



# Child Care and Development Fund ACF-801 Case-Level File Format

*Technical Bulletin #4*  
*Revised: March 1, 2002*

## I. Introduction

Technical Bulletin #4 describes the requirements for formatting the ACF-801 data submission file. These formatting guidelines should be followed by all states and territories when creating the file for electronic submission to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). All questions about the file format should be directed to the Child Care Automation Resource Center. This Technical Bulletin includes the revised guidance to States unable to submit data in a variable record length format and additional guidance on how to incorporate the new Family Size data element into States' monthly submissions.<sup>1</sup>

The ACF-801 data submission contains information required on the ACF-801: Child Care Quarterly Case Record Form. States have the option to submit either a sample or the complete population of children receiving federal child care subsidies. States also have the option to submit data for monthly or quarterly (3 months at once).<sup>2</sup> However, regardless of whether the State submits a sample or the full population, or chooses to submit data monthly or quarterly, the guidelines in this bulletin apply.

The file format portion of this document is organized into the following sections:

*Contents of ACF-801 Data Submission:* Lists the types of records that are included in the electronic file.

*Order of Records in the ACF-801 Data Submission:* Gives the order of records in the file.

*The Monthly Summary Record:* Describes the format of the monthly summary record.

*Records on families and children receiving subsidized child care:* Describes the format of the records containing information on families receiving federal child care subsidies.

*Missing and Numeric Data Elements in Family Records:* Explains how missing data elements should be handled in the records on families and children receiving subsidized child care.

*Footnotes:* Describes the format of optional explanatory footnotes.

*Summary of Record and File Delimiters:* Lists all delimiters to be included in the file and explains their use.

## II. File Format

*Contents of ACF-801 Data Submission:*

The data submission is made up of two or, at the States option, three types of records:

1. The monthly summary record. This is required.
2. Records on families and children receiving subsidized child care. These are required.
3. Footnotes. These are optional.

<sup>1</sup> Initial Issuance Date: March 20, 1998

<sup>2</sup> See ACYF-PI-CC-01-02 for a review of the ACF-801.

The data is submitted in a flat file with variable length records.

*Order of Records in the ACF-801 Data Submission:*

Records should be ordered as listed below. For example, if the State submits monthly data only for April 1998, the order of records in the file would be:

1. April's monthly summary record.
2. Records on families and children receiving subsidized child care during April 1998.
3. Footnotes commenting on April's data elements.
4. The " & " file delimiter indicating the end of the data submission.

The record order is repeated if the State submits data quarterly. For example, if the State submits data for April, May, and June 1998 at one time, the record order would be:

1. April's monthly summary record.
2. Records on families and children receiving subsidized child care during April 1998.
3. Footnotes commenting on April's data elements.
4. May's monthly summary record.
5. Records on families and children receiving subsidized child care during May 1998.
6. June's monthly summary record.
7. Records on families and children receiving subsidized child care during June 1998.
8. Footnotes commenting on June's data elements.
9. The " & " file delimiter indicating the end of the data submission.

Please note that the above example does not include footnotes for May, as footnotes are optional. If the State had elected to submit footnotes with the May data, the footnote records would immediately follow 5. Records on families and children receiving subsidized child care during May 1998 precede 6. June's monthly summary record.

Also note that only one " & " file delimiter is included in each example.

The following sections of this technical bulletin describe the formats of the three types of records, including delimiter placement.

*The Monthly Summary Record:*

Each month's data begins with a record containing the following data:

Data Element Description	Format <sup>3</sup>	Length	Comment
Delimiter	<i>M</i>	1	This delimiter identifies the following record as a monthly summary record.
Report Period	YYYYMM	6	This data element identifies the month being reported. For example, if the report covers April 1998, this element would be "199804".
Families Receiving Subsidized Child Care	Number	7	The number of families receiving subsidized child care in your State for the reported month. The number should be right-justified within the field and padded with zeros. For example, 25,387 would be formatted as "0025387".
Number of Children in Pre-K Child Care	Number	7	The number of children (or estimated number if actual count is unavailable) receiving subsidized pre-K child care services in your State for the report month. The number should be right-justified within the field and padded with zeros. For example, 5,247 would be formatted as "0005247".
Delimiter	#	1	Identifies the following data as contact information.
State Contact Name	Character	No limit	The name of the State child care contact who is designated to receive the data reports.
Delimiter	#	1	Identifies the following data as contact information.
State Contact Telephone Number	Character	No limit	The telephone number of the State child care contact.
Delimiter	#	1	Identifies the following data as contact information.
State Contact Fax Number	Character	No limit	The fax number of the State child care contact.
Delimiter	#	1	Identifies the following data as contact information.
State Contact E-mail Address	Character	No limit	The e-mail address of the State child care contact
Record Delimiter	\$	1	This delimiter indicates the end of the record.

The delimiters, report period, subsidized child care population, and contact information is required. However, if the State does not have certain contact information, such as e-mail addresses, the field may be

<sup>3</sup> Key for Format Codes:

- Character Any alphanumeric character.
- Number Digits from 0-9.
- M,F,C,S,N,#,\$,%%,&* These italicized characters are literals; the character as it appears should be included in the file.
- YYYYMM Format for dates, indicating that dates should be reported as a four digit year and a two digit month such as '199804' for April, 1998.

skipped, although all delimiters should be included. For example, following is a monthly summary record containing the following data:

Report Period: April 1998  
 Population: 72,384  
 Pre-K: 4,629  
 Contact name: Jane Smith  
 Contact Telephone: (703) 555-1234 ext. 684  
 Contact Fax: (703) 555-9876  
 Contact E-mail: jsmith@dhr.anystate.us

The monthly summary record is formatted as follows (delimiters are in **bold**):

**M**19980400723840004629#Jane Smith#(703) 555-1234 ext. 666#(703) 555-9876#jsmith@dhr.anystate.us\$

However, if the State does not have an available fax number, the formatted record will look like this (note the two # delimiters together, indicating that no fax number is included):

**M**19980400723840004629#Jane Smith#(703) 555-1234 ext. 684##jsmith@dhr.anystate.us\$

The monthly summary record is immediately followed by the records on families and children receiving subsidized child care.

*Records on families and children receiving subsidized child care:*

One record is included for each family. Each record contains:

1. family data, information which applies to the family as a whole and,
2. dependent children receiving child care data, information on *each* child receiving child care assistance and all subsidized child care settings for that child.

The format for family data will be the same for each record. An *F* delimiter is placed before each family's data to identify the information. Positions 1 through 61 (59, for pre-January 2002 submissions) will always contain family data as detailed in the following table:

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
Delimiter identifying family data	<i>F</i>	1
01:Sample Month/Year of Report Period	YYYYMM	6
02:Unique State Identifier	Character	15
03:Social Security Number (Optional)	Number	9
04:FIPS Code	Number	5
05:Single Parent?	Number	1
06:Reason For Receiving Subsidize Child Care	Number	1
07:Total Monthly Child Care Copayment by Family	Number	4
08:Month/Year Child Care Assistance Started	YYYYMM	6

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
09:Total Monthly Income for Determining Eligibility	Number	5
10:Employment Income, Including Self-Employment	Number	1
11:Title IV of the Social Security Act (TANF)	Number	1
12:State Program for Which State Spending is Counted Towards TANF MOE	Number	1
13:Housing Voucher or Cash Assistance	Number	1
14:Assistance Under the Food Stamps Act of 1977	Number	1
15:Other Federal Cash Income	Number	1
16:Family Size (for January 2002 report period and after)	Number	2

The format for dependent children receiving child care will differ from record to record depending on the number of children receiving assistance per family, and the number of child care settings per child. This data always begins at record position 62 (60, for pre-January 2002 submissions) and continues until all of the information for each child receiving child care assistance is recorded.

Delimiters are used to identify children and settings. *C* precedes each child's data and *S* precedes setting data. Additional settings for the same child follow the same format; they start with a *S*. The child and setting format is repeated for each child receiving assistance in the family. Finally, a *\$* delimiter is placed after the last child's final setting to mark the end of the family's record. The following table gives the details of this format. A new Data Element, i.e., Family Size, was introduced in January of 2002. Consequently, Data Element numbers for pre-January 2002 submissions will differ by one beginning with the Data Element of Family Size.

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
Delimiter identifying child data	<i>C</i>	1
17:Child #1 SSN (optional)	Character	9
18:Is Child #1 Hispanic or Latino?	Number	1
19:Is Child #1 American Indian or Alaskan Native?	Number	1
20:Is Child #1 Asian?	Number	1
21:Is Child #1 Black or African American?	Number	1
22:Is Child #1 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander?	Number	1
23:Is Child #1 White?	Number	1
24:Gender of Child #1	Number	1
25:Month/Year of Birth of Child #1	YYYYMM	6
<b><i>Add first child care setting.</i></b>		
Delimiter identifying setting data	<i>S</i>	1
26:Type of Child Care (Setting #1) for Child #1	Number	2
27:Total Monthly Amount Paid to Provider	Number	4

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
(Setting #1) for Child #1		
28:Total hours of Child Care per Month (Setting #1) for Child #1	Number	3
<b><i>If second child care setting exists, add record.</i></b>		
Delimiter identifying setting data	S	1
26:Type of Child Care (Setting #2) for Child #1	Number	2
27:Total Monthly Amount Paid to Provider (Setting #2) for Child #1	Number	4
28:Total hours of Child Care per Month (Setting #2) for Child #1	Number	3
<b><i>If third child care setting exists, add record.</i></b>		
Delimiter identifying setting data	S	1
26:Type of Child Care (Setting #3) for Child #1	Number	2
27:Total Monthly Amount Paid to Provider (Setting #3) for Child #1	Number	4
28:Total hours of Child Care per Month (Setting #3) for Child #1	Number	3
<b><i>If fourth child care setting exists, add record.</i></b>		
Delimiter identifying setting data	S	1
26:Type of Child Care (Setting #4) for Child #1	Number	2
27:Total Monthly Amount Paid to Provider (Setting #4) for Child #1	Number	4
28:Total hours of Child Care per Month (Setting #4) for Child #1	Number	3
<b><i>Repeat for each additional child care setting for this child.</i></b>		
<b><i>If second child is receiving child care assistance, add record.</i></b>		
Delimiter identifying child data	C	1
17:Child #2 SSN (Optional)	Character	9
18:Is Child #2 Hispanic or Latino?	Number	1
19:Is Child #2 American Indian or Alaskan Native?	Number	1
20:Is Child #2 Asian?	Number	1
21:Is Child #2 Black or African American?	Number	1
22:Is Child #2 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander?	Number	1
23:Is Child #2 White?	Number	1
24:Gender of Child #2		1
25:Month/Year of Birth of Child #2	YYYYMM	6
<b><i>Add first child care setting.</i></b>		
Delimiter identifying setting data	S	1
26:Type of Child Care (Setting #1) for Child #2	Number	2
27:Total Monthly Amount Paid to Provider (Setting #1) for Child #2	Number	4

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
28:Total hours of Child Care per Month (Setting #1) for Child #2	Number	3
<b><i>If second child care setting exists, add record.</i></b>		
Delimiter identifying setting data	S	1
26:Type of Child Care (Setting #2) for Child #2	Number	2
27:Total Monthly Amount Paid to Provider (Setting #2) for Child #2	Number	4
28:Total hours of Child Care per Month (Setting #2) for Child #2	Number	3
<b><i>If third child care setting exists, add record.</i></b>		
Delimiter identifying setting data	S	1
26:Type of Child Care (Setting #3) for Child #2	Number	2
27:Total Monthly Amount Paid to Provider (Setting #3) for Child #2	Number	4
28:Total hours of Child Care per Month (Setting #3) for Child #2	Number	3
<b><i>If fourth child care setting exists, add record.</i></b>		
Delimiter identifying setting data	S	1
26:Type of Child Care (Setting #4) for Child #2	Number	2
27:Total Monthly Amount Paid to Provider (Setting #4) for Child #2	Number	4
28:Total hours of Child Care per Month (Setting #4) for Child #2	Number	3
<b><i>Repeat for each additional child care setting for this child.</i></b>		
<b><i>Repeat until all of the children receiving assistance are included.</i></b>		
Delimiter indicating the end of family's entire data record	\$	1

This format is repeated for each family included in the data submission. On the following page are two examples of family, children, and setting data:

## Examples of Case Record Submissions

Example 1: Suppose a family has two children receiving child care assistance during the month. The first child is in one child care setting during the month. The second child is in two settings, with the second setting missing the information for 28:Total hours of Child Care per Month (Setting #2). A record will be submitted in the following format (delimiters are in **bold**):

Prior to January 2002 report period:

Family Data

Setting Data

Child Data

Missing Data  
(3 blanks inserted)

```

F19980400000DC-ER394524807734832100212007519960800984110000C2214564321000001199607S020320020C4807787431000011199402S030500060S010200 $
    
```

January 2002 report period and after:

Family Data

Setting Data

Child Data

Missing Data  
(3 blanks inserted)

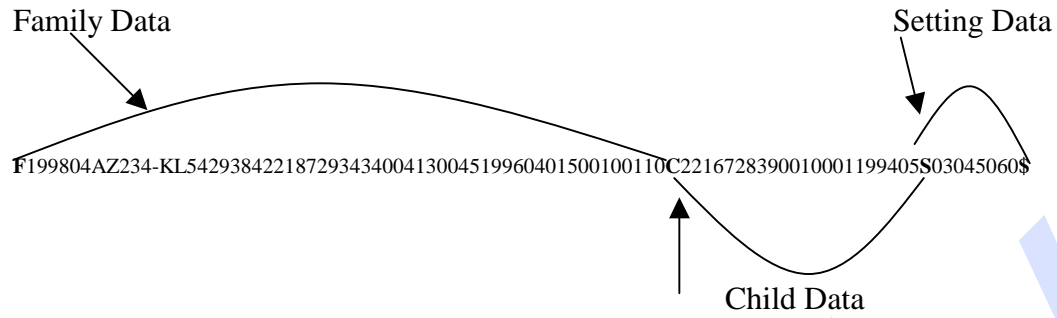
```

F19980400000DC-ER3945248077348321002120075199608009841100004C2214564321000001199607S020320020C4807787431000011199402S030500060S010200 $
    
```

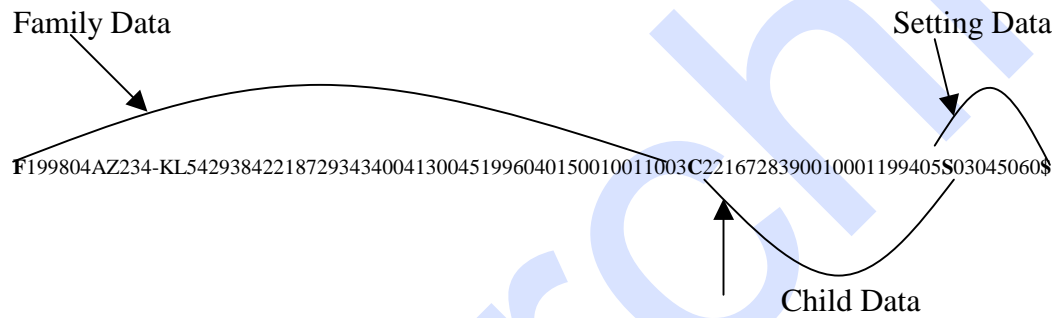
Example 2: Suppose a family has one child receiving child care assistance during the month. This child is in one child care setting. A record having the following format will be submitted:



Prior to January 2002 report period:



January 2002 report period and after:



Archived

The last submitted record on families and children receiving subsidized child care is followed by one of the following:

1. the optional footnotes for this month, if the State chooses to submit footnotes; or
2. the monthly summary file for the successive month, if the State is submitting three months at once; or
3. the " & " file delimiter if this is the last record in the ACF-801 data submission.

*Missing and Numeric Data Elements in Family Records:*

Although the number of families, children, and settings will vary in each submission, the space allocated to each group of elements remains the same. The family data is always allotted 61 positions (59, for pre-January 2002 submissions); each child is allotted 23 positions and each setting 10. If the State is missing a data element for a record, blanks should be inserted in its place. For example, if the State is missing data element 08:Month/Year Child Care Assistance Started for one family, 6 spaces should be included in the record. Likewise, if element 28:Total Hours of Care Provided in Month were unavailable for one setting, the State would insert three blanks. This rule also applies to optional data elements such as 17:Child's Social Security Number. If the State does not provide a child's social security number, nine blanks should be inserted into the record immediately following the C.

Numeric data such as counts or dollars should be right justified in the space allocated for the element and padded with zeros to fill the field. For example, element 9:Total Monthly Family Income for Determining Eligibility is allocated 5 positions. If, for example, family income were \$ 980, the amount would be formatted as '00980'. This standard also is used for element 02:Unique State Identifier; if this optional data element is supplied, the characters should be right justified and padded with zeros to fill out the 15 spaces allocated for the element. In summary, this formatting standard applies to the following elements:

- 02:Unique State Identifier
- 07:Total Monthly Child Care Copayment by Family
- 09:Total Monthly Family Income for Determining Eligibility
- 16:Family Size (January 2002 submissions and beyond)
- 27:Total Monthly Amount Paid to Provider
- 28:Total Hours of Care Provided in Month

*Footnotes:*

Footnotes are included at the State's option. States are encouraged to submit footnotes to clarify the data. Each footnote has the following format:

Data Element Description	Format	Length	Comment
Delimiter identifying footnote	<i>N</i>	1	This delimiter identifies the following record as a footnote.
Footnote Reference	Number	2	This references the data element on which the State is submitting an explanation. It can range from '01' for the first data element in the ACF-801 (the report period) to '28' ('27', for pre-January 2002 submissions) for the last data element (Total Hours of Care Provided in a Month). States can also submit footnotes that refer to the whole file. In this case, the reference is '00'.
Footnote Body	Character	No limit	The text of the State remarks.
Record Delimiter	%%	2	These characters indicate the end of a footnote record.

Following is an example of a correctly formatted footnote (delimiters are in **bold**):

**N17**This State does not currently collect information on ethnicity as a separate data element from race.%%

*Summary of Record and File Delimiters:*

As the records in the ACF-801 data submission can be of varying lengths, delimiters are used to:

1. identify related groups of data or individual data elements;
2. mark the end of records; and
3. determine the length of the file and verify that all data the state intended to transmit was received.

The following table describes all the delimiters that are used in the ACF-801 data submission:

Delimiter	Use
<i>M</i>	This is the first character in the file. It signals that a monthly summary record follows.
#	Identifies a State contact data element in the monthly summary record.
<i>F</i>	Identifies the ACF-801 family data for one family. (pre-January 2002 submissions: elements 1-15; post-January 2002 submissions: elements 1-16)

Delimiter	Use
C	Identifies the ACF-801 child data for one child. (pre-January 2002 submissions: elements 16-24; post-January 2002 submissions: elements 17-25)
S	Identifies the ACF-801 setting data for one setting. (pre-January 2002 submissions: elements 25-27; post-January 2002 submissions: elements 26-28)
\$	Marks the end of either a monthly summary record or the complete family, child(ren) and setting(s) record for one family.
N	Marks the beginning of a footnote.
%%	Marks the end of a footnote.
&	Marks the end of the data submission file. Only one " & " is included with each submission, even if the submission includes three months of data.

### Formatting Guidance For States Unable To Submit Data In A Variable Record Length Format

Some States employ software tools that will not allow child care data to be formatted in the variable length format described above. ACF gives these States the option to allocate fixed fields for every submitted record and submit ACF-801 data in the alternative format described below:

1. Data for each family, child, and setting must follow the formatting rules described previously in this document. Data elements must be in the same order, and the same delimiters (“F”, “C”, “S”, and “\$”) used. See above for additional information about the standard delimiters.
2. The State should define each record so that it includes:
  - allocation for one family;
  - allocation for a maximum of 15 children per family. The State may allocate space for fewer than 15 children if desired; and
  - allocation for a maximum of 5 settings per child. The State may allocate space for fewer than 5 settings per child if desired.
3. Each record should begin with the family information, followed by the first child and the five associated settings, followed by the second child and the five associate settings. This allocation continues up to the 15<sup>th</sup> child (if the State chooses to allocate that much space per family). *This space is allocated even if not used for a specific family.*
4. **A new delimiter, an asterisk “\*”, is used to mark all allocated but unused space for children and settings. Unused space should be filled with blanks or zeros and be the correct length for a child (22) or setting (9).**

Following is an example of a State's (or Territory's) family record in a fixed record length. The maximum allowable record space is allocated. The first child has three settings and the second child has two settings:

**F** (60, 58 for pre-January 2002 submissions)**C**(22 characters of data for child 1)**S**(9 characters of data for setting 1)**S**(9 characters of data for setting 2)**S**(9 characters of data for setting 3)\*(9 blanks for setting 4) \*(9 blanks for setting 5)**C** (22 characters of data for child 2)**S**(9 characters of data for setting 1)**S**(9 characters of data for setting 2)\*(9 blanks for setting 3)\*(9 blanks for setting 4)\*(9 blanks for setting 5)\*(22 blanks for child 3)\*(9 blanks for setting 1)\*(9 blanks for setting 2) \*(9 blanks for setting 3) \*(9 blanks for setting 4) \*(9 blanks for setting 5)..... \*(22 blanks for child 15)\*(9 blanks for setting 1)\*(9 blanks for setting 2) \*(9 blanks for setting 3) \*(9 blanks for setting 4) \*(9 blanks for setting 5)**\$**