



**Technical Bulletin #8**  
**AFCARS Encryption/Decryption**  
**Utility: C Version 2.1**  
**REVISED: January, 2012<sup>1,2,3</sup>**

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This Technical Bulletin provides guidance for installing and executing the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) Encryption/Decryption Utility. By following the guidance of this Bulletin, title IV-E agencies will be able to properly encrypt and decrypt record numbers to report as the record number in the agency's data file (foster care element # 4 and adoption element #3).

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<sup>1</sup> Initial issuance date May 26, 1995 as Technical Bulletin #10.

<sup>2</sup> Revised for century date format August 31, 1996, see ACYF-IM-CB-96-08, issued April 17, 1996, and 65 FR 4019.

<sup>3</sup> Previously issued March, 2000 as Technical Bulletin #5.

## I. Introduction

### A. AFCARS Background

AFCARS is designed to collect uniform, reliable information on children who are under the responsibility of the title IV-B/IV-E agency for placement, care, or supervision. The collection of adoption and foster care data is mandated by section 479 of the Social Security Act (the Act). The requirements for AFCARS are codified in Federal regulation at 45 CFR 1355.40. Effective October 1, 2009, section 479B(b) of the Act authorizes direct Federal funding of Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations, and Tribal consortia that choose to operate a foster care, adoption assistance and, at Tribal option, a kinship guardianship assistance program under title IV-E of the Act. On January 6, 2012, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) issued an Interim Final Rule (IFR)<sup>3</sup> to implement statutory provisions related to the Tribal title IV-E program. The Federal regulations at 45 CFR 1355.40 were amended to apply the same regulatory requirements for data collection and reporting to a Tribal title IV-E agency as are applied to a State title IV-E agency.

AFCARS was established to provide data that would assist in policy development and program management. Data can be used by policymakers at the Federal, Tribal, and State levels to assess the reasons why children are in foster care and to develop strategies to prevent their unnecessary placement into foster care. Specifically, the data include information about foster care placements, adoptive parents, and length of time in foster care, and make it possible to identify trends in particular geographic areas. Also, the data enable the Children's Bureau to administer the Federal title IV-E foster care and adoption assistance programs more effectively. The Children's Bureau and ACF use these data for a number of purposes, including:

- responding to Congressional requests for current data on children in foster care or those who have been adopted;
- responding to questions and requests from other Federal departments and agencies, including the General Accounting Office (GAO), the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Inspector General (OIG), national advocacy organizations, States, Tribes, and other interested organizations;
- developing short and long-term budget projections;
- developing trend analyses and short and long-term planning;
- targeting areas for greater or potential technical assistance efforts, for discretionary service grants, research and evaluation, and regulatory change; and
- determining and assessing outcomes for children and families.

Additionally, the AFCARS data are used specifically in the

- Adoption Incentives Program;

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<sup>3</sup> 77 FR 896 (January 6, 2012)

- Child Welfare Outcomes Report;
- Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs);
- Title IV- E Eligibility Reviews; and
- Allotment of funds in the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP).

## ***B. Overview of the Technical Bulletin***

To protect confidentiality when reporting detailed data to AFCARS, title IV-E agencies are required to assign a sequential number or a unique number. For children in foster care this number is to follow the child as long as he or she is in foster care. While title IV-E agencies may use either sequential numbering or a unique number, the Children's Bureau encourages title IV-E agencies to use encryption of the agency's person number. Additional information on developing an encryption routine can be found in Technical Bulletin #7, Encryption Guidelines and Algorithms.

This Technical Bulletin provides guidance for installing and executing the AFCARS Encryption/Decryption Utility: C Version 2.1. The utility follows all guidelines listed for encryption software development found in AFCARS Technical Bulletin #7, Encryption Guidelines and Algorithms. It is designed to ensure the confidentiality of title IV-E agency person numbers; the Children's Bureau will be **unable** to decode the encrypted AFCARS record number.

## **II. Overview of the Encryption/Decryption Utility**

### ***A. Utility Programs***

This utility consists of three programs that perform different functions:

1. One program will encrypt the AFCARS record number in a title IV-E agency's properly formatted and concatenated AFCARS data file with delimiters<sup>4</sup>;
2. A second program will decrypt the AFCARS record numbers that have been encrypted using the AFCARS Encryption/Decryption Utility; and,
3. A third program will decrypt the AFCARS record number in any report that is sent to the title IV-E agency that includes AFCARS record numbers that have been encrypted with the AFCARS Encryption/Decryption Utility, such as the detailed error reports that are sent back to the title IV-E agencies after each submission.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** The AFCARS Case Record Encryption/Decryption Utility will process only ASCII formatted files as specified in Technical Bulletin #9: AFCARS File Format. The utility will not work for files created in EBCDIC and/or other non-ASCII

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<sup>4</sup> For instructions on how to properly format an AFCARS submission file with delimiters, see Technical Bulletin #9: AFCARS File Format.

formats, or files concatenated in an order other than the one specified in Technical Bulletin # 9.

### **B. Utility Files**

The utility is available in the C programming language. The utility includes the source code and PC-compatible executables. A complete listing of the files is as follows:

<b>File Purpose</b>	<b>File Name</b>
Encrypt Record Identifier (Executable)	ENCR_C.EXE
Decrypt Record Identifier (Executable)	DECR_C.EXE
Decrypt Standard Format Reports (Executable)	RDCR_C.EXE
Encrypt Record Identifier (Source Code)	ENCR_C.C
Decrypt Record Identifier (Source Code)	DECR_C.C
Decrypt Standard Format Reports (Source Code)	RDCR_C.C

### **C. Options for Using the Utility**

The Children's Bureau is providing both source code and executables to allow the title IV-E agency to select its own approach for encrypting the AFCARS record number. Three options are listed below:

1. *Use the executables.* This is the easiest option. Simply copy the three executables to the PC where the AFCARS data submission is stored and execute them. The executables will only run on a PC under DOS. An authorized individual must enter the encryption/decryption key each time the program is executed.
2. *Use the source code.* This option provides the flexibility to execute the utility on different computer platforms. The source code can be copied to a PC or mainframe. The code must then be compiled and executed with the key entered at run-time. Additionally, the code may be edited by hard-coding the key directly into the source program prior to compilation. If the key is hard-coded, the utility will not prompt for the key when the program is executed.

3. *Use both executables and source code.* Options 1 and 2 may be combined. For example, the encryption/decryption key may be hard-coded into the source code of the encryption program, but the executables might be used for the file decryption and report decryption programs. An advantage of this option is that an operator would not be required to remember the key each time the encryption program is executed. However, an authorized individual would have to have access to the key to decrypt the case record identifiers, thus adding an extra measure of security. If this option is selected, use the executables that were written in the same language as the modified source code.

#### ***D. The Encryption/Decryption Key***

When using the utility, the authorized title IV-E agency personnel must agree precisely what the key will be in accordance with the guidelines and specifications outlined in AFCARS Technical Bulletin #7: Encryption Guidelines & Algorithms, to determine how the case record identifiers are encrypted. The key can be any 12 character combination of letters and/or numbers. However, it is imperative that the authorized personnel responsible for the key remember that:

1. The **exact** same key must be used for encrypting and decrypting files.
2. The key must be **exactly** 12 characters long.
3. The key is case sensitive. For example, "THISISTHEKEY" is not the same as "thisisthekey" or "Thisisthekey".

Since the key can be used to decrypt the AFCARS record number, it must be **safeguarded against unauthorized access**. The key must also be **protected against loss**. If the key is lost, the Children's Bureau will not be able to assist in decrypting the case record identifiers since the key is determined by the title IV-E agency and only known to authorized title IV-E agency personnel.

If option 1, "Use the executables," is selected, please follow the specific directions in Section III of this document. If using the source code (option 2), please follow the specific directions in Section IV of this document.

### **III. Using Only the Executables - Option 1**

#### ***A. Installing the Software***

The ready-to-use executable files for the case record identifier encryption, file decryption, and report decryption programs are available from the Children's Bureau by sending an email to [afcars@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:afcars@acf.hhs.gov). Copy the files to a compatible personal computer running DOS 3.0 or higher.

The executable files are as follows:

File Purpose	C File Name
Encrypting Record Identifier	ENCR_C.EXE
Decrypting Record Identifier	DECR_C.EXE
Decrypting Standard Format Reports	RDCR_C.EXE

### ***B. Encrypting Record Numbers***

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** The AFCARS Encryption/Decryption Utility will process only ASCII formatted files as specified in Technical Bulletin #9: AFCARS File Format. The utility will not work for files created in EBCDIC and/or other non-ASCII formats, or files concatenated in an order other than the one specified in Technical Bulletin #9.

Execute the encrypt command with one parameter - the name of the AFCARS detail file containing the title IV-E agency client identifiers. For example, if the AFCARS detail file name is "FC\_DET.DOC", the command would be:

ENCR\_C(space)FC\_DET.DOC

The program will prompt for the encryption key. Type the encryption key and press <Enter>.

The file "OUTFILE" will be generated. The data in "OUTFILE" is unaltered; only the case record identifiers will be encrypted.

### ***C. Decrypting the AFCARS Record Numbers***

A decryption routine is included to allow title IV-E agencies to decode the AFCARS record numbers. This utility is included as a safeguard. If the AFCARS submission file is inadvertently lost, this utility can recreate it using the file generated by the encryption utility.

Execute the decrypt command with the name of the AFCARS detail file with the encrypted case record identifiers. For example, if the input encrypted file name is "OUTFILE," the command would be:

DECR\_C(space)OUTFILE

The program will prompt for the key. **MAKE SURE TO USE EXACTLY THE SAME KEY** that was used when the case identifiers in the original file were encrypted using the

AFCARS Encryption/Decryption Utility. Type the key and press <Enter>. A file named "DECRYPT.OUT" will be generated; it will be identical to the file that was originally encrypted.

#### ***D. Decrypting the AFCARS Detail Reports***

Another important use for the AFCARS Encryption/Decryption Utility is to decrypt the Detailed AFCARS Reports that are returned to the title IV-E agency by the Federal AFCAR System. These reports enumerate all errors that are subject to penalty in the submission file. Title IV-E agencies receive two of these report files for each AFCARS submission: one for foster care and one for adoption.

Since these files will be returned with the encrypted record identifiers, title IV-E agencies will not be able to match them to the records in the agency's data system until the decryption routine is executed.

Execute the report decryption command with the name of the AFCARS Detail Report. For example, if the name of the report is "FC\_RPT.DOC", the command would be:

```
RDCR_C(space)FC_RPT.DOC
```

The program will prompt for the key. MAKE SURE TO USE EXACTLY THE SAME KEY that was used when the case identifiers in the original file were encrypted using the AFCARS Encryption/Decryption Utility. Type the key and press <Enter>. A file named "DECRYPT2.OUT" will be generated; it will be identical to "FC\_RPT.DOC" except that each record will have the State/Tribe's case record identifier in place of the encrypted case record identifier.

### **IV. Modifying the Source Code - Option 2**

#### ***A. Installing the Software***

To modify the source code for any of the three programs, copy those files to a personal computer or mainframe. The file names for the source code files written in C are:

File Purpose	C Source Code File Name
Encrypting Record Identifier	ENCR_C.C
Decrypting Record Identifier	DECR_C.C
Decrypting Standard Format Reports	RDCR_C.C

After copying the source code, use a text editor to make changes to the source code. The following section explains what changes to make.

### ***B. Modifying the C Source Code***

The code may be modified to include the key. Without this modification, an encryption key will be required at each run-time.

Ordinarily, when executing the programs, the program will prompt for the key. Hard-coding an encryption key eliminates this prompt. The key *must* be 12 characters long. For example, **thisisthekey** is acceptable. (This example is for illustration purposes only; do not use this key when executing this utility.)

Figure 1 contains the C code that appears in all three source code files that need to be modified. Modifications are shaded.

Figure 1

Original Code	Modified Code
<pre> /* ** ** This is what requires MODIFICATION. ** Please note that source code will be shipped without ** any key at all. The following comment will be shipped ** with the source code. ** ** NOTE: You must enter the KEY into the variable "inputline" ** (a 12-character string) in the strcpy function cell ** if you want the program to execute properly! */ strcpy(inputline,"");  /* ** And you will comment out the following code, from here... */ printf("Enter the key: "); if (gets(inputline) == NULL) {     fprintf(stderr, "You must supply a key for this program to run!\n");     fprintf(stderr, "Terminating...\n");     exit(-1); }  if (strlen(inputline) != 12) {     fprintf(stderr, "You must supply a key with exactly 12 characters.\n");     fprintf(stderr, "Your key has %d characters.\n", strlen(inputline));     fprintf(stderr, "Terminating...\n");     exit(-1); }  /* ** To here... */ </pre>	<pre> /* ** ** This is what requires MODIFICATION. ** Please note that source code will be shipped without ** any key at all. The following comment will be shipped ** with the source code. ** ** NOTE: You must enter the KEY into the variable "inputline" ** (a 12-character string) in the strcpy function cell ** if you want the program to execute properly! */ strcpy(inputline,"<b>thisisthekey</b>");  /* ** And you will comment out the following code, from here... */ /* printf("Enter the key: "); if (gets(inputline) == NULL) {     fprintf(stderr, "You must supply a key for this program to run!\n");     fprintf(stderr, "Terminating...\n");     exit(-1); }  if (strlen(inputline) != 12) {     fprintf(stderr, "You must supply a key with exactly 12 characters.\n");     fprintf(stderr, "Your key has %d characters.\n", strlen(inputline));     fprintf(stderr, "Terminating...\n");     exit(-1); } */  /* ** To here... */ </pre>

Please note that while this code appears in all three C source code files, it is not necessary to modify it in all three files. For example, one option is to choose to hard-code the key only into the encrypt program, while not modifying the source code in the file decrypt or report decrypt programs. The advantage of this approach is that an operator would not need the key to execute the encryption program, but an authorized individual will have to have access to the key to decrypt the case record identifiers, thus adding an extra measure of security.

### C. Compiling the C Source Code

After modifications are made, compile the source code using a C compiler to create an executable(s). **Compile all modified files.**

While the name of the executable(s) will not affect performance, we recommend the following naming conventions:

File Purpose	Executable Name
Encrypting Record Identifier	ENCR_C.EXE
Decrypting Record Identifier	DECR_C.EXE
Decrypting Standard Format Reports	RDCR_C.EXE

### D. Encrypting the Client Files

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** The AFCARS Encryption/Decryption Utility will process only ASCII formatted files as specified in Technical Bulletin #9: AFCARS File Format. The Utility will not work for files created in EBCDIC and/or other non-ASCII formats, or files concatenated in an order other than the one specified in Technical Bulletin #9. Operational instructions for C follow:

Step 1: Execute the encrypt command with one parameter - the name of the AFCARS detail file containing the State/Tribe's case record identifiers. For example, if the AFCARS detail file name is "FC\_DET.DOC", the command would be:

ENCR\_C(space)FC\_DET.DOC

Step 2: Provided the encryption key is not hard-coded into the source code, the operator will be prompted for the key. Type the key and press <Enter>. If the code is modified to include the encryption key, no action is required. The file "OUTFILE" will be generated. The data in "OUTFILE" is unaltered; only the case record identifiers will be encrypted.

### E. Decrypting the Client Files

A decryption routine is included to allow title IV-E agencies to decode the case record identifiers. This utility is included as a safeguard. If the AFCARS submission file is inadvertently lost, this utility can recreate it using the file generated by the encryption utility.

Step 1: Execute the decrypt command with the name of the AFCARS detail file with the encrypted case record numbers. For example, if the input encrypted file name is "OUTFILE" the command would be:

DECR\_C(space)OUTFILE

Step 2: The program will prompt for the key. MAKE SURE TO USE EXACTLY THE SAME KEY that was used when the case record identifiers in the original file were encrypted using the AFCARS Encryption/Decryption Utility. Type the key and press <Enter>. A file named "DECRYPT.OUT" will be generated; it will be identical to the file that was originally encrypted.

#### ***F. Decrypting the AFCARS Detail Reports***

1. Step 1: Execute the report decryption command with the name of the AFCARS Detail Report. For example, if the name of the report is "FC\_RPT.DOC," the command would be:

RDCR\_C(space)FC\_RPT.DOC

2. Step 2: The program will prompt for the key. MAKE SURE TO USE EXACTLY THE SAME KEY that was used when the case record identifiers in the original file were encrypted using the AFCARS Encryption/Decryption Utility. Type the key and press <Enter>. A file named "DECRYPT2.OUT" will be generated; it will be identical to "FC\_RPT.DOC" except that each record will have the title IV-E agency person record identifier in place of the encrypted record identifier.

#### **V. Additional Information**

If additional information is required on installing and executing the AFCARS Encryption/Decryption Utility, please send an email to [afcars@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:afcars@acf.hhs.gov).