



Department of
Job and Family Services

John R. Kasich, Governor
Michael B. Colbert, Director

June 21, 2012

TO: AFCARS Onsite Review Case Coordinators

FROM: Tresa Young, Bureau Chief OFC Automated Systems

SUBJECT: Adoption Foster Care Analysis Reporting System “AFCARS” Review Q & A

1) **Where is the review taking place, are federal reviewers visiting county agencies?**

The onsite record review will occur at the ODJFS Lazarus location during August 20-24. Federal reviewers do not visit county agencies as part of the AFCARS review. They do encourage interested county staff to participate in the review if time/resources permit. If a county representative is available/interested in participating, please contact Tresa Young at 614-387-8910 or via e mail: “tresa.young@jfs.ohio.gov”. As the review is in Columbus, county staff members who are close in proximity would be the most logical county participants.

2) **Some of the identified sample cases have sealed adoption records identified and will require counties to obtain court orders to enable cases to be “unsealed”, will the Administration for Children and Families “ACF” allow substitute cases for these scenarios?**

No, ACF will not permit substitute cases to be used in this scenario. If court orders are necessary to open the record, the county agency should take actions to ensure required documents are provided for the onsite review in Columbus.

3) **Some cases have extensive placement histories and many siblings/case members, are counties expected to share full histories for cases that may currently include many binders?**

The sample includes a high percentage of older cases. All placement information, signed case plans, semi-annual review documents, court orders, financial eligibility documents, provider information, educational/medical/psychological information, homestudies, etc. for the entire life of the case for the identified child must be provided to ODJFS for the onsite review. Counties should include the paper documents that exist locally for sample cases. Some counties keep separate files/records for homestudy, financial, adoption, provider information, etc.; these separate records should also be included.

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- 4) **We have older cases stored on a document imaging system, can we provide a CD of these and/or other records?** We have asked ACF and they are considering this request. We will have computers onsite for reviewers to access information counties send that has already been stored on document imaging systems. At this point, we are interested in knowing how many of the identified cases would involve CD/imaged records? If you know this, please e mail Tresa Young at tresa.young@jfs.ohio.gov.

- 5) **Some cases are restricted in SACWIS, will they need to be unrestricted for the review?** While federal reviewers primarily utilize hard copy documents and bring a review tool that already includes reported AFCARS elements for each case (data submitted in the 12a file in May 2012), it may make sense to un-restrict cases for the review. If counties do not keep hard copy files for all data entered in SACWIS, the state review team would like to be able to reference it if permitted to do so during the review. State staff will be working on the method to handle restricted cases in collaboration with county staff.

- 6) **Some counties realize they have entered data incorrectly, what should be done now?** Undoubtedly the review will find errors as has occurred in all other states. Everyone (county and state staff) would like the opportunity to correct errors prior to the review. Modifications made to data entered into SACWIS and/or AFCARS code may not be made in time to impact the review findings. However, as most of us prefer to focus on making things better and doing our best, if possible we will correct what we can regardless of whether it impacts the actual onsite review. There is a chance corrected data may be resubmitted to ACF prior to the review, but we do not know whether it will be considered during the actual review. If staff members discover errors, they should correct them within the application when possible. If the data element cannot be fixed locally and/or staff members are confused about how to make corrections, please contact the SACWIS Help Desk. We know certain kinds of errors, delays in data entry and AFCARS and/or SACWIS coding issues may need to be addressed within the corrective action plan the state submits after the review is over. We also know counties have many priorities and that correcting older AFCARS data may be a longer term goal for some.

- 7) **Caseworkers may not refer to data elements as AFCARS required items and may be confused about what is required. How should we work with staff so they understand how data entered into SACWIS is reported in AFCARS?** Modifications to easily identify required AFCARS elements are being made to SACWIS screens and an enhanced AFCARS exception report is being put in production (work should begin in the coming months). These items will likely be included in Ohio's corrective action plan. Some counties participated in the effort to revise and

document AFCARS data mapping about a year or so ago and counties are at varying levels of understanding on these issues. We are also in the process of updating a knowledge base article to assist staff in understanding the AFCARS data elements in SACWIS. We know additional work will need to occur in the coming years to improve front-line case work staff involvement/support/understanding of required AFCARS elements and how data are utilized at the federal level.

- 8) **The review involves test case scenarios and a review of AFCARS mapping, what is being learned so far in preparation for the review?** The initial review of test cases and Ohio's AFCARS mapping has revealed that although Ohio made significant strides in developing compliant AFCARS code, we do need to make some minor mapping and coding adjustments to ensure all scenarios are properly recorded, particularly for elements that may change over time (such as a child's diagnosis/characteristics, etc.). We are currently making these adjustments to improve the AFCARS code and will be providing additional clarification and training tools to county agencies. Some county staff members are asking that certain AFCARS fields be "required" in SACWIS, particularly race/ethnicity values; we will have further conversations with counties to make these changes.
- 9) **We'd like a copy of the onsite review instrument, would you please share it with us?** The Federal reviewer indicates she uses different tools and does not use a specific tool for each review. An example of one review instrument is contained in the *State Guide to an AFCARS Assessment Review* and is attached. A link to the AFCARS review process can be found at the following website <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/systems/afcars/guide/index.htm>. We continue to explore additional options (reviewing other state's AFCARS reports, et al.) to obtain copies of the instrument and will make these available to county staff for future learning/ongoing improvement opportunities.
- 10) **We plan to provide copies of our records, is that ok?** At this time, we have not been instructed that copies of records are prohibited. We understand some counties have concerns about original files being removed from county locations. We also understand some counties do not have resources to copy records.
- 11) **How will records be picked up, stored and returned?** Joan Van Hull and Tresa Young will contact county agencies and collaborate with field and other state staff to pick records up. It would be helpful to know how many binders/boxes are expected from a particular county. We will begin contacting counties next week to discuss needs/concerns/options. Records will be stored in locked locations at 50 West Town Street, Columbus, Ohio.

12) **Why is the state asking for the records in advance?** Based upon experience with both the CFSR "Child and Family Services Review" and IV-E case reviews, it takes significant time to organize files consistently to ease the review process. Pick-up dates will be negotiated with counties if there is a particular hardship or concern.

13) **We don't know exactly what AFCARS elements were submitted on the sample cases and we do not currently have an exceptions report, can you provide this information?** Yes, we will be sending counties the reported AFCARS elements for the sample cases from the 12a file. We are currently working on an enhanced exceptions report to put in production and will be working with county agencies to finalize testing and deployment of the report.

14) **We do not want files removed from the agency as it is a risk to our organization, can federal reviewers visit the agency to review the file?** Federal reviewers are requiring county and state staff to provide records at the centralized onsite review location (50 West Town Street, Columbus, Ohio). The following federal and state provisions permit the dissemination of the case files to ODJFS for the purpose of a federal audit:

42 USC 5106a(b)(2)(B)(viii) Grants to States for child abuse or neglect prevention and treatment programs

42 USC 671(a)(8) State Plan for foster care and adoption assistance

45 CFR 1340.14(i)(2)(x) CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PREVENTION AND TREATMENT SUBPART B -- GRANTS TO STATES - eligibility requirements

45 CFR 1355.30 which applies the requirements of 45 CFR 205.50 (Safeguarding information for the financial assistance programs.) to foster care and adoption cases.

R.C. 2151.423 Disclosure of confidential information to protect children.

OAC 5101:2-33-21(C)(1) Confidentiality and dissemination of information relating to child abuse or neglect.

Appendix F: Sample Case File Review Form

This form will be generated automatically by ACF with all information submitted for the record by the participating State. This is an example of only one page. A report is generated for both Adoption and Foster Care.

Foster Care Case Review Report Report Period: October 1, 2009 – March 31, 2010			
State: Bliss AFCARS Record Number: XN5000001235		State Client Identifier: _____	
AFCARS Element	Data from AFCARS	Data from Paper File	Data Do Not Match (X)
#3 Local FIPS Code	Clinton		
#5 Date of Most Recent Periodic Review	July 08, 2009		
#6 Child Birth Date	August 22, 2008		
#7 Child Sex	Male		
#8 Child Race			
a. American Indian/Alaska Native	Yes		
b. Asian	Yes		
c. Black/African American	Yes		
d. Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Yes		
e. White	Yes		
f. Unable to determine	No		
#9 Child Hispanic Origin	Yes		
#10 Has Child Been Diagnosed with Disability?	No		

#11 Mental Retardation	Condition does not apply		
#12 Visually/Hearing Impaired	Condition does not apply		
#13 Physically Disabled	Condition does not apply		
#14 Emotionally Disturbed	Condition does not apply		
#15 Other Diagnosed Condition	Condition does not apply		
#16 Has Child Ever Been Adopted	No		
#17 Age at Adoption	Not Applicable		
#18 Date of First Removal from Home	April 10, 2009		
#19 Total Number of Removals from Home	01		
#20 Date of Discharge from Last Episode	-		
#21 Date of Latest Removal	April 10, 2009		
#23 Date of Placement in Current Setting	October 24, 2009		
#24 Number of Previous Placement Settings in Episode	03		
#25 Manner of Removal from Home	Court Ordered		
#26 Condition Associated with Removal - Physical Abuse	Condition Applies		
#27 Sexual Abuse	Condition Applies		
#28 Neglect	Condition Applies		
#29 Parent Alcohol Abuse	Condition Applies		
#30 Parent Drug Abuse	Condition Applies		

#31 Child Alcohol Abuse	Condition Does not Apply		
#32 Child Drug Abuse	Condition Does not Apply		
#33 Child Disability	Condition Does not Apply		
#34 Child's Behavior Problem	Condition Applies		
#25 Death of Parent	Condition Does not Apply		
#36 Incarceration of Parent	Condition Applies		
#37 Caretaker Inability to Cope Due to Illness or Other Reasons	Condition Applies		
#38 Abandonment	Condition Does not Apply		
#39 Relinquishment	Condition Does not Apply		
#40 Inadequate Housing	Condition Applies		
#41 Current Placement Setting [These are not listed on the form] 1 = Pre-Adoptive Home 2 = Foster Family Home-Relative 3 = Foster Family Home-Non-Relative 4 = Group Home 5 = Institution 6 = Supervised Independent Living 7 = Runaway 8 = Trial Home Visit	Foster Family Home (non-relative)		
#42 Is Current Placement Out-of-State?	No		
#43 Most recent case plan goal [These are not listed on the form.]	Adoption		

1 = Reunify With Parent(S) Or Principal Caretaker(S) 2 = Live With Relative(S) 3 = Adoption 4 = Long Term Foster Care 5 = Emancipation 6 = Guardianship 7 = Case Plan Goal Not Yet Established			
#44 Caretaker Family Structure [These are not listed on the form.] 1 = Married Couple 2 = Unmarried Couple 3 = Single Female 4 = Single Male 5 = Unable to Determine	Single Female		
#45 1 st Primary Caretaker's Birth Year	1971		
#46 2 nd Primary Caretaker's Birth Year (if applicable)	-		
#47 Mother's Date of TPR	April 23, 2009		
#48 Legal or Putative Father' TPR	June 30, 2009		
#49 Foster Family Structure	Single Female		
#50 1 st Foster Caretaker's Birth Year	1972		
#51 2 nd Foster Caretaker's Birth Year	-		
#52 1 st Foster Caretaker's Race			
a. American Indian/Alaska Native	No		
b. Asian	No		
c. Black/African American	No		
d. Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	No		
e. White	Yes		

f. Unable to determine	No		
#53 1 st Foster Caretaker's Hispanic or Latino Origin	Yes		
#54 2 nd Foster Caretaker's Race (if applicable)			
a. American Indian/Alaska Native	-		
b. Asian	-		
c. Black/African American	-		
d. Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	-		
e. White	-		
f. Unable to determine	-		
#55 2 nd Foster Caretaker's Hispanic Origin	Not Applicable		
#56 Date of Discharge from foster care	-		
#58 Reason for Discharge [These are not listed on the form] 1 = Reunification with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s) 2 = Living with Other Relative(s) 3 = Adoption 4 = Emancipation 5 = Guardianship 6 = Transfer to Another Agency 7 = Runaway 8 = Death of Child	Not Applicable		
#59 Title IV-E (Foster Care)	Condition Applies		
#60 Title IVE (Adoption Subsidy)	Condition Does Not Apply		
#61 Title IVA (Aid to Families with Dependent Children)	Condition Does Not Apply		

#63 Title XIX (Medicaid)	Condition Applies		
#64 SSI or other Social Security Act Benefits	Condition Applies		
#65 None of the Above	Condition Does Not Apply		
#66 Amount of monthly foster care payment (regardless of source)	0435		