



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

Technical Bulletin # 4r-v3  
REVIEWED: August 2014

---

## 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 National Center on Data and Technology (NCDT). This Technical Bulletin provides guidance reflecting changes made to the ACF-801 report announced in April 2012. Footnotes are now required for Element #28 (Hours), Element #34 (QRIS rating), and Element #37 (Other State-defined quality measure). The Office of Child Care has indicated that each State/Territory is expected to report on at least one of the quality elements for at least a portion of the provider population.

**Note: Please refer to Technical Bulletin #3 for guidance on the reporting requirements.**

When submitting the required ACF-801 report, States and Territories have the option to submit either a sample or the complete population of children receiving federal child care subsidies. CCDF grantees also have the option to submit data monthly or quarterly (3 months at once). 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 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; and
- Section V provides resources for additional assistance.
- 

## I. ACF-801 File Format Overview

### Contents of ACF-801 Data Submission:

The data submission is made up of four types of records:

1. The monthly summary record
2. Family, child, and child care setting records
3. Provider records
4. Footnotes

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. Provider records for all providers who received (or expect to receive) subsidy payments for services provided in the report month, April
4. Footnotes relevant to April's data elements
5. 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. Provider records for all providers who received (or expect to receive) subsidy payments for services provided during April
4. Footnotes relevant to April's data elements
5. May's monthly summary record
6. Family, child, and setting records for families and children receiving subsidized child care during May
7. Provider records for all providers who received (or expect to receive) subsidy payments for services provided during May
8. Footnotes relevant to May's data elements
9. June's monthly summary record
10. Family, child, and setting records for families and children receiving subsidized child care during June
11. Provider records for all providers who received (or expect to receive) subsidy payments for services provided during the month of June
12. Footnotes relevant to June's data elements
13. The "&" file delimiter indicating the end of the data submission

States and Territories are required to submit footnotes each month to indicate the type of hours they are submitting. Additional footnotes are required to augment the data for quality elements. Grantees should provide other footnotes at any time to clarify data for other elements. Footnotes should be reviewed and updated (as appropriate) 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.

## II. Guidance for Formatting Records

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

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

### Summary of Record and File Delimiters:

The records in the ACF-801 data submission can be of varying lengths. The file 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 were 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*, *P*, *N*, #, \$, %%, &) are literals – the character as it appears should be included in the file.

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.
<i>C</i>	Identifies the ACF-801 child data for one child.
<i>S</i>	Identifies the ACF-801 setting data for one setting.
<i>P</i>	Identifies the ACF-801 provider data for one provider.
\$	Marks the end of a monthly summary record or the complete family, child(ren) and setting(s) record for one family.  The \$ delimiter also must be placed at the end of each provider record to mark the end of each provider's information.
<i>N</i>	Marks the beginning of a footnote.
%%	Marks the end of a footnote.

Delimiter	Use
&	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	<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 2013, this element would be "201304".
Families Receiving Subsidized Child Care	Number	7	The number of families receiving subsidized child care in the 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 Providers Delivering Subsidized Child Care	Number	7	The total number of providers receiving, or expected to receive, subsidized child care payments for services provided during the reported month. The number should be right-justified within the field and padded with zeros. For example, 22,322 providers would be formatted as "0022322".
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. Do not include unnecessary descriptive prefixes or suffixes.
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 family and provider counts, and contact information are required. However, if the State does not have certain contact information, such as a fax number, 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 2012  
 Family Population: 72,384  
 Providers: 53,000  
 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**):

**M20120700723840053000#Jane Smith#(703) 555-1234 ext. 684#(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):

**M20090700723840053000#Jane Smith#(703) 555-1234 ext. 684##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 including information that identifies the provider that served the child in each setting. 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 setting record also must contain provider identifier information.

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	<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 Subsidized Child Care	Number	1
07:Total Monthly Child Care Copayment by Family	Number	4

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
08:Month/Year Child Care Assistance Started	YYYYMM	6
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	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. These data always begin at record position 62 and continue 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.**

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
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
29: Provider FEIN for (Setting #1) for Child #1	Number	9
30: Provider Unique State ID (Setting #1) for Child #1	Character	15

***If second child care setting exists, add information for second setting.***

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
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
29: Provider FEIN for (Setting #2) for Child #1	Number	9
30: Provider Unique State ID (Setting #2) for Child #1	Character	15

***If third child care setting exists, add information for third setting.***

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
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
29: Provider FEIN for (Setting #3) for Child #1	Number	9
30: Provider Unique State ID (Setting #3) for Child #1	Character	15

***If fourth child care setting exists, add information for fourth setting.***

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
29: Provider FEIN for (Setting #4) for Child #1	Number	9
30: Provider Unique State ID (Setting #4) for Child #1	Character	15

***Repeat for each additional child care setting for this child.***

***If second child is receiving child care assistance, add information for second child.***

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
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 information for the second child.***

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
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
29: Provider FEIN for (Setting #1) for Child #2	Number	9
30: Provider Unique State ID (Setting #1) for Child #2	Character	15

***If second child care setting exists, add information for second setting.***

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
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
29: Provider FEIN for (Setting #2) for Child #2	Number	9
30: Provider Unique State ID (Setting #2) for Child #2	Character	15

***If third child care setting exists, add information for third setting.***

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
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
29: Provider FEIN for (Setting #3) for Child #2	Number	9
30: Provider Unique State ID (Setting #3) for Child #2	Character	15

***If fourth child care setting exists, add information for fourth setting.***

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
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
29: Provider FEIN for (Setting #4) for Child #2	Number	9
30: Provider Unique State ID (Setting #4) for Child #2	Character	15

***Repeat for each additional child care setting for this child.***

***Repeat until all of the children (with settings) in the family receiving assistance are included.***

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
Delimiter indicating the end of family's entire data record	\$	1

This format is repeated for each family included in the data submission.

Provider Records:

The records on families and children are followed by the records for all providers receiving (or expected to receive) subsidized child care payments for services delivered during the report month. If the grantee submits sample data, only those providers associated with the families/children/settings in the sample should be included. The example below includes the provider identifier and quality information.

The format for provider data will be the same for each provider record. A “P” delimiter is placed before each provider’s data to identify the information. Positions 1 through 33 will always contain provider data as detailed in the table below. A “\$” delimiter is placed in the last space of the provider record.

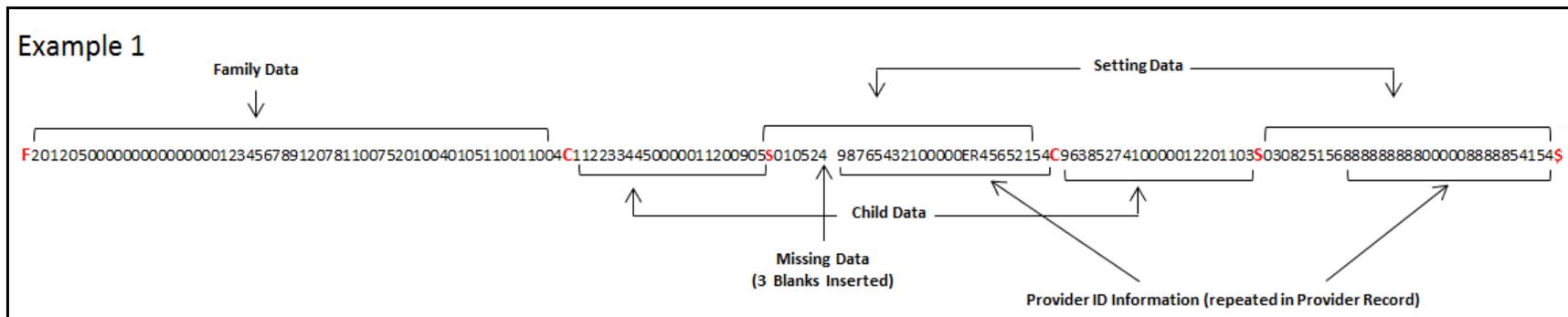
Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
Delimiter identifying family data	<i>P</i>	1
31: Provider FEIN	Number	9
32: Provider Unique State ID	Character	15
33: QRIS Participation	Number	1
34: QRIS Rating	Character	3
35: Accreditation Status	Number	1
36: Provider is Subject to State Pre-K Standards	Number	1
37: Other State-defined Quality Measure	Number	1
Delimiter indicating the end of the Provider	\$	1

***Repeat until all of the Providers receiving payments are included.***

Two examples of the family/children/setting data record and one example of a provider record are demonstrated on the following page.

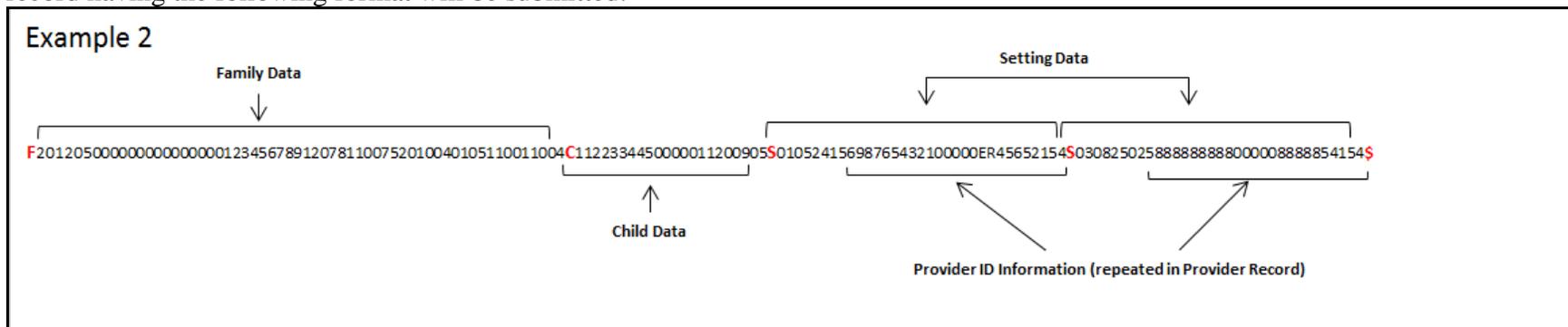
## Examples of Case Record Submissions

Example 1: A family has two children receiving child care assistance during the month. Each child is in one child care setting during the month. The first child is missing the information for Element #28: Total hours of Child Care per Month. A record will be submitted in the following format (delimiters are in **bold red text**):



*Note: Provider ID information, FEIN and Unique State ID, are included in the Setting data and in the separate Provider record (see Example 3).*

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



Example 3: This is an example of the new provider record. It contains the provider identifier information and data for each of the provider quality elements.

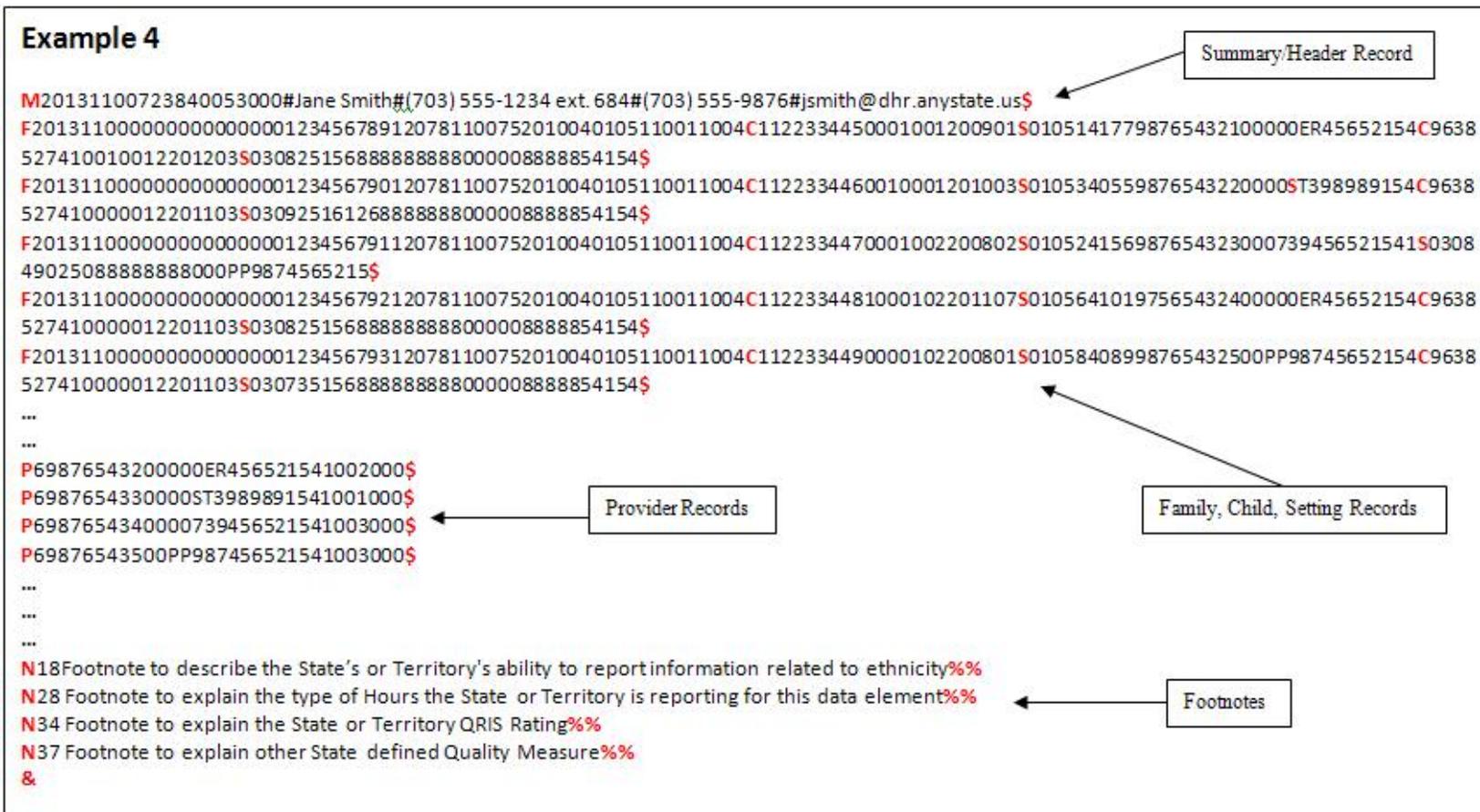
**Example 3**

Provider Data

P698765432100000ER456521541011000\$

P58888888880000088888541541011000\$

**Example 4:** Below is an example of the layout of the entire ACF-801 file that includes the provider quality-related information. The grantee served 72,384 families through 53,000 providers during the month. The Summary Record should be followed by family, child, and setting records for the month. The format requires that the provider records should follow all of the family, child, and setting records. The footnotes should be listed last in the file. Note that certain footnotes are required as a part of the report.



The last submitted record for providers receiving subsidized payments is followed by footnotes for the month. Footnotes are required to indicate the type of hours reported for Element #28 and to augment provider quality information (Elements #34 and #37). Grantees should provide other footnotes at any time to explain anomalous data for other elements.

If the grantee is submitting three months at once, the footnotes would be followed by the monthly summary file for the successive month. If submitting only one month of data, the footnotes would be followed by the "&" file delimiter indicating it is the end of the report.

General Instruction for Data Elements in Family, Child, and Provider Records:

Although the number of families, children, settings, and providers will vary in each submission, the space allocated to each group of elements remains the same. The family information is always allotted 61 positions; each child is allotted 23 positions and each setting is allotted 34 positions. The provider quality information is reported in a separate provider record and is always allotted 33 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 #8: Month/Year Child Care Assistance Started for one family, 6 blank spaces should be included in the record in the location reserved for #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 other elements, such as #2: 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
- 30/32: Provider Unique State ID
- 34: QRIS Rating

Footnotes:

Footnotes are required to explain the type of hours being reported (Element #28) and to augment the quality information being reported in Elements #34 and #37. States are also encouraged to submit footnotes at any time to clarify the data reported for other elements. 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	<p>This references the data element for 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 '37' for the last data element (Other State-Defined Quality Measure).</p> <p>States can also submit footnotes that refer to the whole file. In this case, the reference is '00'.</p> <p><b><u>Required Footnotes:</u></b></p> <p>Element #28 – States must provide a footnote to explain the type of hours they are reporting</p> <p>Element #34 – State must provide a footnote to explain the code for the quality levels they are reporting.</p> <p>Element #37 – Grantees must provide a footnote to explain the other State-defined quality measure, if applicable.</p>
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**):

*N07* Copay is null when parents/caretakers are in an unpaid activity or when copayment waiver is in place. **%%**

### III. 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, setting, and provider 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, P, and \$) used. See Section III for additional information about the standard delimiters.
2. The State should define each family/child/setting 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. Provider information is reported as a separate record for each provider.
5. **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 (33). Note that these record lengths do not include the delimiter counts.**

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**(33 characters of data for setting 1)**S**(33 characters of data for setting 2)**S**(33 characters of data for setting 3)\*(33 blanks for setting 4)\*(33 blanks for setting 5)**C** (22 characters of data for child 2)**S**(33 characters of data for setting 1)**S**(33 characters of data for setting 2)\*(33 blanks for setting 3)\*(33 blanks for setting 4)\*(33 blanks for setting 5)\*(22 blanks for child 3)\*(33 blanks for setting 1)\*(33 blanks for setting 2)\*(33 blanks for setting 3)\*(33 blanks for setting 4)\*(33 blanks for setting 5)..... \*(22 blanks for child 15)\*(33 blanks for setting 1)\*(33 blanks for setting 2)\*(33 blanks for setting 3)\*(33 blanks for setting 4)\*(33 blanks for setting 5)**\$**

Following the initial delimiter (*P*), each provider record has 31 spaces allocated for the data followed by the “\$”. The remaining record should be filled in with blanks.

Each footnote record should be ended with “%%” characters. The remaining record should be filled in with blanks.

#### **IV. 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 National Center on Data and Technology (NCDT) for general reporting questions.

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/ta/raaddr/program\\_managers.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/ta/raaddr/program_managers.htm)

NCDT works with the OCC 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 **NCDT** Monday to Friday from 9:00 am – 5:00 pm, prevailing Eastern Time.

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