
**ORANGE COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY
CFS OPERATIONS MANUAL**

Effective Date: October 23, 2007
Revised: October 6, 2010

Number: E-0110

AFCARS

Purpose	To provide guidelines for entering mandated foster and adoptive data to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).
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Approved	This policy was approved by Gary Taylor, Director of CFS, on October 6, 2010. <i>Signature on file.</i>
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Background	AFCARS is a federally mandated system for collecting data on children in foster care and children who have been adopted under public child welfare agencies.
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AFCARS was created, in part, from concerns about the lack of national information available on foster and adopted children. In 1986, Congress added Section 479 to Title IV-E of the Social Security Act requiring the federal government to institute a foster care and adoption data collection system.

Federal regulations were then created to require states to electronically transmit AFCARS data semi-annually, within 45 days of the end of the reporting period (i.e., November 15 and May 15) on each child in foster care and each child adopted during the reporting period. Financial penalties are assessed for missing data, internal inconsistencies of data, and untimely entries and reporting.

California Department of Social Services (CDSS) obtains the required data through Child Welfare Services/ Case Management System (CWS/CMS). The AFCARS field entries identified in this policy are required by Children and Family Services (CFS) for both

this reporting purpose and meeting federal and state outcome measures.

Definitions

Episode: Time of removal from home to either reunification with parent or dependency termination.

Reporting Period: April 1 through September 30 and October 1 through March 31. (Federal fiscal year is October 1 through September 30).

Hispanic/Latino origin: A secondary self-designation which refers to whether the primary ethnicity of the person is of Hispanic/Latino origin.

Legal Mandates

- [Title IVE Social Security Act, Section 479](#)
 - [ACIN I-44-05, dated August 25, 2005](#)
 - [ACL 04-45, dated October 26, 2004](#)
 - [ACIN I-26-04, dated May 18, 2004](#)
 - [ACIN I-01-04, dated January 13, 2004](#)
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POLICY

AFCARS Data

CFS will maintain complete, accurate, and timely AFCARS data entries in CWS/CMS for:

- National data on foster and adopted children
- Federal and state outcome measures
- Continued funding
- Current, accurate records for social workers to use in serving children and families

The reporting system will include all children who have or had been in foster care for at least 24 hours.

This data is entered on a flow basis, as information is obtained. CFS programs are responsible for entering and/or updating data as the child's case moves through the child welfare system.

Review of data will follow periodically to support the completeness of entries and the congruence of electronic and paper file data, using the [CWS/CMS Data Entry Standards—Federal Reporting Navigation Tool Instructions](#).

Data Entry

Social work staff will be responsible for gathering the mandated information as they work with referrals and/or cases.

Clerical staff will be responsible for entering the information into CWS/CMS.

Staff are referred to the table, [AFCARS REQUIREMENTS](#), maintained on the CFS CWS/CMS Intranet website, for:

- A. Required AFCARS data entries.
- B. The identified program responsible for each CWS entry.
- C. Any specialized directive for each entry to help with consistency of interpretation.
- D. Location of data entry within child's referral or case.

Data Review and Correction

Reviews will be conducted at periodic intervals in cases, using the [CWS/CMS Data Entry Standards—Federal Reporting Navigation Tool Instructions](#) to check data entered. Reviews will occur at:

- A. Status Review hearings in court programs.
- B. Initial placement and placement change (including child returning home from out-of-home care).
- C. Foster care annual reapplication.
- D. Transfer in and out to another social worker, program, or county.
- E. Adoptive placement.
- F. Case closure.

At these review times, clerical staff will:

- Print the Navigation Tool for the child's case and forward to the assigned senior social worker (SSW)
- Make the corrections/additions returned on the Navigation Tool by the assigned SSW

The child's assigned SSW will:

- Check the case information for current accuracy. If corrections/additions are necessary, they will be noted on the Navigation Tool printout, and then be returned to clerical staff. If no corrections are needed, the SSW will indicate "no change necessary" on the printout and return to clerical staff

The assigned clerical staff will not have access to enter missing/incorrect information for the child's foster family home. These changes will be requested from the current Licensing Office Technician (OT) by email.

Note: Substitute care providers are not required entries for group home placements.

Exceptions

Exceptions to this policy include:

- A. Non-dependency legal guardianship cases. AFCARS entries for these cases will be reviewed at:
 - Creation of case
 - Placement change
 - Case plan reviews (every six months)
 - Change of case status
- B. Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) cases incoming to CFS will not be included in mandated entries as the sending state is responsible for AFCARS.