

<h1>ACF</h1> <p>Administration for Children and Families</p>	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES Administration on Children, Youth and Families	
	1. Log No: ACYF-CB-PI-17-01	2. Issuance Date: January 13, 2017
	3. Originating Office: Children’s Bureau	
	4. Key Words: NYTD, SACWIS, CCWIS, AFCARS, Chafee Foster Care Independence Program	

PROGRAM INSTRUCTION

TO: State Agencies administering the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP)

SUBJECT: National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Reviews

LEGAL AND RELATED: Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-169); Title IV-E of the Social Security Act (the Act) at Section 474(a)(4) and Section 477; 45 CFR 1356.80-86 and Appendix to Part 1356

PURPOSE: This Program Instruction notifies states of the Children's Bureau's implementation of the NYTD Review process and shares the Guide to the NYTD Review.

INFORMATION: Organization of the Program Instruction

- Section A. Background
- Section B. Purpose of the NYTD Review
- Section C. Designing the NYTD Review
- Section D. Overview of NYTD Review Procedures and Improvement Planning
- Section E. Review Teams
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- Attachment B. Guide to the NYTD Review

Section A. Background

The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) is a federal reporting system designed to collect information on youth transitioning out of foster care who are served by the state agency that administers the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP). The collection of these data is mandated by section 477(f) of the Social Security Act. The requirements for NYTD are codified in federal regulation at 45 CFR 1356.80-86 and the Appendix to Part 1356.

Effective October 1, 2010, states were required to begin collecting and submitting data semiannually on youth in transition on the following:

- Demographics and characteristics of youth such as sex, race, ethnicity, tribal membership and education level;
- Information on the independent living services state agencies pay for or provide to youth; and
- Outcomes information collected by survey from cohorts of youth at ages 17, 19 and 21.

The collected information allows ACF to track which independent living services states deliver and to assess the collective outcomes of youth transitioning out of foster care. NYTD also provides a new source of data to assist in determining the effectiveness of independent living (IL) programs nationwide. In addition, because a common identifier must be used for youth reported to both NYTD and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), ACF is able to analyze the information related to a youth's foster care experiences reported to AFCARS along with their service and outcomes information reported to NYTD. In this way, NYTD information may help agencies develop new or adjust existing services to be more effective and efficient for youth in transition.

Section B. Purpose of the NYTD Review

In order 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 primary way we 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). However, the data compliance checks cannot assess the accuracy of all information submitted on youth in transition. For example, the data compliance checks cannot assess whether the state is capturing the full array of independent living services a youth received during a six-month period. Similarly, the data compliance checks cannot assess the adequacy of the state's survey instrument or the survey methodology used to collect outcomes information from youth. For this reason, we also specified in the regulation at 45 CFR 1356.85(d)(2) that we may use other monitoring tools or assessment procedures to determine whether a state is meeting all NYTD requirements.

We developed the NYTD Review to evaluate comprehensively states' policies and practices related to collecting and reporting timely, reliable and accurate data on youth in transition. Through this review, the state's NYTD data collection practices are assessed against federal requirements by:

- Validating and verifying that the state's child welfare information system can collect, manage and report required data on youth in transition. This includes confirming that states operating a Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) (or a Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) through July 31, 2018) that receive federal financial participation (FFP) are collecting and managing NYTD data consistent with federal requirements;
- Assessing 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 NYTD survey; and

- Assessing the timeliness, accuracy, reliability and completeness of NYTD data reports.

Finally, we intend to use the NYTD Review as an opportunity to explore how states use NYTD data to evaluate the quality of services provided to youth in transition as part of a CQI framework. While the NYTD Review is not an evaluation of the state's CQI system, states should use findings and recommendations from the NYTD Review to assist in benchmarking their performance supporting positive outcomes for young people

Section C. Designing the NYTD Review

In FY 2012 and FY 2013, we conducted site visits in six states (North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia and Washington) to learn more about how states implemented NYTD requirements. Based on these site visits, we designed and piloted a NYTD Review process in seven states (Indiana, Missouri, Nebraska, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah and West Virginia). Each pilot review included a system documentation review and demonstration, a comprehensive assessment of the state's survey methodology, a case record review and stakeholder interviews with caseworkers, foster parents, services providers and young people. The pilot reviews were conducted by an interdisciplinary team of reviewers with backgrounds in data and technology, evaluation, and policy and programs for youth. Young people also participated on both the state and federal teams. Based on lessons learned during the pilot reviews, including from feedback from the pilot states, the Children's Bureau has refined and finalized a process for conducting the NYTD Review. The attached *Guide to a NYTD Review* (the *Guide*) was developed to assist states in preparing for a review and provides more detailed information on review procedures. Please note that we may supplement the Guide with additional guidance in the future to aid in the preparation and implementation of the NYTD Review.

Section D. Overview of NYTD Review Procedures and Improvement Planning

This section provides a brief overview of the NYTD Review process. For more detailed information refer to the attached *Guide*. The NYTD Review has three phases: pre-onsite phase, onsite phase and post-onsite phase.

In the **pre-onsite phase**, the following activities are completed approximately 16 weeks before the onsite review:

- The state and federal teams conduct a series of planning calls to confirm a schedule and logistics for the onsite review;
- The state submits documentation that describes how NYTD data are managed in the state's child welfare information system and how the NYTD survey is administered;
- The state completes a short workbook to document how it has implemented each of the requirements subject to review; and
- The state submits "test cases" designed to evaluate how the state enters, extracts and transmits NYTD data on mock records of youth in transition.

The **onsite phase** is conducted over four days at the state agency and includes the following activities:

- An entrance and exit conference;

- A live demonstration of the information systems that collect NYTD data;
- A case review of 30 youth records reported to NYTD;
- Stakeholder interviews with youth, caseworkers and service providers; and
- A discussion of the state's efforts to integrate NYTD data into its CQI framework.

Finally, in support of continuous quality improvement the state and the Children's Bureau work collaboratively to complete the following **post-onsite phase** activities:

- The Children's Bureau issues a final report within approximately 90 days documenting all NYTD Review findings, including ratings on all requirements subject to review. (For a complete listing of requirements and rating factors, please see Section 2 of the Guide).
- The state develops an improvement plan based on findings from the final report. In collaboration with the Children's Bureau, states develop action plans and timelines to address each finding in the plan. The first improvement plan draft is due within 30 days of receiving the final report.
- The state monitors the improvement plan and provides updates regarding their progress implementing the plan at least twice a year, including an update in the state's Annual Progress and Services Plan.

Even though states do not incur penalties as a direct result of findings or ratings from the NYTD Review, NYTD improvement plans will be closely monitored by the Children's Bureau. If the Children's Bureau discovers through the NYTD Review that a state is not reporting data as required by the NYTD regulation and the state is not implementing the action plan documented in its improvement plan, then this information may be used in determining the state's compliance with NYTD standards at 45 CFR 1356.85.

Section E. Review Teams

Preparing for and conducting the NYTD Review is a joint federal-state effort between the Children's Bureau and staff of the state agency that administers the CFCIP. The state review team may include but is not limited to:

- Agency leadership such as the child welfare administrator, commissioner or division directors;
- SACWIS, CCWIS or other information technology project manager;
- Foster care manager;
- Independent living (IL) program coordinator and staff;
- Caseworkers and other field staff;
- Community-based service providers;
- CQI lead or data manager; and
- Youth and young adults.

State team members participate in a variety of onsite review activities in conjunction with the federal team (see the Guide for more information on state team roles and responsibilities). In particular, the state's designates a *review coordinator* who serves as a liaison to the federal team to assist with planning for and executing the onsite visit. In addition, states also will designate a *technical lead* to coordinate the state's participation in the NYTD Review with respect to the state's use of information technology and the child welfare information system.

The federal team will consist of approximately 7-10 staff from the Children's Bureau central and regional offices, staff from the NYTD Help Desk¹ and trained consultant reviewers, which will include young adults and may include staff from another state. A federal review coordinator will work with the state team's review coordinator to complete review preparations, lead the onsite review and coordinate the work of the federal team in the post-onsite phase of the review.

Section F. The Role of Young People in the NYTD Review

A critical component of a CQI approach² is engaging stakeholders in adjusting state programs and processes to better meet the needs of children and families. As stakeholders in a CQI system, young people play an important role in helping decision makers analyze and use information to drive changes within an agency to improve outcomes for youth transitioning out of foster care. Engaging young people directly in the NYTD Review is part of the Children's Bureau's commitment to supporting the role young people play in a CQI system. As noted in the Guide, involving young people in the review process is a shared responsibility of the state and federal review teams. Trained young adults will serve on each federal review team conducting the NYTD Review. Similarly, states will recruit at least one young person to serve on the state's review team. Additional young people from the state will participate in focus groups conducted during the onsite review in which youth will discuss their role in NYTD implementation, their experience receiving services from the state agency and their participation in NYTD outcome data collection. We will provide additional guidance and technical assistance to support states in engaging young people in the NYTD Review process.

Section G. Review Schedule

We intend to conduct a NYTD Review in each state. The Children's Bureau Regional Office will schedule and confirm each NYTD Review. We anticipate conducting approximately five NYTD Reviews each year. In order to establish a review schedule, we intend to prioritize the order in which states are reviewed based on the following:

- First priority: states that have been assessed penalties for non-compliance with NYTD standards;
- Second priority: states that have consistently reported data errors or data quality advisories in NYTD reports;
- Third priority: all other states that did not participate in a NYTD site visit or pilot NYTD Review; and
- Fourth priority: states that have participated in a NYTD site visit or pilot NYTD Review since FY 2012.

Based on the number of states assessed penalties to date and the number of states reporting data quality concerns, we anticipate that the first five years of NYTD Review implementation will include only "first" and "second" priority states. However, we also will consider review requests

¹ The NYTD Help Desk is staffed by contract staff trained to provide technical support to states in NYTD reporting.

² Please see [ACYF-CB-IM-12-07](#) for more information about implementing a CQI system.

from states at any time. We will make efforts to avoid scheduling a NYTD Review in the same year in which a state is scheduled for another federal review initiated by the Children's Bureau (e.g., Child and Family Services Review, Title IV-E Eligibility Review, CCWIS Review, etc.).

INQUIRIES: Children's Bureau Regional Program Managers

/s/

Rafael López
Commissioner
Administration on Children, Youth
and Families

ATTACHMENTS:

[A – List of Children's Bureau Regional Program Managers](#)

[B – Guide to the NYTD Review](#)