

Case File Summary Report
State: New York

Background

The purpose of the case file review is to assess the accuracy of the data reported to AFCARS by comparing what was reported to what is found in the child's paper file. A sample of 80 foster care records and 30 adoption records is selected from the most recent AFCARS report period prior to the onsite review. The AFCARS data submitted to the Children's Bureau for each record is then compared to information found in the paper case file. The process involved all members of the State and Federal teams, technical and program. Additionally, the State incorporated field staff, including supervisors and staff from training units, etc., as part of the State team for the purpose of reviewing cases.

The Children's Bureau recognizes for those States that chose to implement a statewide case management system (both SACWIS and non-SACWIS models) there will be far less data in the paper file since the electronic case management system is the official record. However, there are some documents that may not be part of the State's information system, such as medical reports, court reports, home studies, etc. These documents usually provide a significant amount of the information for the case file reviewers. Additionally, this process identifies issues related to timely data entry as well as how well the system is being used to record information on each case.

The Children's Bureau has found that while there may be challenges to identifying the information in the paper file, the process provides very valuable information to the review teams. The findings often provide additional information that increases the Federal team's understanding of the data reported to AFCARS. Also, this process allows the review team to assess how well records are being kept up-to-date, the accuracy of the AFCARS data, and usage of the State's information system. Typically, this process does not identify new problems, but confirms findings from the other components of the AAR.

Since the case file review is the only means to assess conversion, the cases selected for the review were primarily those in which the most recent removal date, or the first removal date, precedes the date the State's system went operational. If the State phased in its operational status, then the sample may reflect these dates.

Summary

This summary report provides information on the number of cases selected in the sample, the number of cases reviewed, and any relevant general information regarding the analysis of the results. The matrices that follow provide detailed findings. There are six columns in the matrices, they are:

- AFCARS Element - This is the name of each AFCARS element with the corresponding values.
- Data in AFCARS Matches Paper File - The number of records in which the reviewer found that the data submitted to AFCARS matched what was found in the paper file.

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- Data in AFCARS Does Not Match Paper File - The number of records in which the reviewer found that the data submitted to AFCARS did not match what was found in the paper file.
- Questionable - The number of records where either the reviewer was not sure whether the data were the correct or based on final analysis there was some type of inconsistency between what was reported and what was noted by the reviewer. Comments are provided in the comment column for these situations.
- Not Found - Indicates that the reviewer was not able to locate the information pertaining to the element in the paper file. This can either be due to a missing file or sections of the file, or the data are now only recorded in the information system and there are no paper documents with the data. This is not considered a negative finding.
- Comments - This column includes findings regarding the errors that were identified in the column “Data in AFCARS Does Not Match Paper File” as well as any other pertinent information pertaining to the element and the findings.

Foster Care

Number of Cases in Sample	65
Number of Cases Reviewed	55
Number of Cases Analyzed	52

Element #5, Most Recent Periodic Review Date

There were many errors noted by the case file review. It is likely the errors are reflective of the issue identified in the program code.

Element #23, Date of current placement setting

Several of the errors were related to the reviewers finding the child had only one placement while in foster care but the date reported was a later date. It is likely the program code is picking up a change in status of the foster care setting. In one instance, the date reported for this element preceded the date of removal (element #21). The child was initially placed in a hospital and the date reported for element #23 appears to represent the beginning of the hospitalization. The date in element #21 for the removal date was correct; the date the agency placed the child in a foster care setting.

Element #24, number of previous placement settings

The analysis of this element is inconclusive because not all of the reviewers followed the instruction to write down every location the child had been in since entering foster care. In some instances, the reviewers could only find a partial history of the placements. However, it was determined that some of the incorrect records were incorrect because respite and visits with siblings in another foster home were counted as placement moves. It also appeared that there were situations where the status of the foster home changed and so this was counted as a placement move.

Also, it appears that a move into and from a detention facility is not being counted.

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It also appears that hospital settings are being counted regardless of length of time or if they were the first placement setting.

Manner of removal from home, element #25

The 26 error cases were reported to AFCARS as blanks. In 25 of them the reviewers noted that the response should have been "court ordered." One appears to have been a voluntary placement agreement.

Also the cases were analyzed by the county of the cases. The area with the highest number of errors was New York City (20). The analysis did not find a pattern in location or by the date of when the child entered foster care. In regard to the New York City cases, it is possible that a further analysis may find a difference by Burroughs.

Foster Family Structure, element #49

There were 32 records reported as blank. In 24 of these records the child the reviewers noted the child was living in a foster home as of the end of the report period. The remaining eight reflected children residing in a non-foster home setting and so the AFCARS response should have been "not applicable." There were also four records that reflected the wrong marital status.

Adoption

Number of Cases in Sample	30
Number of Cases Reviewed	30
Number of Cases in Analyzed	30

Has the agency determined if the child is special needs and the primary basis (#9 and 10)

The majority of the cases in the sample indicated the child did not have a special need but the child is receiving an adoption subsidy (element #35). In all of the error cases the reviewer did find that the agency had determined eligibility for adoption subsidy and the child did have a special need. In five of the records the reviewers noted "hard to place."

Note for element #31: There was one record reported as foster parent and the reviewer did not note whether the foster parent was a relative or a non-relative.