

## **Chapter 2: Sources of the Data**

National Child Abuse and Neglect Data  
System (NCANDS), Adoption and Foster  
Care Analysis and Reporting System  
(AFCARS), Alternative Sources

## Sources of the Data

- State data profiles have been designed and calculated using two national data collection systems:
  - NCANDS – National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System
  - AFCARS – Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System

### **What Are the Sources of Data?**

The State Data Profiles are designed and calculated using two national data collection systems:

#### **National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System**

The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) is a collaborative, voluntary information collection system that gathers and analyzes annual State statistics on abused and neglected children. NCANDS data are collected annually on a Federal Fiscal Year basis. NCANDS consists of two parts designed to collect State child abuse and neglect information at different levels of detail, which are the agency file and the child file.

#### **Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System**

The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) is a federally mandated system for collecting data on children in foster care and children who have been adopted under the auspices of the State child welfare agency. AFCARS data are submitted semiannually on a Federal fiscal year basis.

### Source: NCANDS

- Submission by States is VOLUNTARY
- Reported annually for the Federal fiscal year
- Consists of two parts designed to collect State child abuse and neglect information at different levels of detail:
  - Child File (case level data)
  - Agency File (aggregated State totals)

#### **NCANDS Information**

P. L. 100-294, passed on 4/24/88, amended the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and directed DHHS to establish a national data collection and analysis program on child abuse and neglect. The first NCANDS report was in 1992 for 1990 data.

As noted earlier, NCANDS submission is voluntary and the data are submitted on a Federal fiscal year basis.

NCANDS consists of two reporting components, the Child File which provides case level data and the Agency File which provides aggregated counts for data elements not available on a case level basis.

## NCANDS Child File

- Case-level information from CPS agencies on children who were the subject of an investigation alleging child maltreatment
- Used to generate aggregated counts of children for the State Data Profiles

### NCANDS Child File

The Child File holds case-level information from CPS agencies on children who are subjects of reports alleging child maltreatment. This information, for example, is necessary to fill in the Unique Children Counts on the State Data Profiles.

## Key Child File Data Elements

- Age and sex of children who were the subject of a maltreatment investigation or assessment
- Maltreatment allegations by type and disposition
- Services provided
- Characteristics of maltreatment perpetrators

### **What Are the Child File Data Elements?**

The Child File collects four primary categories of data used in the Safety Profiles:

- The first category of data refers to the characteristics of a specific child who is the subject of an investigation or assessment (e.g. age, sex, race);
- The second category of data refers to the characteristics of a report of alleged maltreatment (e.g. report date, maltreatment type, maltreatment disposition);
- The third category of data refers to services, including placement of the child in foster care, associated with the maltreatment report.
- The fourth category of data refers to the characteristics of perpetrators of substantiated or indicated maltreatment (e.g., age, sex, race, and relationship to victim).

## Agency Data File

- A compilation of key aggregate data from States
- Includes counts that cannot be aggregated from the case level Child File

### NCANDS Agency File

Currently the Agency File is a compilation of key aggregate data from States. The Agency File includes information that cannot be reported in conjunction with the case level data associated with the case level Child File. For example, a number of States report maltreatment fatalities in the Agency File which for a variety of reasons might be excluded from the Child File.

### Key Agency File Data Elements

- Screened investigations
- Maltreatment fatalities not reported in the Child File
- CPS staffing
- Preventive services
- Response time to investigation

#### **What Are the Agency File Data Elements?**

The Agency File asks each State to report a variety of aggregated statistics that cannot be computed from the Child File including:

- Screened Investigations
- Maltreatment fatalities not reported in the Child File
- CPS staffing
- Preventive services
- Response time to investigation

## States Submitting NCANDS

- Forty-five States submitted the Child File; almost all of them also reported aggregate-level data in the Agency File for items that were not obtainable at the child level, such as the number of CPS workers. Five States reported aggregate statistics through the aggregated data file, the Summary Data Component; four of these States are in the process of developing the Child File. (CM 2004)

### **States Submitting NCANDS**

Forty-five States submitted the Child File; almost all of them also reported aggregate-level data in the Agency File for items that were not obtainable at the child level, such as the number of CPS workers. Five States reported aggregate statistics through the aggregated data file, the Summary Data Component; four of these States are in the process of developing the Child File. (Child Maltreatment 2004)

### Source: AFCARS

- Reporting by the States is MANDATORY
- AFCARS consists of 2 files—foster care and adoptions
- One record for each child served by the foster care system during the 6-month reporting period
- Data are reported twice a year--every 6 months on a Federal fiscal year basis
  - October 1 - March 31 (report period A) - Submitted on May 15
  - April 1 - September 30 (report period B) - Submitted on November 14

### **Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System**

Title IV-E, Section 479 of the Social Security Act was passed in 1986, directing DHHS to establish and implement a system for the collection of comprehensive adoption and foster care data in the United States. On 9/27/90, DHHS published proposed regulations to implement the data collection system known as AFCARS. The first reporting period was 10/01/94 to 03/31/95.

AFCARS reporting by the States is mandatory. AFCARS consists of 2 files – foster care and adoptions. In AFCARS there is one record for each child served by the foster care system during the 6-month reporting period. Data are reported twice a year – every 6 months on a Federal fiscal year basis.

The dates are:

- Report Period A: October 1 – March 31 (Data are due no later than May 15)
- Report Period B: April 1 – September 30 (Data are due no later than November 14)

## AFCARS Foster Care

- Foster Care File
  - Case-level data on all children in out-of-home care
  - Must include children who are under placement, care, or supervision of the State child welfare agency
    - Tribal children
    - Children covered by an inter-agency agreement
    - Youth over the age of 18 up to 19 years and receiving a title IV-E payment
  - 66 data elements

### **What Are the AFCARS Components?**

#### **Foster Care File**

As noted before, AFCARS consists of a foster care file and an adoption file. AFCARS collects case-level data on all children in out-of-home care who are under placement, care, or supervision of the State child welfare agency, and on children adopted under the auspices of the State title IV-B/E agency.

Depending on a State's structure and policies, the AFCARS data may include tribal children, children covered by an inter-agency agreement, and youth over the age of 18 up to 19 and receiving a title IV-E payment.

There are a total of 66 data elements.

## AFCARS Adoption

- Adoption File
  - Case-level data on all children adopted with State child welfare agency involvement
    - placed by the State child welfare agency
    - for whom the State agency is providing adoption assistance (either ongoing or for non-recurring expenses)
    - for whom care or services are provided directly or by contract or agreement with other private or public agencies
    - States may also voluntarily report adoptions with no State child welfare agency involvement.
  - 37 data elements
- Adoption Database is not reflected in the data profiles.

### **What Are the AFCARS components?**

#### **Adoption File**

The adoption file contains case-level data on all children adopted with State child welfare agency involvement. This includes adopted children who were placed by the State child welfare agency, children receiving adoption assistance, and children for whom services are provided either directly or by contract or agreement with other private or public agencies. States may also voluntarily report on adoptions with no State child welfare agency involvement.

There are a total of 37 data elements.

Elements from the adoption file are not used in the State Data Profiles.

### Alternative Data Sources

- NCANDS is the preferred data source for the Safety portion of the State Data Profiles.
- Alternative sources must be submitted for approval by the Regional Office at least 8 months prior to the on-site review.
- If no alternative data are available, the State may be found not in substantial conformity for those outcomes to which those data elements apply.
- Alternative data sources may be used in place of NCANDS only. AFCARS is the only acceptable source for the permanency measures.

#### **What Are Approved Alternative Data Sources?**

Alternative data sources may be used in place of the NCANDS data only. AFCARS is the only acceptable foster care data source for use in the data profile. NCANDS is the preferred data source for the safety section of the State Data Profile.

Should those data be unavailable or incomplete for the review year, States must submit alternative sources for approval by the Regional Office at least 8 months prior to the on-site review. If no alternative data are available for the review year, the State may be found not in substantial conformity for those outcomes to which those data elements apply.

### Alternative Sources May Include:

- Completed NCANDS child file programming
- Unconverted data in a legacy system
- General statistics from any relevant database the State has available
- General sources: paper reports, supervisor/management reports, paper based event logs (hand counts)
- Sampling (as a last resort)

### What Are Possible Alternative Sources of Data?

Other approved alternative sources of data may include:

- Resubmitted AFCARS files
- Completed NCANDS DCDC programming for year 2000, applied to year 1999 and prior data
- Unconverted data in a legacy system
- General statistics from any relevant database the State has available
- General sources: paper reports, supervisor/management reports, paper-based event logs (hand counts)
- Submitting a sampling as a “last resort” source of alternative data.

## Elements Used in the CFSR

### NCANDS Child File

- Element 3: Report ID
- Element 4: Child ID
- Element 6: Report Date
- Elements 27, 29, 31, and 33: Maltreatment Disposition Level
- Elements 89, 108, and 127: Perpetrator Relationship

### **NCANDS Elements Used in the CFSR**

#### NCANDS Child File

- Element 3: Report ID
- Element 4: Child ID
- Element 6: Report Date
- Elements 27, 29, 31, and 33: Maltreatment Disposition Level
- Elements 89, 108, and 127: Perpetrator Relationship

## Elements Used in the CFSR

### AFCARS Foster Care

- **Element 6: Child birth date\***
- **Element 21: Date of latest removal from home\*\***
- Element 23: Date of placement in current foster care setting
- Element 24: Number of previous placement settings in this episode
- **Element 41: Current placement setting\*\*\***
- Element 56: Date of discharge from foster care
- Element 58: Reason for discharge
- **Element 47: Mother's date of TPR (or date of death)\*\*\*\***
- **Element 48: Legal or putative father's TPR (or date of death)\*\*\*\***

### AFCARS Elements Used in the CFSR

The following elements from the AFCARS Foster Care File are used in the CFSRs:

- **Element 6: Child birth date\***
- Element 21: Date of latest removal from home\*\*
- Element 23: Date of placement in current foster care setting
- Element 24: Number of previous placement settings in this episode
- **Element 41: Current placement setting\*\*\***
- Element 56: Date of discharge from foster care
- Element 58: Reason for discharge
- **Element 47: Mother's date of TPR (or date of death)\*\*\*\***
- **Element 48: Legal or putative father's TPR (or date of death)\*\*\*\***

The bolded elements were those not used in Round 1, but are used in Round 2.

\*To determine if child reached the age of 18

\*\*Date of latest removal from home is used to calculate whether the child has been in care for at least 8 days

\*\*\*Current placement setting: Trial Home Visit is now used

\*\*\*\*Termination of Parental Rights Date used to determine if child is "legally free for adoption."

## National Standards

- Important part of ensuring that Federal, State, and local agencies remain focused on achieving the highest level of results
- National Standards for the two independent measures and for each of the four composites are established from 2004 State data. AFCARS data from 2003 were used for some measures.
- The 75th percentile becomes the national standard for that data element.

### **How Are the National Standards Determined?**

Because the national standards for the first round of the CFSR were based on the distribution of performance across States, they are relative rather than absolute. By setting the standard at the 75th percentile (as adjusted for sampling error and for normality of distribution), the goals represented by the standards are realistic and attainable and that, by establishing standards, the Children's Bureau is promulgating the expectation that States make concerted efforts to achieve these goals.

## National Standards

Safety Indicator 1: Maltreatment Recurrence	94.4 or higher
Safety Indicator 2: Maltreatment of children in foster care	99.67 or higher
Permanency Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunification	110.2 or higher
Permanency Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions	103.0 or higher
Permanency Composite 3: Achieving permanency for children in foster care	111.7 or higher
Permanency Composite 4: Placement stability	108.5 or higher

### **National Standards**

The table shown above lists the national standards for each indicator and composite.

Note: Section 9 of the Toolkit provides a Table of Data Indicators for the CFSR and includes the range, median and if applicable, the national standard for each indicator and measure.