

November 9, 2006

INFORMATIONAL TEXT to accompany the “ComputeComposites.zip” file

Overview

What does this zip file do?

The files contained in the ComputeComposites.zip file will compute the four Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) second round permanency composite scores for a State.

What do I need to make this work?

To use the files in this zip file, you must have:

- 1) Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)
- 2) Microsoft “Excel”

What happens when I unzip ComputeComposite.zip?

For the added convenience of the user, ComputeComposites.zip is designed to automatically create its own appropriate directories and sub-directories (folders and sub-folders) on your hard drive. You will want these directories and sub-directories (folders and sub-folders) when you are using the syntax.

In addition to creating the directories and sub-directories (folders and sub-folders), when you unzip this file, three files are made available:

- 1) **CompositeSyntax_Nov_09_06.sps** SPSS syntax to calculate the individual measures subsumed under each of the four composites.
- 2) **ChangeDates.sps** This SPSS syntax provides the various dates used by composite syntax.
- 3) **ComputationalSpreadsheet_Nov_09_06.xls** Upon using the composites syntax (CompositeSyntax_Nov_09_06.sps), this Excel spreadsheet is created and is populated with the output from the syntax. Then Excel automatically computes a State’s composite scores, including:

Overall composite scores for a State

A percentile equivalent for each composite score

Performance on individual measures under each composite

Performance on individual measures by county (up to 258 counties)

Details for Technical Staff:

When unzipped, the zip file will create the needed directories and place the various files in these directories (a.k.a. folders) as specified by the paths found in the SPSS syntaxes. **If you unzip the “ComputeComposites.zip” file onto a drive other than your C:\ drive you will need to change the C:\ drive designation in the syntax, CompositeSyntax_Nov_09_06.sps to the drive where you unzipped it.**

The two SPSS syntaxes work in tandem to generate an Excel spreadsheet, which will populate the Excel computational spreadsheet, which, with its underlying formulas, will compute the composite scores.

There are only three significant steps in the process of generating the composite scores. The first is the need to change the names of the source files, begin and end dates of the timeframes each source file represents, and placing the source files in the correct directory.

Changing the names of the five source files

In the syntax, **CompositeSyntax_Nov_09_06.sps**, only the name of the five source files being used needs to be changed. In the syntax, **ChangeDates.sps** the only changes necessary are the dates so that they parallel the timeframes of the source files being used. The details regarding these changes can be found embedded in the comments section(s) of each syntax.

Putting source files in the Composite folder

The only additional step(s) will be to place the various source files into the “Composite” directory or folder and make sure the source file names match the file names in the “Create File Handles” section of the **CompositeSyntax_Nov_09_06.sps**. The create file handles section begins on line 43 in the **CompositeSyntax_Nov_09_06.sps** syntax. Currently, the source files are ID’d with an “xxx” and it will be convenient to replace these “xxx”s with your State’s two digit postal code. This step is also reviewed in comments section of the syntax, **CompositeSyntax_Nov_09_06.sps**.

The results you will get

The computational spreadsheet is composed of 4 work sheets, one for each permanency composite. The spreadsheet will accommodate your State’s number of counties (accommodates up to 258 counties). In addition to your State’s scaled composite score calculations, this spreadsheet will also generate your State’s performance on each individual measure as subsumed under each composite. Finally, it will calculate , for your State’s scaled composite score, a percentile relative to the distribution of State

composite scores as used in setting the national standards. For example, if your State's composite score on "Permanency Composite One" were 105 and the percentile were 65%, that means that your State's score of 105 was better than 65% of all the State composite scores from the 2004 distribution of scores on permanency composite one. This distribution of State composite scores served as the source for setting the national standards for permanency composite one. This explanation is applicable to the remaining three permanency composite measures, two, three and four.

How the syntax works

The following discussion describes the relationship between the syntax, **CompositeSyntax_Nov_09_06.sps** and the **ComputationalSpreadsheet_Nov_09_06.xls**.

The composite syntax (**CompositeSyntax_Nov_09_06.sps**) is run using SPSS, and it utilizes a set of 5 different foster care source files. Additional details are found on page one of this document and as mentioned there, even **more details can be found in the comments** of the syntax, **CompositeSyntax_Nov_09_06.sps**. This syntax will generate results for each individual measure, e.g. "Time to Reunification", "Time to Adoption", etc. and these results are compiled on a county-by-county basis. These measures are ultimately subsumed under individual composites.

The final product of this syntax is an "EXCEL" spreadsheet (StateSheet.xls) that will automatically populate the computational spreadsheet (**ComputationalSpreadsheet_Nov_09_06.xls**). Once the StateSheet.xls has been created, the first step is to open this sheet first, then open the computational spreadsheet and if given options related to macros, **choose "enable macros"**. This "Computational Spreadsheet" automatically generates your State's composite score for each permanency composite due to being populated by the data contained in the StateSheet.xls. It is anticipated that this automated process will be further enhanced in the coming weeks.

The computational spreadsheet also contains a macro which will hide unused rows after being populated with your State's data. Pressing Ctrl + Shift + D launches the macro. Finally, you may save this spreadsheet for dissemination by doing the following - select "**Edit**" from the toolbar followed by "**Links**", followed by "**Break Links**". The file is now ready to be saved with the name and location of your choice. **Give the file a new name in order to preserve the original version and its links. Do not save over the computational spreadsheet.**

If you are **not provided the option to "Break Links"** you can do the following: On each sheet (see the tabs in the lower left hand corner of the screen, Perm One, Perm Two, etc., choose Perm One, press Ctrl+A, choose "**Edit**", then "**Copy**", then "**Edit**" again, then "**Paste Special**", then choose the option "**Values**" and click "**OK**". This will break all the links associated with this given sheet; consequently, these same steps need to be followed for each of the other three sheets. **Give the file a new name in order to**

preserve the original version and its links. Do not save over the computational spreadsheet.

While the syntax, **CompositeSyntax_Nov_09_06.sps** contains a significant amount of supporting information most centers around the logistics of the processing rather than detailed descriptions of the computational aspects of the syntax.

Future Plans: Enhancements

It is expected that to more fully meet users' needs, more computational details of the syntax will be released in another version of the syntax,

CompositeSyntax_Nov_09_06.sps, in the next two weeks or so. This more detailed version will be accompanied by additional syntax that will combine two consecutive AFCARS six-month submissions into a twelve-month file of children served.

In addition to these syntaxes, a set of **pseudo code** will be made available to make the composite computational logic more transferable to **other software and programming languages**.

Lastly, it is expected that, in December 2006, a set of SAS syntax will be made available that mirrors the SPSS syntax.

Please see the chart on the page that follows (last page of this document), for a summary of the file logistics related to the computing of the composites, and use of the syntaxes and spreadsheet.

“Overview of computing State Composites”

