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

*Technical Bulletin # 4r-v2*
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## I. Introduction

This Technical Bulletin 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 (CCARC). This Technical Bulletin provides new guidance reflecting changes made to the ACF-801 report announced in June 2009, and effective October 1, 2010 (CCDF-ACF-PI-2009-07).

When submitting the required ACF-801 report, 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 monthly or quarterly (3 months at once). 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 remainder of this document contains four sections. Section II below offers an overview of the ACF-801 report format. Section III gives detailed guidance for formatting the summary and case-level records. Section IV provides guidance for States/Territories that may be unable to submit data in a variable record length. Section V provides resources for additional assistance.

## II. ACF-801 File Format Overview

*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 <u>required</u>.
2. Family, child, and child care setting records. These are <u>required</u>.
3. Footnotes. These are <u>optional</u>.

The data are 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, the order of records in the file would be:

1. April's monthly summary record.
2. Family, child, and setting records for families and children receiving subsidized child care during the report month, in this case, April
3. Footnotes relevant to 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 at one time, the record order would be:

1. April's monthly summary record.
2. Family, child, and setting records for families and children receiving subsidized child care during April
3. Footnotes relevant to April's data elements.
4. May's monthly summary record.
5. Family, child, and setting records for families and children receiving subsidized child care during May
6. June's monthly summary record.
7. Family, child, and setting records for families and children receiving subsidized child care during June
8. Footnotes relevant to 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- Family, child, and setting records for families and children receiving subsidized child care during May and would precede 6- June's monthly summary record. Footnotes should be reviewed and updated for each file submission.

Also note that only one "&" file delimiter is included. This indicates the end of the entire ACF-801 submission regardless of whether it contains one monthly report or three monthly reports.

**III. Guidance for Formatting Records**

This section provides general information about record and file delimiters and includes detailed guidance for formatting the three types of records:

- Monthly summary (header) record
- Case-level family, child, and setting records
- Footnotes

*Summary of Record and File Delimiters:*

The records in the ACF-801 data submission can be of varying lengths and 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. Note that italicized characters (*M,F,C,S,N,#,$,%%,&*) are literals – the character as it appears should be included in the file.

| Delimiter | Use |
|---|---|
| *M* | 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. |
| *F* | Identifies the ACF-801 family data for one family. |
| *C* | Identifies the ACF-801 child data for one child. |
| *S* | Identifies the ACF-801 setting data for one setting. |
| *$* | 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. |

*Monthly **Summary** (Header) Record:*

Each month's ACF-801 data report begins with a record identifying the report period and other general administrative information.

| Data Element Description | Format | Length | Comment |
|---|---|---|---|
| Delimiter | *M* | 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 2009, this element would be "200904". |
| 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<br><br>After June, 2009, a Pre-K count no longer is collected on the monthly ACF-801 report. | Number | 7 | Before June 2009: 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".<br><br>Effective June 2009, the CCB removed this information from the ACF-801 summary record. In lieu of an estimated count, the seven-character field should be populated with seven zeros – "0000000". |
| Delimiter | *#* | 1 | Identifies the following data as contact information. |
| State Contact Name | Character | No limit | The name of the person to contact regarding questions related to the report and who is designated to receive the assessment 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 summary record. |

The delimiters, report period, subsidized child care population, and contact information are required. However, if the State does not have certain contact information, such as e-mail addresses, the field may be skipped, although all delimiters should be included.  For example, following is a monthly summary record containing the following data:

Report Period:          July, 2009
Population:              72,384
Pre-K:                  0000000
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**20090700723840000000#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**20090700723840000000#Jane Smith#(703) 555-1234 ext. 666##jsmith@dhr.anystate.us**$**


*Case-Level Family, Child, and Setting Records:*

The monthly summary record is immediately followed by the 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,
2.  Child data: information which applies to each child in that family receiving child care assistance, and
3.  Setting data: information on each child care setting for each child in that family.

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 will always contain family data as detailed in the following table:

| Data Element Number/Description | Data Format | Length |
|---|---|---|
| Delimiter identifying family data | *F* | 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 Subsidized Child Care | Number | 1 |
| 07:Total Monthly Child Care Copayment by Family | Number | 4 |
| 08:Month/Year Child Care Assistance Started | YYYYMM | 6 |
| 09:Total Monthly Income for Determining Eligibility | Number | 5 |

| Data Element Number/Description | Data Format | Length |
|---|---|---|
| 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 | 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 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 each starting with an *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.

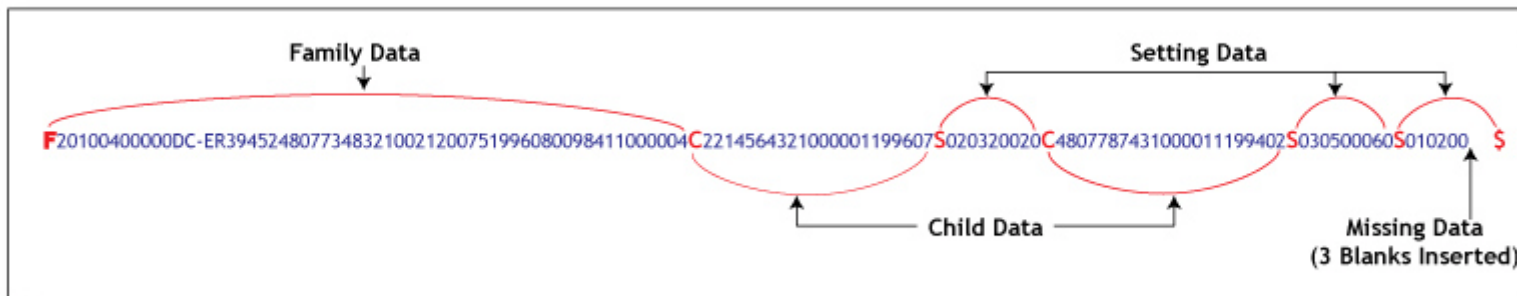| Data Element Number/Description | Data Format | Length |
|---|---|---|
| Delimiter identifying child data | *C* | 1 |
| 17: Child #1 SSN (optional) | Character | 9 |
| 18:  Is Child #1 Hispanic or Latino? | Number | 1 |
| 19: Is Child #1 American Indian or Alaskan Native? | Number | 1 |
| 20: Is Child #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 |
| *Add first child care setting.* | | |
| Delimiter identifying setting data | *S* | 1 |
| 26: Type of Child Care (Setting #1) for Child #1 | Number | 2 |
| 27: Total Monthly Amount Paid to Provider (Setting #1) for Child #1 | Number | 4 |
| 28: Total hours of Child Care per Month (Setting #1) for Child #1 | Number | 3 |
| *If second child care setting exists, add record.* | | |
| 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 |
| *If third child care setting exists, add record.* | | |
| 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 |
| *If fourth child care setting exists, add record.* | | |

| Data Element Number/Description | Data Format | Length |
|---|---|---|
| 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 |
| *Repeat for each additional child care setting for this child.* | | |
| | | |
| *If second child is receiving child care assistance, add record.* | | |
| 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 | Number | 1 |
| 25: Month/Year of Birth of Child #2 | YYYYMM | 6 |
| *Add first child care setting.* | | |
| 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 |
| 28: Total hours of Child Care per Month (Setting #1) for Child #2 | Number | 3 |
| *If second child care setting exists, add record.* | | |
| 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 |
| *If third child care setting exists, add record.* | | |
| 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 |
| *If fourth child care setting exists, add record.* | | |
| 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 |
| *Repeat for each additional child care setting for this child.* | | |
| | | |
| *Repeat until all of the children receiving assistance are included.* | | |
| Delimiter indicating the end of family's entire data record | *$* | 1 |

This format is repeated for each family included in the data submission. Two examples of family, children, and setting data records are demonstrated on the following page.
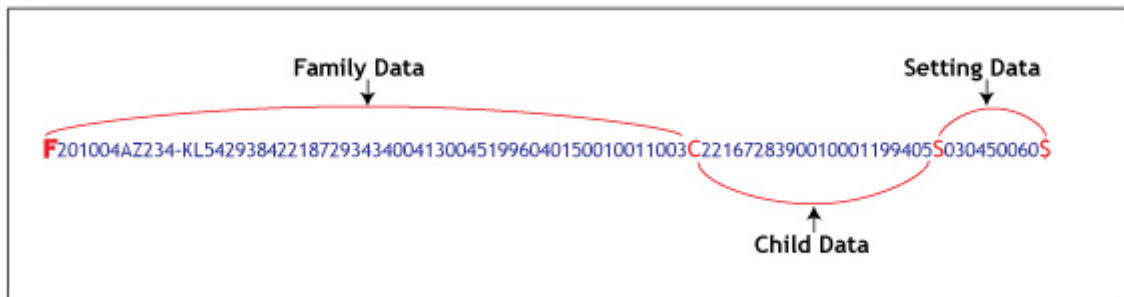
# Examples of Case Record Submissions

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 Element 28:Total hours of Child Care per Month (Setting #2).  A record will be submitted in the following format (delimiters are in **bold**):

Example 1



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:

Example 2

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.

*General Instruction for Missing and Numeric Data Elements in Family and Child 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; each child is allotted 23 positions and each setting is allotted 10 positions. 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 blank spaces should be included in the record in the location reserved for element 8. 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
        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 | *N* | 1 | This delimiter identifies the following record as a footnote. |

| Data Element Description | Format | Length | Comment |
|---|---|---|---|
| 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' for the last data element (Total Hours of Care Provided in a Month).<br><br>States can also submit footnotes that refer to the whole file. In this case, the reference is '00'. |
| Footnote Body | Character | 1000 characters | 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**):

**N**17This State does not currently collect information on ethnicity as a separate data element from race.**%%**

**IV. Formatting Guidance for States/Territories Unable To Submit Data In A Variable Record Length Format**

Some States/Territories 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, with the same delimiters ("F", "C", "S", and "$") used. See Section III 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 associated settings.  This

allocation continues up to the 15th 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 instead of the usual "C" or "S" delimiter 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)**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)**$**


## V. Resources for Additional Assistance

If you have other questions or need more information about the ACF-801 report, there are two primary resources for additional help – the Regional Office Child Care Program Manager for program and policy questions, and the Child Care Automation Resource Center (CCARC) for general reporting questions.

The Child Care Bureau (CCB) is represented by staff in each of the ten administrative regions across the country. You should contact your Regional Office if you have questions regarding your Child Care program policy or operations. Contact information for the **Regional Offices** can be found on the CCB website:
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/ta/raaddr/program_managers.htm

CCARC works with the CCB to provide technical assistance to all of the State, Territory, and Tribal CCDF Grantees with matters related to the required CCDF data reporting. You can reach **CCARC** Monday to Friday from 9:00 am – 5:00 pm, prevailing Eastern Time.

    Phone (toll-free):     1-877-249-9117
    E-mail:        ccarc@childcaredata.org
    Fax:                301-692-0700
    Mail:               2600 Tower Oaks Boulevard
                        Suite 600
                        Rockville, MD 20852