

AFCARS ASSESSMENT REVIEW FINDINGS: General Requirements
State: Georgia
AFCARS Reporting Period: October 1, 2010 – March 31, 2011 (2011A)

No.	Requirement	Notes/Findings	Rating Factor
Foster Care Reporting Population			
1	<p>Each State's data transmission must include all children in foster care for whom the State title IV-B/IV-E agency has responsibility for placement, care, or supervision (45 CFR 1355.40(a)(2)).</p> <p>The State agency shall transmit semi-annually information on each child in foster care during the reporting period (45 CFR 1355.40 (b)(1)).</p> <p>The population to be included in this reporting system includes all children in foster care under the responsibility of the State agency administering or supervising the administration of the title IV-B Child and Family Services State plan and the title IV-E State plan; that is, all children who are required to be provided the assurances of section 422(b)(10) of the Social Security Act (Appendix A to Part 1355--Foster Care Data Elements, Section II--Definitions).</p>	<p>The Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) includes the following Divisions/Offices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Division of Aging • Division of Child Support • Division of Family and Children Services • Office of Residential Care <p>The Department of Human Services is the designated single state title IV-B/E agency.</p> <p><u>Program Code, LNs 13868 – 13943 and 33965 - 34043</u> The program code extracts the foster care population based on the stage of foster care (SUB) or adoption (ADO), the child's legal status is DFCS custody, and the legal status county is not "999" (other county), or they were in DFCS custody but their legal status changed within the reporting period.</p> <p>The information to use for identifying the reporting population is pulled from the legal action screen.</p> <p>In addition to the status of foster care and adoption there are other legal statuses that reflect other services. These are not included and so these records will not be reported to AFCARS. However, there is a legal status of "short-term emergency care" status. These are cases where there is no imminent risk, no abuse or neglect. The caregiver is unavailable and the State has placement and care responsibility of the child (Georgia Code 1511). These records are to be included in the AFCARS reporting population. See item #5 for additional information regarding when these records are to be part of the reporting population.</p> <p>The selection logic correctly includes the records of children whose only placement is "runaway" and the child is in the agency's responsibility for placement and care. See foster care elements #23, date of placement and #41, foster care setting for additional information and necessary changes for those elements.</p>	2

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		The selection logic is incorrectly including the records of children whose only placement is a hospital or locked facility (juvenile justice) and the agency has responsibility for placement and care. These removal episodes are never included in the AFCARS reporting population. See foster care elements #18 - 20 (information on the removal episodes) for additional information regarding these records if the child does enter foster care at another time.	
2	This includes American Indian children covered under the assurances in section 422(b)(8) of the Act on the same basis as any other child (45 CFR 1355.40(a)(2)).		4
3	For children in out-of-State placement, the State placing the child and making the foster care payment submits and continually updates the data (45 CFR 1355.40(a)(2)).	There is a legal status of “custody with other State” and these are correctly excluded in the selection logic.	4
4	This population includes all children supervised by or under the responsibility of another public agency with which the title IV-B/IV-E State agency has an agreement under title IV-E and on whose behalf the State makes title IV-E foster care maintenance payments (Appendix A to Part 1355--Foster Care Data Elements, Section II--Definitions).	The agency has an inter-agency agreement with the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). The State also has joint custody of these DJJ youth and the DFCS worker manages the case and enters the foster care information into SHINES.	4
5	The reporting system includes all children who have or had been in foster care at least 24 hours. (Appendix A to Part 1355--Foster Care Data Elements, Section II--Definitions)	The program code must be modified to include records with a “short-term legal status.” Since it may be possible that these children may be in care for less than 24 hours, the program code must be modified to check for the start and end of a removal episode and use the time field associated with the placement to determine if the removal episode was less than 24 hours. Or, add a time field to the start and end time fields of the removal field. If the removal episode is less than 24-hours, then these records must be excluded from the reporting population. (Also, see foster care elements #18, 19, 20, and 21 for additional information.)	2
6	Foster care does not include children who are in their own homes under the responsibility of the State agency. (Appendix A to Part 1355--Foster Care Data Elements, Section II--Definitions)	The agency does have care and placement of children that remain in their own home with their parent(s) and receive in-home services. The State is correctly not including these children in the foster care reporting population. (These children are reported in NCANDS. Also, this is not the same as a “constructive removal.”)	4
7	A title IV-E agency that exercises the option to extend	The State’s age of majority is 18. The State does not claim title IV-E	4

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	<p>assistance to youth age 18 or older must collect and report data to AFCARS on all youth receiving a title IV-E foster care maintenance payment. (45 CFR 1355.40, ACYF-CB-PI-10-11, Issued July 9, 2010)</p> <p>Includes youth over the age of 18 if a payment is being made on behalf of the child (Child Welfare Policy Manual, Section 1.3).</p>	<p>funds on youth after the age of 18.</p> <p><u>Program Code, LNs 13868 – 13943 and 33965 - 34043</u></p> <p>The program code extracts the foster care population based on the stage of foster care (“SUB”) or adoption (“ADO”) and the child’s age is 18 or less (based on subtracting the birth date from a constant of 6575 days).</p> <p>As of the onsite AAR the State <u>has decided</u> not to exercise the option to extend title IV-E foster care maintenance payments to youth over the age of 18 and up to the age of 21. If the State chooses to exercise the option in the future, the AAR IP will be modified accordingly.</p>	
8	<p>Include all children who are in the placement, care, or supervision responsibility of the title IV-B/E agency that are on “trial home visits” (Child Welfare Policy Manual, Section 1.3).</p>	<p>The agency does have children that are returned to their home and the agency still has responsibility for placement and care. The agency continues to include these records in the foster care reporting population until the agency’s responsibility for care and placement has been dismissed. The agency has a policy that the agency should no longer have responsibility for care and placement any longer than longer 180. However, if the child is still in care at 180 days, the agency must submit a report to the court and the judge may extend the agency’s responsibility for an additional amount of time.</p>	4
Adoption Reporting Population			
9	<p>[D]ata are required to be transmitted by the State on all adopted children who were placed by the State title IV-B/IV-E agency, and on all adopted children for whom the State agency is providing adoption assistance (either ongoing or for nonrecurring expenses), care or services directly or by contract or agreement with other private or public agencies. (45 CFR 1355.40(a)(3))</p> <p>All children adopted who had been in foster care under the responsibility and care of the State child welfare agency and who were subsequently adopted whether special needs or not and whether subsidies are provided or not. (Appendix B to Part 1355--Adoption Data Elements, Section II - Definitions)</p>	<p><u>Program Code</u></p> <p>The program code extracts records of children that were in the GA foster care system and were adopted.</p>	4
10	<p>For a child adopted out-of-State, the State which placed</p>		4

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11	<p>the child submits the data. (45 CFR 1355.40(a)(3))</p> <p>The State must report on all children who are adopted in the State during the reporting period and in whose adoption the State title IV-B/IV-E agency has had any involvement. (45 CFR 1355.40(a)(3))</p> <p>All special needs children who were adopted in the State, whether or not they were in the public foster care system prior to their adoption and for whom non-recurring expenses were reimbursed; and All children adopted for whom an adoption assistance payment or service is being provided based on arrangements made by or through the State agency. (Appendix B to Part 1355--Adoption Data Elements, Section II - Definitions)</p>	<p>The agency does enter into adoption agreements with families adopting a child through a private agency when the child is determined to be special needs.</p> <p>The agency also enters into adoption agreements with families for the purpose of paying non-recurring costs.</p> <p>These records can be entered into the system by using the Non-Incident AFCARS Information Page. This allows the worker to enter the case without having to enter an abuse/neglect report. While many of the fields are the same, there appears to be some differences</p> <p>The agency team indicated that private agency adoption agreements are mostly for non-recurring cost than for subsidies.</p> <p>The agency staff indicated that if a private agency in another State was placing a child for adoption with a family in Georgia, and the child is special needs, they would/could enter into an adoption agreement with the family. This does not currently happen very frequently.</p> <p>The program code checks for records of “non-GA DFCS kids.” There must be at least one approved adoption agreement or service authorization entered.</p>	4
Technical Requirements			
12	<p>The data must be extracted from the data system as of the last day of the reporting period and must be submitted in electronic form as described in appendix C to this part and in record layouts as delineated in appendix D to this part. (45 CFR 1355.40, sections (b)(1))</p> <p>For foster care information, the child-specific data to be transmitted must reflect the data in the information system when the data are extracted. (45 CFR 1355.40(b)(2))</p> <p>Provide data for all children who were discharged from</p>	<p>The test deck had several errors for the current report period (11A). The data though would be correct in the 11B report in most cases. The test deck report periods were 10A, 10B and 11A. One of the issues impacting the accuracy of the information is the State’s use of effective dates and transaction dates. If the data for an event or action is entered late (in the following report period), then the information is not being extracted and reported for the regular report period.</p> <p>In regard to subsequent files, the same issues are occurring and this is tied to how the State extracts the file using the transaction dates. If the State submits a prior report period, the data that for the events, actions, etc. that occurred in that report period must be reported regardless of when they</p>	2

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	foster care at any time during the reporting period, or in the previous reporting period, if not previously reported. (Appendix D, 45 CFR 1355 Foster Care and Adoption Record Layouts Section A.1.b(5)).	were entered. State will remove restriction of transaction date for the subsequent submissions for foster care and adoption.	
13	The State agency shall transmit semi-annually information on each child adopted during the reporting period. (45 CFR 1355.40(b)(1)) Adoption data are to be reported during the reporting period in which the adoption is legalized or, at the State's option, in the following reporting period if the adoption is legalized within the last 60 days of the reporting period. For a semi-annual period in which no adoptions have been legalized, States must report such an occurrence. (45 CFR 1355.40(b)(3))	The adoption file is extracted based on the foster care transaction date. The adoption is not reported based on when it occurred but when it is recorded. While this approach will capture most adoptions that during the report period, it will also capture those that occurred towards the end of the report period but were entered after the end of the report period. At a minimum these records will definitely be reported in the following report period. Some may get reported for the actual report period it occurred if the entered right after a report period ends.	4
14	A summary file of the semi-annual data transmission must be submitted and will be used to verify the completeness of the State's detailed submission for the reporting period. (45 CFR 1355.40(b)(4)) The values for these data elements are generated by processing all records in the semi-annual detailed data transmission and computing the summary values for Elements 1 and 3-22. Element 2 is the semi-annual report period ending date. In calculating the age range for the child, the last day of the reporting period is to be used. (Appendix D, 45 CFR 1355 Foster Care and Adoption Record Layouts Sections A.2 and B.2)		4
15	Data file must be in ASCII format. (Appendix C, 45 CFR 1355 Electronic Data Transmission Format)		4
16	Elements must be comprised of integer (numeric) value(s). (Appendix C, 45 CFR 1355 Electronic Data Transmission Format)		4
17	All records must be a fixed length.		4

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	(Appendix C, 45 CFR 1355 Electronic Data Transmission Format)		
18	Provide data for all children who were discharged from foster care at any time during the reporting period, or in the previous reporting period, if not previously reported. (Appendix D, 45 CFR 1355 Foster Care and Adoption Record Layouts, Section A.1.b(5))		4
19	State extracts all records based on the transaction date of discharge (foster care element #57) or the date of latest removal (foster care element #21), if the child has not been discharged. (ACYF-PI-CB-95-09, Reissued May 23, 1995 and Technical Bulletin #13, AFCARS File Extraction)		4
20	State must use correct file name for transmission. (Technical Bulletin #2, File Format)		4
Data Quality - Conversion			
21	State transferred historical information on open cases. Specifically, it included information on: date of first removal, total number of removals, and whether the child's mother was married at the time of the child's birth. If the case was open at the time of conversion, information on the number of placement settings was included.	<p>The State did have a legacy system. The data was mostly converted through an automated process. Conversion began 12/03/07 and rollout continued through 2008/2009. Automated data conversion in SHINES was followed up with a significant effort of manual review and correction of identified errors and omissions.</p> <p>While the conversion process appears to have been largely successful, Georgia should be vigilant in continuing to monitor this situation, improving data quality wherever possible. There appear to be areas where incorrect and/or missing data affect data quality.</p>	3 4
22	The information system has the capability of recording historical information. This should apply to both open cases in which historical information must be entered, and for closed cases that re-open after conversion and must be entered into the system.		4