25.1 The state must revise its business process for collecting information on IL services to ensure that service information is consistently captured regarding activities and supports paid for or provided by the state (see **General Requirement #1**).
- 25.2 The state must revise its data mapping to ensure the activities reported as “budget and financial management” are clearly defined and meet the definition of the element found at 45 CFR § 1356.83(g)(25).

26. Housing education and home management training findings to address: Rating: 1

- 26.1 The state must revise its business process for collecting information on IL services to ensure that service information is consistently captured regarding activities and supports paid for or provided by the state (see **General Requirement #1**).
- 26.2 The state must revise its data mapping to ensure the activities reported as “housing education and home management training” are clearly defined and meet the definition of the element found at 45 CFR § 1356.83(g)(26).

27. Health education and risk prevention findings to address:

Rating: 1

- 27.1 The state must revise its business process for collecting information on IL services to ensure that service information is consistently captured regarding activities and supports paid for or provided by the state (see **General Requirement #1**).

- 27.2 The state must revise its data mapping to ensure the activities reported as “health education and risk prevention” are clearly defined and meet the definition of the element found at 45 CFR § 1356.83(g)(27).

28. Family support and healthy marriage education findings to address: Rating: 1

- 28.1 The state must revise its business process for collecting information on IL services to ensure that service information is consistently captured regarding activities and supports paid for or provided by the state (see **General Requirement #1**).
- 28.2 The state must revise its data mapping to ensure the activities reported as “family support and healthy marriage education” are clearly defined and meet the definition of the element found at 45 CFR § 1356.83(g)(28).

29. Mentoring findings to address: Rating: 1

- 29.1 The state must revise its business process for collecting information on IL services to ensure that service information is consistently captured regarding activities and supports paid for or provided by the state (see **General Requirement #1**).
- 29.2 The state must revise its data mapping to ensure the activities reported as “mentoring” are clearly defined and meet the definition of the element found at 45 CFR § 1356.83(g)(29).

30. Supervised independent living findings to address: Rating: 1

- 30.1 The state must revise its business process for collecting information on IL services to ensure that service information is consistently captured regarding activities and supports paid for or provided by the state (see **General Requirement #1**).
- 30.2 The state must revise its data mapping to ensure the activities reported as “supervised independent living” are clearly defined and meet the definition of the element found at 45 CFR § 1356.83(g)(30).

31. Room and board financial assistance findings to address: Rating: 1

- 31.1 The state must revise its business process for collecting information on IL services to ensure that service information is consistently captured regarding activities and supports paid for or provided by the state (see **General Requirement #1**).
- 31.2 The state must revise its data mapping to ensure the activities reported as “room and board financial assistance” are clearly defined and meet the definition of the element found at 45 CFR § 1356.83(g)(31).

32. Education financial assistance findings to address: Rating: 1

- 32.1 The state must revise its business process for collecting information on IL services to ensure that service information is consistently captured regarding activities and supports paid for or provided by the state (see **General Requirement #1**).
- 32.2 The state must revise its data mapping to ensure the activities reported as “educational, financial assistance” are clearly defined and meet the definition of the element found at 45 CFR § 1356.83(g)(32).

33. Other financial assistance findings to address:**Rating: 1**

- 33.1 The state must revise its business process for collecting information on IL services to ensure that service information is consistently captured regarding activities and supports paid for or provided by the state (see **General Requirement #1**).
- 33.2 The state must revise its data mapping to ensure the activities reported as “other financial assistance” are clearly defined and meet the definition of the element found at 45 CFR § 1356.83(g)(33).

34. Outcome reporting status findings to address:**Rating: 2**

- 34.1 The state should develop a quality assurance process to ensure the participation status or reason for non-participation is consistently and accurately reported in **element 34**.
- 34.2 The states should develop logic to ensure the outcome reporting status of “participate” reflects at least one valid response other than “declined” in **elements 37–58**.

35. Date of outcome data collection findings to address:**Rating: 2**

- 35.1 The state will need to revise its reporting process for youth who do not participate in the survey (a response other than “participated” for **element 34**, outcome reporting status); the “date of outcomes data collection” is to be reported as “blank.”
- 35.2 We strongly recommend the state review training materials, prompts, and labels of the field for “outcome date” to ensure the date entered into SACWIS is when the youth takes the survey.

36. Foster care status—outcomes findings to address:**Rating: 2**

- 36.1 The state’s program code must be updated to report the federal definition of foster care (45 CFR § 1355.20) for young adults over the age of 18, according to NYTD.
- 36.2 The state should develop a quality assurance process to ensure the developed code is reporting “foster care status - outcomes” correctly for youth who participate in the NYTD survey.

42. Public financial assistance findings to address:**Rating: 2**

- 42.1 The state has indicated that they have made progress in correcting survey instruments and response options. We ask the state to submit finalized copies of these paper instruments, codes, and screenshots (as applicable) with their NYTD Improvement Plan to support that these changes have been made across instruments (paper and web) and data entry (SACWIS). CB will review these items in tandem to document compliance.

43. Public food assistance findings to address:**Rating: 2**

- 43.1 The state has indicated that they have made progress in correcting survey instruments and response options. We ask the state to submit finalized copies of these paper instruments, codes, and screenshots (as applicable) with their NYTD

Improvement Plan to support that these changes have been made across instruments (paper and web) and data entry (SACWIS). CB will review these items in tandem to document compliance.

49. Homelessness findings to address:

Rating: 3

- 49.1 The state has indicated that they have made progress in correcting survey instruments and response options. We ask the state to submit finalized copies of these paper instruments, codes, and screenshots (as applicable) with their NYTD Improvement Plan to support that these changes have been made across instruments (paper and web) and data entry (SACWIS). CB will review these items in tandem to document compliance.

53. Marriage at child's birth findings to address:

Rating: 3

- 53.1 The state has indicated that they have made progress in correcting survey instruments and response options. We ask the state to submit finalized copies of these paper instruments, codes, and screenshots (as applicable) with their NYTD Improvement Plan to support that these changes have been made across instruments (paper and web) and data entry (SACWIS). CB will review these items in tandem to document compliance.

54. Medicaid findings to address:

Rating: 3

- 54.1 The state has indicated that they have made progress in correcting survey instruments and response options. We ask the state to submit finalized copies of these paper instruments, codes, and screenshots (as applicable) with their NYTD Improvement Plan to support that these changes have been made across instruments (paper and web) and data entry (SACWIS). CB will review these items in tandem to document compliance.

56. Health insurance type: Medical findings to address:

Rating: 3

- 56.1 The state has indicated that they have made progress in correcting survey instruments and response options. We ask the state to submit finalized copies of these paper instruments, codes, and screenshots (as applicable) with their NYTD Improvement Plan to support that these changes have been made across instruments (paper and web) and data entry (SACWIS). CB will review these items in tandem to document compliance.

57. Health insurance type: Mental health findings to address:

Rating: 3

- 57.1 The state has indicated that they have made progress in correcting survey instruments and response options. We ask the state to submit finalized copies of these paper instruments, codes, and screenshots (as applicable) with their NYTD Improvement Plan to support that these changes have been made across instruments (paper and web) and data entry (SACWIS). CB will review these items in tandem to document compliance.

58. Health insurance type: Prescription drugs findings to address:

Rating: 3

- 58.1 The state has indicated that they have made progress in correcting survey instruments and response options. We ask the state to submit finalized copies of these paper instruments, codes, and screenshots (as applicable) with their NYTD Improvement Plan to support that these changes have been made across instruments (paper and web) and data entry (SACWIS). CB will review these items in tandem to document compliance.