AFCARS ASSESSMENT REVIEW FINDINGS – General Requirements
State: Wisconsin
Report Period Under Review: October 1, 2005 - March 31, 2006 (2006A)

No.	Requirement	Findings/Notes	Rating Factor
Foster Care Population			
1	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)). All children in foster care under the responsibility of the State agency administering or supervision 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 (the Act) (Appendix A – SECTION II).	The Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) is the designated title IV-B and IV-E single State agency. For all counties, except for Milwaukee, the county agency covers child welfare and juvenile justice. The State includes in its reporting population children that were adjudicated delinquent and are court ordered into the agency's responsibility for care and placement. If the only placement is a locked facility, the State correctly does not include the child in the AFCARS population.	4
2	All children supervised by or under the responsibility of another public agency with which the title IV-B/E agency has an agreement under title IV-E and on whose behalf the State makes title IV-E foster care maintenance payments (Appendix A - SECTION II).	There is a title IV-E agreement between DHFS and the Department of Corrections. However, the DFHS no longer claims title IV-E funds on behalf of children placed by the Department of Corrections.	4
3	Includes American Indian children covered under section 422(b)(10) of the Act, on the same basis as any other child (45 CFR 1355.40(a)(2)).	There are 11 Federally recognized Tribes in WI. The counties are fiscally responsible for tribal children and the cases are entered into the system and reported to AFCARS.	4
4	For children in out-of-State placements, the State placing the child submits and continually updates the data (45 CFR 1355.40(a)(2)).	The State only reports children under its care and placement responsibility.	4
5	Includes all children who have been in foster care at least 24 hours (Appendix A - SECTION II).	The program code excludes removals that begin and end on the same day.	4
6	Does not include children who are in their own homes under the responsibility of the State agency (Appendix A - SECTION II).	The program code excludes children with a placement setting of "Kinship Care – Voluntary." These are cases in which the family has arranged for the child to be placed with a family member and the agency does not have placement and care responsibility. The State may be providing in-home services to the family.	4

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7	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, AFCARS Reporting Population).	Currently the State does not have a policy regarding "trial home visit." However, they are developing a policy that addresses "trial reunification." The State indicated that they will allow for a child to be placed back in his/her own home while still under the responsibility of care and placement of the agency. The policy will stipulate that this cannot exceed 90 days.	4
8	Includes youth over the age of 18 if a payment is being made on behalf of the child (Child Welfare Policy Manual, Section 1, AFCARS).	The State's age of majority is 18. The State does claim title IV-E funds for youth over the age of 18 up through the completion of school or their 19th birthday, whichever occurs first. These youth are included in the AFCARS reporting population.	4
Adoption Population			
9	Data 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)). Report on all children adopted in the State during the reporting period and in whose adoption the State title IV-B/IV-E agency has had any involvement. All adoptions after 10/1/94 that meet the criteria below must be reported. • Children 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 – Section II, paragraph (a)).	The State reports on all children adopted from the WI foster care system. The State uses a transaction date to identify which cases have already been reported to AFCARS and those that have not.	4
10	Report on all children adopted in the State during the reporting period and in whose adoption the State title IV-B/IV-E agency has had any involvement. All adoptions after 10/1/94 that meet the criteria below must be reported.	The State does have adoption agreements with families that adopt from a private agency. These adoptions are entered into eWiSACWIS and reported to AFCARS.	4

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	• All special needs children, whether or not they were in the public foster care system prior to their adoption and for whom non-recurring expenses were reimbursed. Children adopted for whom an adoption assistance payment or service is being provided based on arrangements with the State agency. (Appendix B – Section II, paragraphs (b) and (c)).		
11	For children adopted out-of-State, the placing State reports the adoption data (45 CFR 1355.40(a)(3)).	State reports its adoptions in which the child is placed out-of-State.	4
12	Voluntarily reports on all other adoptions. (Appendix B – Section II).		
Technical Requirements			
45 CFR 1355.40(b)(1)			
13	The data must be extracted from the data system as of the last day of the reporting period		
14	The data must be submitted in electronic form as described in Appendix C.		
15	The data must be in record layouts as delineated in Appendix D.		
45 CFR 1355.40(b)(2)			
16	For foster care information, the child-specific data to be transmitted must reflect the data in the information system when the data are extracted.	The State does report data that is in the system as of the end of the report period. However, not all data are entered in a timely manner. This is addressed in the date element matrices.	4
45 CFR 1355.40(b)(3)			
17	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.		4
Appendix A, 45 CFR 1355 Foster Care Data Elements and Appendix B, 45 CFR 1355 Adoption Data Elements			
18	State uses sequential numbering of the case record number or encrypts the record number.	The State encrypts the record number.	4

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Appendix C, 45 CFR 1355 Electronic Data Transmission Format			
19	Data file must be in ASCII format.		4
20	Elements must be comprised of integer (numeric) value(s).		4
21	All records must be a fixed length.		4
22	Inform the Department, in writing, of the method of transfer intended to be used by the State.		
Appendix D, 45 CFR 1355 Foster Care and Adoption Record Layouts			
23	Report the status of all children in foster care as of the last day of the reporting period (Section A.1.b(5)).	The State does report data that is in the system as of the end of the report period. However, not all data are entered in a timely manner. This is addressed in the date element matrices.	4
24	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 (Section A.1.b(5)).		
ACYF-PI-CB-95-09, Reissued May 23, 1995			
25	State extracts all records based on the transaction date of discharge or removal.		
Technical Bulletin #2, File Format			
26	State uses correct file name for transmission.		4
Data Quality - Conversion			
27	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.	One issue that continues to impact the quality of Wisconsin's data, resulting in missing or incomplete information for some elements, is its four-year conversion process. State's response to the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System Assessment Review (SAR) describing its conversion process: "For conversion, the State used electronic, manual or a combination of electronic and manual processes to convert individual county data to WiSACWIS. Most electronic information was from payment records or client registration systems. Additional information was entered at the	3

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		local level to complete the basic information for the case. For the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (BMCW), cases were converted from the local Scripts system that contained placement and payment information. Their conversion included complete history for all open cases and some closed cases at the time of conversion. For cases that had a placement history prior to WiSACWIS that re-opens, the case is typically opened as a new case. If the case had prior activity in WiSACWIS, the case is reopened as a former case. BMCW has a relatively low re-entry rate, so the lack of history for some cases has little impact on AFCARS reporting. For the State Special Needs Adoption Program (SNAP), cases were set up in WiSACWIS as guardianship of children was transferred from counties to the state. For cases open at the time of conversion, typically only the portion of the case while under state guardianship was loaded. Information on placement and payments was converted from the state Adoptions Assistance and Foster Care (AAFC) payment system. For 2001 and 2002, new cases for SNAP were typically set up with little or no history prior to state guardianship as that history was reported by counties in the HSRS CSC Module. BMCW cases did come with history as they were transferred to the Milwaukee adoption program in WiSACWIS. In 2003 and 2004, as more counties are using WiSACWIS, more cases are being transferred to the SNAP in WiSACWIS with history and for other cases basic information needed for AFCARS such as the date of removal from home are being entered as cases are set up by adoption staff in WiSACWIS. When WiSACWIS rollout is complete, cases transferred to SNAP all will come with placement history. The lack of history for adoption cases does not affect most permanency measures such as re-entry rate, placement stability or time to reunification. The lack of history does have a significant adverse impact on the permanency measure for time to adoption, but this adverse impact is diminishing over time. For the rollout to counties starting in 2001, the conversion requirements changed over time. The first group of counties was required to convert only open cases, although counties could choose to convert closed cases.	

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		For some of the initial counties, complete history was not converted for open cases. DHFS established conversion policies in 2002 requiring complete case history for all open cases during the AFCARS period that the county converted in and for counties to load all cases open since June 2002. As the rollout has proceeded, counties are loading more closed cases with the 2004 group of counties loading two years of case activity. For counties where manual data conversion was used, the state provided a Manual Data Entry program where counties were asked to enter all AFCARS-related placement data in for cases open at the point of conversion. Beginning with counties that implemented WiSACWIS after June 2002, counties were asked to enter all placement history on any case that was open during the AFCARS Reporting Period in which the county implemented WiSACWIS. Many counties who used electronic conversion also reviewed and manually corrected any errors in the placement history for open and closed cases prior to converting the data to WiSACWIS. Through the use of AFCARS exception reports and system enhancements completed in February 2003, essential AFCARS information can be added for cases that are still open for the current episode. For closed cases and prior episodes of current cases, there is very limited capacity to correct incomplete historical information. DHFS is planning to create a historical placement screen in WiSACWIS to allow for such corrections. The lack of history for many county cases does affect permanency measures such as re-entry and time to reunification. This adverse impact will diminish over time" (June 2004). There are 404 records in the 2006A data file that do not have a date of first removal (foster care element #18). This is a decrease from prior report periods and reflects that the State is addressing data clean-up. The missing information is related to conversion. The State staff indicated they are using the history screen to clean up data.	

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		Based on the case file review, findings: 17 (24%) of the records analyzed did not match what was reported in AFCARS. In four of the error cases, the reviewers found more removals than what were reported in AFCARS. In one error case, the child actually only had one removal episode and not two as reported to AFCARS. In four other error cases, the actual date of removal was earlier than the one reported to AFCARS. In each of the error cases noted here, conversion appears to be a contributing factor. All the cases with additional removal episodes were prior to the one reported and had occurred prior to the county coming online. Refer to the case file review findings for elements related to removal episodes and placements for additional findings. ACF encourages the State to focus on the remaining converted cases and ensure that the correct number of removals and placements are entered into eWiSACWIS.	
28	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.	The system has the capacity to record historical information.	4