

<h1>ACF</h1> <p>Administration for Children and Families</p>	<p align="center"><b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES</b> <b>Administration on Children, Youth and Families</b></p>	
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### PROGRAM INSTRUCTION

**TO:** State and tribal agencies administering child welfare programs funded by title IV-E of the Social Security Act and who operate an automated state or tribal child welfare information system funded by title IV-E.

**SUBJECT:** New review instrument for state and tribal automated child welfare information systems (S/TACWIS).

**LEGAL AND RELATED REFERENCES:** 45 CFR Part 95; 45 CFR Part 92; 45 CFR 1355.50-5; ACF-OISM-001; ACF-OSS-05; ACYF-CB-PI-11-07; Technical Bulletin #1: Action Plan Guidance and Examples

**PURPOSE:** This Program Instruction (PI) provides guidance to states and tribes who administer child welfare programs funded by title IV-E of the Social Security Act and are preparing for a federal compliance review of their automated child welfare information system. It describes a new S/TACWIS Review Instrument (SRI) used in the review process.

**BACKGROUND:** After a state or tribal title IV-E agency's child welfare automated system is operational, ACF conducts assessment reviews of S/TACWIS under the authority granted by regulations at 45 CFR 1355.55. These regulations require that ACF evaluate S/TACWIS systems developed with federal funds. During these reviews, ACF compares system functionality with the federal SACWIS requirements outlined in Action Transmittal ACF-OISM-001 and as described in approved agency-submitted Advance Planning Documents.

In preparation for the review, agencies have been asked to complete and submit a SACWIS Assessment Review Guide (SARG) and related technical and system documentation. The SARG has been in use for more than 15 years. Since its introduction, respondents have increasingly moved toward a preference for electronic submission of documents related to their information systems. Additionally, the extension of title IV-E funding to tribes requires update of ACF guidance for related program regulations and practices, including the SARG. To update that instrument for state and tribal use, to ease its completion, and to foster electronic submission, ACF has developed a new S/TACWIS review instrument, the SRI, to update and replace the SARG.

**INFORMATION:** The new SRI provides a framework for the documentation necessary to prepare for, report on, and document the outcomes of a S/TACWIS review. The SRI provides a template to be used by state or tribal title IV-E agencies to describe the functionality and performance of their child welfare information system, and then by the federal review in their assessment of system components and operations. After the review, federal staff will record their findings and observations in the document, and agency staff will enter requested information and insert Action Plans for requirements not in compliance with federal expectations.

The SRI has three components that largely parallel the contents of the historic SARG:

- Appendix A includes an overview section that collects historical and descriptive information, high level organizational, operational and technical information; requests specific items of system documentation; and captures the lessons learned that may be of value to other agencies.
- Appendix B provides the requirements section, in which the agency fully describes the system's functionality and the way it complies with program requirements and regulations. The requirements in this section reflect the requirements summarized in the SACWIS Action Transmittal ACF-OISM-001, published February 24, 1995.
- Appendix C consists of a checklist that captures the system's support for federal child welfare initiatives.

The SRI streamlines data entry, better organizes content, and eliminates duplicate documentation. It also clarifies the language of the requirements, addressing items that some respondents have found confusing in the SARG. The SRI ends the expectation for hardcopy document submission for information provided in both the template and supporting documentation. As with the SARG, ACF does not intend that a state or tribe develop extensive new content, and if requested information is not available, agency staff should contact their assigned federal analyst to determine what alternate content may satisfy ACF's needs.

When originally developed, the data collection instrument for S/TACWIS reviews was submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for clearance as a federally sponsored data collection as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act. This clearance is required when standardized data is collected from 10 or more respondents in a federally sponsored data collection within a 12 month period. After determination by OMB that its annual usage did not approach those levels, the S/TACWIS review instrument was released from this oversight process in 2013.

The new SRI can be found on the Children's Bureau website in PDF format, and may be obtained from an agency's federal analyst in a template format for data entry. Its development and use will be an ongoing collaboration between the agency staff and their federal analyst.

The new SRI is the preferred format for S/TACWIS review documentation effective July 1, 2014. ACF recognizes that some agencies may have invested time in completion and use of the existing SARG. If these agencies feel that use of the SARG format would be more efficient they may discuss its continuing use with their federal analyst.

**INQUIRIES:** Director, Division of State Systems, Children's Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Administration for Children and Families

/s/

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