



## Child Care and Development Fund ACF-801 Case-Level Data Submission Guidelines

*Technical Bulletin #5r- v2*  
*Revised December 2012*

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### I. Introduction

This Bulletin originally was developed in 1998 to guide Lead Agencies as they initially began preparing for required data submission at the onset of the CCDF program. This revision of the Bulletin focuses on what a State/Territory must do if they make changes to their approved plan for data submission, or if they change from submitting sample data to full population data (or vice versa). Much of the information in the original document still applies and is retained in this revision.

Any time a State/Territory wishes to change the way they submit the required ACF-801 monthly case-level data file, they first must inform the Regional Office (RO) Child Care Program Manager of the proposed change, submit a **Letter of Intent** explaining the new proposed submission process, and receive approval for the change. Once a process has been approved, the State/Territory should notify NCDT of the impending change.

As part of that Letter of Intent, States also must inform the RO whether or not they separate CCDF funds from non-CCDF funds. States that pool CCDF funds with non-CCDF funds are required to include in their ACF-801 sampling frame all families served by all child care funds in the pool, and must report the percentage of dollars that each fund contributes to the total funds for child care. This is a requirement of all States regardless of the type of data (population or sample) they choose to submit.

The remaining sections of this bulletin provide specific instructions for Lead Agencies that wish to review or change the method they use to submit the required monthly ACF-801 case-level data, guidelines for preparing a representative data sample, with additional information and sample documents in the Appendices.

### II. Full Population Submissions

If a state currently submits sample data and wishes to move to full population reporting, they must first submit a **Letter of Intent** to the RO indicating their plan to report data for their entire CCDF population. If States pool CCDF funds with non-CCDF funds, they also must report the percentages of dollars that each fund contributed to the total used for child care. The **Letter of Intent** must include the following information (See Appendix I for an example):

- The State's intent to submit entire monthly child care caseloads;

- The proportional contribution of all non-CCDF funds to the entire CCDF reporting pool, if a pooled child care fund is used;
- The interval between each monthly report (one per month or three monthly submissions per annual quarter); and
- The name, telephone number, and e-mail address of at least one State contact person.

### **III. Sample Submissions**

If a State wishes to submit monthly sample data (minimum 200 cases), instead of their entire CCDF caseload, they also must submit a Letter of Intent indicating their plan. States must follow standard sampling methodology to ensure the integrity of their samples.

When submitting sample data, States also must report the (actual) total number of families receiving assistance under the State CCDF program for each reporting month. This number, equal to the total number of cases included in each monthly sample frame, is required for weighting the sample results in order to calculate estimates for the entire caseload. The family count must be reported on the ACF-801 summary record (see the latest version of Technical Bulletin #4 – ACF-801 Case-Level File Format).

#### **1. Sample Methodology-Overview**

The sample methodology must conform to principles of probability sampling. That is, each family in the CCDF caseload must have an equal probability of being selected. A sample frame, which is an unduplicated list of all families currently receiving subsidized child care, must be constructed for each month. The monthly sample may be submitted each month or three monthly samples may be submitted together on a quarterly basis. Approximately one-twelfth ( $n = 200$ ) of the required minimum annual sample size ( $n = 2,400$ ) must be selected from each monthly sample frame.

#### **2. Systematic Random Sampling**

Systematic random sampling is the preferred method for CCDF purposes. This method provides a system for selection of an individual unit from a file or list, at equally spaced intervals (such as every 10th, 140th, 950th, etc.), to obtain the desired sample size. The starting point within the first interval is determined by random selection. A starting point can be selected with a random numbers table or automated procedure that can randomly select numbers. The sampling interval is determined by dividing the estimated average monthly caseload by the required average monthly sample size ( $n = 200$ ). For example, if your estimated average monthly caseload were 22,232, the sampling interval ( $22,232 / 200$ ) would be 111. Every 111<sup>th</sup> case would be drawn from the sample frame to obtain the monthly (approximately  $n = 200$ ) sample. This number is approximate since, as the monthly population fluctuates, so too will the number of cases that are included in the systematic random sample. If you pull every 111<sup>th</sup> case from a population that is a little more or less than the average of 22,232, the actual monthly sample size increases or decreases slightly.

A worksheet is attached in Appendix IV to assist States with the steps and procedures for determining their average monthly caseload and sampling interval.

### 3. Sampling Frame

A sampling frame is an unduplicated list of families served by CCDF funds during the reporting period. Each sampling frame must include families served by CCDF Federal and State funding streams, including Mandatory, Discretionary (including funds transferred from TANF), Federal and State Matching, and State MOE funds. If the State pools funds, the sampling frame must also include families served by non-CCDF funding streams in the pool.

### 4. Annual Sample Size Requirement

The minimum required annual sample size for families receiving assistance is 2,400. This minimum sample size will provide reasonably accurate estimates, with a precision of about plus or minus 2 percentage points, for an attribute of .5 at a 95% confidence level. To assure proportional representation for the whole fiscal year, States will have to report approximately 200 cases (one-twelfth of the annual sample size) each reporting month. The method detailed in Appendix IV will ensure that the samples are proportional – that is, that months with caseloads higher than the average have proportionally more cases selected into the samples, and months with smaller case loads have proportionally fewer cases.

### 5. Sampling Plan

Each State must submit a **Sampling Plan** to the RO Child Care Program Manager for approval. The Plan should include changes to the currently approved sampling plan (if any) and be submitted at least sixty (60) calendar days before the start of the reporting period. If the State's sampling plan is unchanged from the previous year, the State is not required to resubmit a new one. The sampling plan must include the following components (see Appendix II for examples of a State Annual Sampling Plan):

- a. Documentation of methods for constructing and maintaining the sample frame(s), including an assessment of frame completeness and any potential problems associated with using the sample frame(s);
- b. Documentation of methods for selecting the sample cases from the sample frame(s);
- c. The estimated average monthly caseload for the annual sample period and the computed sample interval.
- d. States that use a pooled method to construct their sampling frame (the pooled fund includes both CCDF funding streams and non-CCDF funding streams) must report the percentage contribution of each funding stream of the total child care budget.

- e. States must inform the Office of Child Care Regional Office whether they intend to submit one report each month, or three monthly reports quarterly.

#### **IV. Resources for Additional Information**

If you have other questions or need more information about the ACF-801 report, there are two primary resources for additional help – your Regional Office Child Care Program Manager, and the National Center on Child Care Data and Technology (NCDT).

The Office of Child Care (OCC) 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 OCC website: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/regional-child-care-program-managers>.

NCDT works with the OCC to provide technical assistance to all of the Tribal, Territory, and State CCDF Grantees with matters related to the required CCDF data reporting. You can reach NCDT by:

Phone (toll-free): 1-877-249-9117  
E-mail: [ncdt@childcaredata.org](mailto:ncdt@childcaredata.org)  
Fax: 301- 816-8640  
Mail: 2600 Tower Oaks Boulevard  
Suite 600  
Rockville, MD 20852

# APPENDIX I

## Letter of Intent

*Example*

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DATE

Regional Office Child Care Program Manager  
ACF Regional Office  
2222 Main Street Suite 600  
City A, State A 99999

Dear:

The State of A will submit entire monthly populations, instead of sample data, to fulfill the requirements of the CCDF Federal child care reporting guidelines. Our State uses a pooled universe comprised of both CCDF and non-CCDF funds. Our pool consists of the following: CCDF funds (80%), Title XX funds (9%), and private funds (11%). We will submit the monthly populations on a quarterly basis.

If you have any questions about the information contained in this letter, please contact NAME, TITLE at (599) 599-9999.

Sincerely,

Child Care Administrator

CC: NCDT

## APPENDIX II

### Annual Sampling Plan

#### *Example A*

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In accordance with the Federal subsidized child care reporting requirements, the State of A (the State) has prepared a Sampling Plan which describes 1) the methods used for constructing and maintaining the State's sampling frames and 2) documentation of the methods used for drawing monthly samples.

#### **1. Methods Used for Constructing and Maintaining the Sampling Frames**

The State currently does not maintain a single electronic file consisting of all unduplicated families served by CCDF funds. Because the State maintains 14 county-based systems, monthly *sampling frames* will be a compilation of the lists from all 14 systems.

The 14 Child Care systems do not use the same case identifiers. Six of the county based systems use the primary caregiver's social security number and 7 use an algorithm that assigns a unique number to each family. One county-based system uses an algorithm that assigns a unique number to each child in care. The name/date of birth sequence resulted in many duplicate records because of variations in the way names are spelled.

In order to minimize duplication, the State will use a single compiled data file from the 14 systems and use an automated search procedure which matches like sounding character fields/names. Each month the 14 systems will e-mail a data file to the Child Care Program Division. The files will be compiled and the procedure will automatically match like sounding names, identical birth dates, and race categories within and among the 14 files. A match on all three variables (name, birth date, and race category) among at least two cases will be an indication that a duplicate case exists. The State's Child Care Program Director will investigate and delete duplicate cases from the list to create the monthly sampling frames. This procedure will be repeated each month so that a new (unduplicated) sampling frame is created for each monthly sample.

#### **2. Methods for Drawing Monthly Samples**

The State will use a systematic random sampling methodology in which every *kth* case/family is selected from the sampling frame ( $N = 22,230$ ) to draw the monthly samples ( $n = 200$ ). An estimate of the monthly caseload was made by averaging the sampling frame values for October, November, and December (Mean = 22,230 families). The monthly caseload estimate was used to estimate the sampling interval ( $22,230 / 200 = 111.15$ ). An automated procedure, programmed in Access, was created to select every *kth* case, depending on the sampling interval, from the sampling frame to construct the monthly samples. Each month, a random numbers table (Finlay and Agreski 1993) will be used to select a random starting point for case selection.

The State will submit monthly total caseload values and three monthly samples each quarter.

### **3. Method for Gathering Required ACF-801 Data**

The State does not maintain a single system that includes all Federally mandated data elements, therefore, required CCDF data will be pulled from multiple systems. This process will be repeated each month for a monthly report submission.

### **4. CCDF Budget and Pooling of Funds**

The State pools CCDF funds with Title XX and private funds. The proportionate contribution of funds from each funding stream is as follows: CCDF funds (80%), Title XX funds (9%), and private funds (11%).

# Annual Sampling Plan

## *Example B*

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In accordance with the Federal subsidized child care reporting requirements, the State of A (the State) has prepared a Sampling Plan which describes 1) the methods used for constructing and maintaining the State's sampling frames and 2) documentation of the methods used for drawing monthly samples.

### **1. Methods Used for Constructing and Maintaining the Sampling Frames**

The monthly sampling frames (a list of all unduplicated families served by CCDF funds) will be provided by the State's Department of Human Resources, which maintains an unduplicated list of all of the families served by CCDF funds in the State. Each month the Department of Human Resources will send an electronic data file to the Child Care Programs Division with the names of all families served by CCDF funds. This unduplicated list will serve as the sampling frame.

### **2. Methods for Drawing Monthly Samples**

The State will use a simple random sampling methodology to report case-level information to the Office of Child Care. This procedure is equivalent to systematic sampling (i.e. each case/family record has an equal probability of selection). In simple random sampling it is not necessary to select a sampling interval or starting point, because the records are drawn from the sampling frame randomly. Each month an unduplicated list of cases will be created and a sample of the appropriate size ( $n = 200$ ) will be drawn. The estimated monthly caseload, based on a three month average, is 22,230. Actual monthly caseload values will be submitted along with the monthly submissions each quarter.

### **3. Method for Gathering Required ACF-801 Data**

We will use an automated procedure to capture and map data elements that are currently collected by the existing automated system. The Department of Human Resources' system currently stores basic demographic information about families served by CCDF funds. These include: income of primary caregiver, gender, race and ages of children in the family, and type of child care). Other Federally mandated data elements will be collected and mapped from the existing payments system.

We will submit monthly *total* caseload values and samples ( $n = 200$ ) each month to the Office of Child Care.

### **4. CCDF Budget and Pooling of Funds**

The State does not pool CCDF with non-CCDF funds.

## APPENDIX III

### *Glossary*

Terms/Phrases	Definitions
Letter of Intent	A letter stating an agency's intent to submit full monthly population data or sample data. The letter of intent should include the proportional contribution of CCDF and non-CCDF resources included in the total CCDF pool.
Pooled Method of Funding	States that use the pooled method of funding combine CCDF resources with other non-CCDF resources. States that use the pooled method of funding are required to include the proportional contributions of each funding source to total CCDF funds, in their Letter of Intent or Sampling Plan.
Population	All families and children served by CCDF funds, or all families and children receiving child care services if the State pools funds.
Required Minimum Sample Size	Federal child care reporting guidelines require that States submit at least 200 cases per month. When annualized, the 200 cases will equal a minimum sample of $n = 2,400$ cases. This sample size has a confidence interval of $\pm 2$ percentage points.
Probability Sample	A statistically representative group of cases used to approximate population parameters.
Sampling Frame	The (unduplicated) list of cases composing a population.
Sampling Interval	The standard distance between cases selected from a population for a sample.
Sampling Plan	A brief document that describes the methods used for constructing and maintaining the monthly sampling frames and documentation of the methods for drawing monthly samples.
Systematic Sampling	A probability sample in which every <i>k</i> th unit in a list is selected for inclusion in the sample.

## APPENDIX IV Drawing Monthly Samples

### *Worksheet*

#### Step 1: Estimate Average Monthly Caseload

- *Hint: Add each month's estimated caseload together for a total and divide by 12 months. See example worksheet below:*

$$\frac{\text{Total Estimated Caseload}}{12 \text{ months}} = \frac{266,784}{12} = 22,232$$

#### *EXAMPLE*

Month	Estimated Monthly Caseloads
October	21125
November	21615
December	23112
January	23023
February	21100
March	21059
April	21795
May	21895
June	23656
July	24063
August	22916
September	21328
<b>Total</b>	266784

#### *STATE*

- *Hint: Complete this table for your own State to assist in finding your estimated average monthly caseload.*

$$\text{STATE: } \frac{\text{Total Estimated Caseload}}{12 \text{ months}} = \frac{\boxed{\phantom{000000}}}{12} = \boxed{\phantom{000000}}$$

STATE WORKSHEET

Month	Estimated Monthly Caseloads
October	
November	
December	
January	
February	
March	
April	
May	
June	
July	
August	
September	
<b>Total</b>	

**Step 2: Calculate Sample Interval**

EXAMPLE:  $\frac{\text{Average monthly caseload for year } 22,232}{\text{Approximate average monthly sample } 200} = 111$

STATE: $\frac{\text{Average monthly caseload for year } \boxed{\phantom{000}}}{\text{Approximate average monthly sample } 200} = \boxed{\phantom{000}}$
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**Step 3: Randomly Select Starting Point**

*Hint: Use SAS/SPSS or table of random numbers. You can ask SAS or SPSS to randomly pick a case to start your sampling process. A random number table is useful when these packages are not available. The "randomness" of selecting the starting point is very important for the reliability of the data which is supplied to OCC*

**Step 4: Pull Cases Using the Sampling Interval**

*Hint: Beginning with the starting point selected in Step 3, pick that case and every Kth case following depending on your sampling interval selected in Step 2. Be sure to select every Kth case of the population without going back over the original starting point. You will have selected approximately 200 cases.*