

**Case File Summary Report**  
**State: Missouri**  
**Report Period Under Review: April 1, 2008 - September 30, 2008 (2008B)**

## **Background**

The purpose of the case file review is to assess the accuracy of the data entered into the State's information system. A sample of 80 foster care records and 30 adoption records is pulled for the AFCARS reporting period under review. The AFCARS data submitted to the Children's Bureau on each record is then compared to information found in the paper case file. The process involved all members of the State and Federal teams.

For States that have converted from an older information system (or a paper recordkeeping method) to a new electronic case file, the case file review process identifies any issues with the accuracy of the data due to conversion. The information that is submitted to AFCARS should reflect what is in the paper case records. The case file review is the only means for the Federal team to assess the accuracy and the level of completeness of the State's conversion process from a paper or legacy system to its new information system.

The Children's Bureau recognizes for those States that chose to implement a statewide case management system (both SACWIS and non-SACWIS models) there will be far less data in the paper file since the electronic case management system is the official record. However, there are some documents that may not be part of the State's information system, such as medical reports, court reports, home studies, etc. These documents usually provide a significant amount of the information for the case file reviewers. Additionally, this process identifies issues related to timely data entry as well as how well the system is being used to record information on each case.

The Children's Bureau has found that while there may be challenges to identifying the information in the paper file, the process provides very valuable information to the review teams. The findings often provide additional information that increases the Federal team's understanding of the data reported to AFCARS. Typically, this process does not identify new problems, but confirms findings from the other components of the AAR.

Since the case file review is the only means to assess conversion, the cases selected for the review were primarily those in which the most recent removal date, or the first removal date, precedes the date the State's system became operational. If the State phased in its operational status, then the sample may reflect these dates.

This summary report provides information on the number of cases selected in the sample, the number of cases reviewed, and any relevant general information regarding the analysis of the results. The matrices that follow provide detailed findings. There are six columns in the matrices, they are:

- AFCARS Element - This is the name of each AFCARS element with the corresponding values.
- Data in AFCARS Matches Paper File - The number of records in which the reviewer found that the data submitted to AFCARS matched what was found in the paper file.

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- Data in AFCARS Does Not Match Paper File - The number of records in which the reviewer found that the data submitted to AFCARS did not match what was found in the paper file.
- Questionable - The number of records where either the reviewer had some issues with the identifying the information, or based on final analysis there was some type of inconsistency between what was reported and what was noted by the reviewer. Comments are provided in the comment column for these situations.
- Not Found - Indicates that the reviewer was not able to locate the information pertaining to the element in the paper file. This can either be due to a missing file or sections of the file, or the data are now only recorded in the information system and there are no paper documents with the data. This is not considered a negative finding.
- Comments - This column includes findings regarding the errors that were identified in the column "Data in AFCARS Does Not Match Paper File" as well as any other pertinent information pertaining to the element and the findings.

Foster Care

Number of Cases in Sample	80
Number of Cases not Sent to Office	2
Number of Cases Reviewed	73
Number of Cases Analyzed	67

In general, many of the errors identified reflect the findings from the analysis of the extraction code as well as a need for training and increased oversight by supervisors and those monitoring the contracts with the private agencies. Listed below are some of the specific highlights of findings from the case file comparison review.

- Six cases were not included in the final analysis because the youth were over the age of 19.
- One record was not included in the final analysis because the child had never been placed in out-of-home care. The agency had responsibility for placement and care but the child remained in her own home with her mother.
- Removal episodes: Mostly the errors appear to be related to issues identified with the selection and extraction logic in the program code (see notes for foster care elements #18 - 21). As expected there were cases where the child's first placement had been a hospital and so the removal dates were incorrect. Some of the errors were due to the AFCARS report indicating more removal episodes than what the reviewer found, and in some of these cases the data submitted to AFCARS was inconsistent. For instance, in the AFCARS report the date of the first and current removal episode (elements #18 and 21) were the same and indicated one removal episode, but the number of removals reported to AFCARS was "2" (element #19). In regard to discharge from foster care information, there were records that had a date of discharge but "not applicable" was reported for the discharge reason (the child had actually been discharged so a reason should have been reported). There were other issues with the discharge information that appear to be related to the State's method for

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handling the end of a “trial home visits” as well as the placement end reasons and discharge outcome reasons in the same field.

- Placement Information: Most of the errors in the placement date reflected the issue that the start and end dates of placements reflects when payments start and end and not when the child actually was placed in the setting. In one case the date the child was discharged from foster care was reported as a new placement date. There were almost as many errors with too many placement changes being reported as there were of not all placements being counted. There were several errors where the current living arrangement should have been reported as “trial home visit.” There were several other errors that either the worker is not entering the placement setting timely, or there is an issue with the extraction routine. These cases may have been ones that are with the private child placing agencies.
- In regard to incorrect responses for diagnosed conditions (elements #11 - 15), it is not clear whether this was due to incorrect mapping or incorrect data entry.
- There were several records reported as “unable to determine” for the caretaker’s family structure. This may be reflective of incomplete data conversion. In nearly all instances the reviewers found a caretaker family structure.
- For those elements that did not have a significant number of errors (six or more), the State should still address issues that may related to a need for additional training on the meaning and use of certain fields and the importance for accurate data recording, as well as supervisory oversight regarding the accuracy of the data.

Adoption

Number of Cases in Sample	30
Number of Cases not Sent to Office	1
Number of Cases Reviewed	29
Number of Cases in Analyzed	26

- Three cases were not analyzed because the reviewers noted the children were not Missouri cases but were children in custody of another State’s child welfare system.
- Several records were identified as errors because the child had been determined to be a special needs child and the AFCARS indicated that the child was not. The information regarding whether the child was receiving a monthly subsidy was correctly reported.
- Information was incorrect in regard to whether the child’s mother was married at the time of his/her birth. These cases were reported as “unable to determine.” This may be another area that was not completed converted to the new system.
- The reviewers were able to identify an additional relationship between the child and the adoptive parent.