



Office of Children and Family Services

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Informational Letter

Transmittal:	22-OCFS-INF-11
To:	Local Departments of Social Services Commissioners Executive Directors of Voluntary Authorized Agencies
Issuing Division/Office:	Division of Child Welfare and Community Services
Date:	December 5, 2022
Subject:	Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) 2.1 Reporting Requirements
Suggested Distribution:	Directors of Local Departments of Social Services Executive Directors of Voluntary Authorized Agencies Child Welfare Supervisors Child Protective Services Supervisors Foster Care Supervisors Adoption Supervisors CONNECTIONS Implementation Coordinators
Contact Person(s):	See Section IV.
Attachments:	None

Filing References

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	NYS Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
			Social Security Act (SSA) Section 479		CONNECTIONS Build Bulletin: Build 2, 2022 CONNECTIONS Tip Sheet "Recording AFCARS Information"

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Informational Letter (INF) is to inform local departments of social services (LDSSs) and voluntary authorized agencies (VAs) that the federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) requirements have been updated to now include the reporting of additional information in CONNECTIONS. These new reporting requirements are referred to as "AFCARS 2.1." The AFCARS 2.1 requirements became effective October 1, 2022.

II. Background

AFCARS is a data collection system for national adoption and foster care data authorized under Social Security Act (SSA) section 479. Title IV-E agencies are required to collect and report data to the federal Administration of Children and Families (ACF) on children in out-of-home care, children who exit out-of-home care to adoption or legal guardianship, and children who are covered by a Title IV-E adoption or guardianship assistance agreement. AFCARS information is used to identify trends, plan for needed services, establish funding priorities, conduct research and evaluation, maintain/update regulations, and respond to requests for data about foster care and adoption.

In 2016, ACF revised AFCARS regulations to incorporate statutory mandates, implement the assessment of penalties for non-compliant data submissions, enhance the information provided to ACF, and incorporate data elements related to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). The regulations were initially to be effective on October 1, 2019. Thereafter, in 2018, ACF extended the effective date to October 1, 2020. The extension allowed time to comply with federal Executive Order 13777 requiring federal agencies to establish a Regulatory Reform Task Force to review existing regulations and make recommendations regarding their repeal, replacement, or modification.

In 2020, ACF revised the AFCARS regulations again to streamline and reduce the requirements and push out the effective date to October 1, 2022. The out-of-home care data file in the 2016 final rule required Title IV-E agencies to report approximately 272 items; the final rule reduced the number of required items to 205. The 2020 changes mean the final rule does not include data elements asking for information on, among other things, the sexual orientation of the child, foster parent, adoptive parent, or legal guardian, and reduces data elements related to ICWA.

CONNECTIONS has been updated to include additional fields for federally required data elements. The revised AFCARS requirements are referred to as "AFCARS 2.1" and went into effect October 1, 2022.

III. Program Implications

As of October 1, 2022, new and expanded data elements in CONNECTIONS are used for AFCARS 2.1 federal reporting purposes. The AFCARS reporting periods cover October 1 through March 31, and April 1, through September 30, each year. Files must be submitted to ACF by May 15, and November 14, respectively. All AFCARS information is required and must be entered into CONNECTIONS.

There are significant differences between AFCARS 2.1 and the previous AFCARS requirements (referred to as "AFCARS 1.0").

- The AFCARS file now shows longitudinal/historical information rather than point-in-time data.
- AFCARS 2.1 increases the out-of-home care data elements required from 66 to 186 and includes 19 adoption and guardianship assistance-related items
- AFCARS 2.1 includes all children with active adoption and guardianship assistance agreements rather than only new discharges with assistance agreements.
- AFCARS 2.1 requires high compliance standards and includes fiscal penalties for non-compliance.

Fiscal Penalties for Non-Compliance

In addition to expanding the content of the submission file, AFCARS 2.1 rules include fiscal penalties for non-compliance. Penalties will be assessed twice a year and will reduce the amount of federal Title IV-E funds available to New York State. Therefore, it is critical that data is entered in an accurate and

timely manner. Failure related to just one non-compliant element triggers a fiscal penalty. Penalties may be assessed related to timeliness of reporting, format, and errors in data entry.

OCFS will be reviewing files on the National Child Welfare Data Management System (NCWDMS) prior to the submission deadline to check compliance. OCFS may revise and resend its AFCARS submission as many times as necessary prior to the submission of the file to ACF.

Resources

AFCARS 2.1-related fields continue to be indicated by the red “\$” symbol and have been expanded into additional areas of the Family Services Stage (FSS). See [CONNECTIONS Build Bulletin: Build 2, 2022](#) for more details.

The CONNECTIONS tip sheet titled “Recording AFCARS Information” will be updated and available on the [CONNECTIONS page](#) of the OCFS website and within CONNECTIONS on the Helpful Info tab.

IV. Contacts

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Questions regarding the CONNECTIONS changes can be directed to the appropriate CONNECTIONS implementation specialists.

For a full listing of CONNECTIONS contacts, please visit: <https://ocfs.ny.gov/connect/contact.asp>.

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Issued by:

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