

Chapter 3: Introduction to the Data

Data Used in the State Data
Profile and What Has Changed
from Round One

Importance of the Data

- Represent one view of the performance of the State child welfare system
- Show State and national trends
- Can help determine whether State child welfare agencies are achieving the desired outcomes of safety and permanency for children

What is the Importance of the Data?

Using the data in the CFSR is only one way in which to view the performance of State child welfare systems. The CFSR data are important because they illustrate local trends and demonstrate how local trends relate to national trends. More importantly, the results of the data help to determine whether State child welfare agencies are achieving the desired outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being for children.

Keep in Mind...

- Data elements must be looked at holistically; individual elements do not show the “big picture.”
- You need to look behind the numbers – both good and bad.
- Data that meets AFCARS standards for compliance does not necessarily mean good data.

Word to the Wise

Data elements must be looked at holistically because individual elements do not show the “big picture.” It is essential for States to look at all the data - both good and bad - to get a complete picture of how the State is achieving safety, permanency, and child well-being. It is important to remember that one must look behind the data to truly understand it. Just because the data look good, does not mean that it is “good data.” For example, penalty-free AFCARS data does not necessarily equate to good data. An example of penalty-free AFCARS data that is not necessarily good data is a State having an excessively low number of discharges. This type of information cannot be flagged by quality or compliance reports, so a State could pass the data compliance check. However, an extremely low number of discharges should indicate to the State that a data extraction problem exists or that possible programmatic issues are present.

State Data Profile

- Each State receives a State Data Profile
- Allows for comparison against national standards
- Contains composites scores and aggregate data indicators used to determine substantial conformity

State Data Profile

As part of the statewide assessment process, States receive a State Data Profile. The data profiles allow each State to compare certain safety and permanency data indicators with national standards determined by the Children's Bureau. These profiles include the composites that are used to assess a State's conformity with timeliness and permanency of reunification, timeliness of adoption, achieving permanency for children in foster care, and placement stability.

The data profiles are generated by the Children's Bureau and are based on the data that States transmit to ACF in their AFCARS and NCANDS.

The data profiles also include statewide aggregate data indicators. The Children's Bureau has established national standards for each of the statewide aggregate data indicators and composites used to determine substantial conformity. When a State is undergoing a Child and Family Services Review, the State and the Regional Office will compare the State's data for the period under review, as presented in the State Data Profile, with the national standards to determine the State's compliance with the standards.

Why Are State Data Profiles Important?

- The data serve as a major building block for the CFSRs
- The Child and Family Service Reviews utilize statewide data indicators, case reviews, and qualitative information to determine achievement in two areas:
 - Outcomes
 - Systemic Factors

Why are State Data Profiles important?

The Child and Family Services Reviews utilize statewide data indicators, case reviews, and qualitative information to determine achievement in two areas—Outcomes and Systemic Factors.

Prior to development of the Statewide Assessment for the CFSR, each State will receive a State Data Profile. This profile will continue to include the information that was provided in the first round of the CFSR. It also will include new information regarding composite scores, the measures for the composites, and additional information relevant to the composites. The State Data Profile also will include information pertaining to the relative contribution (or weight) of a variable to the composite.

Additional information may be added to the State Data Profile at a later date. Most of the data will be provided for 3 years so that the State can observe and examine trends and changes over time. However, the States to be reviewed in the first year of the CFSR will have only 2 years of data for each of the composites and composite measures.

Differences Between Round 1 and Round 2

- Uses of the complement of the Round 1 safety measures (i.e. absence of maltreatment vs. maltreatment)
- Standards set from 2004 data; 2003 data were also used to set some standards
- The use of data composites
- Optional use of a “rolling year” of data

Differences in the National Standards Between Round 1 and Round 2

Uses the complement of the old safety measures. For example, in the first safety indicator, the focus has shifted from the occurrence of maltreatment to the absence of maltreatment. In the second safety indicator, the focus has shifted from maltreatment in foster care to absence of maltreatment in foster care. This was done so that all data measures address performance from a positive perspective.

The national standards for the second round were calculated using data pertaining to State performance in 2004, with data from FY 2003 included when there is a measure requiring longitudinal analysis that spans fiscal years.

The process for creating the standards is the same as the last round (State data, 75th percentile, etc.)

Rather than using single data measures for which national standards are established, revisions rely on the use of data composites.

In Round 2, it is possible to use of a “rolling year” of data rather than the federal fiscal year. Please see “Child and Family Services Review Technical Bulletin #1 (January 2005) at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwmonitoring/general_info/tech_bull.htm for further details.

What Has Not Changed

- Contrary to popular belief, States will not have to submit new data elements.
- All of the data used for Round 2 of the CFSR reviews still come from existing data sources.

What Has Not Changed

Contrary to popular belief, States will not have to submit more data or new data elements. All of the data used for Round 2 of the CFSR reviews come from existing data sources – AFCARS and NCANDS. Although there are no “new” elements, there are a few more additional AFCARS and NCANDS elements incorporated into the new composites that were not used in the first round of CFSRs.

Overview of the State Data Profile

The data included in the State Data Profile assist States in examining service populations from two different perspectives:

- NCANDS and AFCARS data provide **point-in-time** profiles. The profiles provide States with information on the status of the service populations as of a given date.
- AFCARS data are also used to provide States with information on the **cohort** group of children entering foster care for the first time in their lives during the period under review.

Overview of the State Data Profile

The data included in the State Data Profile assist States in examining service populations from two different perspectives:

First, the NCANDS and AFCARS data provide point-in-time profiles of the child protective service and foster care populations and include all children in the State who are included in the AFCARS and NCANDS databases. The profiles provide States with information on the status of the service populations as of a given date.

Second, AFCARS data are also used to provide States with information on the cohort group of children entering foster care for the first time in their lives during the period under review. Through these data, States have the opportunity to begin tracking progress in certain areas longitudinally.

CFSR Round 2: Composites, Components, Measures

- A composite reflects the general domain that is assessed by the data.
- Each composite comprises one or more components
- Each component comprises one or more measures.

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Composites

There are four data composites in CFSR Permanency Outcome 1. A composite reflects the general domain that is assessed by the data. The four composites are:
Permanency Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunifications;
Permanency Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions;
Permanency Composite 3: Achieving permanency for children in foster care; and
Permanency Composite 4: Placement stability.

Components

Components are the general factors that contribute to the composite score. If a composite has two components, each one contributes 50 percent to the composite score. If a composite has three components, each one contributes 33.3 percent to the composite score.

Measures

The measures provide the actual data for the analysis. The contribution of each measure (also called the weight) to the component score is determined by the principal components analysis and is presented in attachment B.

CFSR Outcome Revisions by Status of Data Elements Not Previously Used in CFSR Round 1

CFSR Outcome	AFCARS/NCANDS Data Elements Used in Construction
Safety Outcome 1	
Maltreatment Recurrence	No changes in elements used in computation.
Maltreatment in Foster Care	No changes in elements used in computation.
Permanency Outcome 1	
Permanency Composite 1: Timeliness and Permanency of Reunification	
Component A. Timeliness of Reunification:	
Discharges Reunified in 12 Months	Introduces AFCARS 'Placement Setting' = 'Trial Home Visit' into computation. State should perform validation tests on reporting THV in conjunction with children discharged from care.
Median Length of Stay of Children Discharged from Care	Introduces AFCARS 'Placement Setting' = 'Trial Home Visit' into computation. State should perform validation tests on reporting THV in conjunction with children discharged from care.
Percent of New Entries Discharged in 12 Months	Introduces AFCARS 'Placement Setting' = 'Trial Home Visit' into computation. State should perform validation tests on reporting THV in conjunction with children discharged from care. Also introduces use of AFCARS 'Record Number' to track children across annual submissions. State should perform validation tests on reporting 'Record Number' to ensure children are appropriately tracked over time.
Component B. Permanency of Reunification	
Percent of Discharged Children Reentering Care	Introduces use of AFCARS 'Record Number' to track children across annual submissions. State should perform validation tests on reporting 'Record Number' to ensure children are appropriately tracked over time.

Permanency Composite 2: Timeliness of Adoptions	
Component A: Timeliness of Adoptions of Children Discharged from Foster Care	
Adoption Discharges within 24 Months	No changes in elements used in computations.
Median Foster Care Stay of Children Discharged to Adoption	New computation, but no new data elements are introduced.
Component B: Progress Toward Adoption for Children Who Meet ASFA Time-in-Care Requirements	
Of Children in Care >17 Months, Percent Adopted in 12 Months	New computation, but no new data elements are introduced.
Of Children in Care >17 Months, Percent Legally Free in 6 Months	Introduces use of TPR dates into formulation. State should perform validation tests on reporting TPR to ensure that dates are appropriately recorded (e.g., if child discharged to adoption, then TPR dates should be recorded).
Component C: Progress Toward Adoption of Children Who Are Legally Free for Adoption	
Of Children Legally Free for Adoption, Percent Adopted in 12 Months	Introduces use of TPR dates into formulation. State should perform validation tests on reporting TPR to ensure that dates are appropriately recorded (e.g., if child discharged to adoption, then TPR dates should be recorded).
Permanency Composite 3: Achieving Permanency for Children in Foster Care	
Component A: Achieving Permanency for Children in Foster Care for Extended Periods of Time	
Of Discharged/Legally Free Children, Percent Discharged to Permanent Home	Introduces use of TPR dates into formulation. State should perform validation tests on reporting TPR to ensure that dates are appropriately recorded (e.g., if child discharged to adoption, then TPR dates should be recorded).
Of Children in Care >24 Months, Percent Discharged to Permanency	New computation, but no new data elements are introduced.
Component B: Children Emancipated Who Were in Foster Care for Extended Periods of Time	
Of Children Discharged to Emancipation, Percent in Care > 3 Years	Introduces use of 'Discharge Reason' = 'Emancipation' as basis for defining reporting universe. States should perform validation tests on reporting 'Emancipation' as the reason for discharge (e.g., vast majority of discharges to emancipation should be for children 18 or older).

Permanency Composite 4: Placement stability	
Of Children in Care <12 Months, Percent with <3 Placement Settings	No changes in elements used in computations.
Of Children in Care 12-24 Months, Percent with <3 Placement Settings	New computation, but no new data elements are introduced.
Of Children in Care >24 Months, Percent with <3 Placement Settings	New computation, but no new data elements are introduced.

Longitudinal Measures

- Wherever possible and appropriate, the data composites incorporate a combination of:
 - longitudinal measures that follow a cohort of children over time;
 - measures that capture outcomes experienced by children exiting foster care in a given year; and,
 - measures that assess the status of children in foster care within a particular timeframe.

Longitudinal Measures

The Children's Bureau included as many longitudinal measures as possible in the composites along with other types of measures. There is a general misunderstanding that AFCARS data does not permit a longitudinal analysis. Children's Bureau has used AFCARS data to assess children across years (i.e., children entering or exiting foster care in one year can be followed in subsequent years).

However, the ability to conduct longitudinal analysis for the CFSR is restricted somewhat by the timeframes of the CFSR and, in particular, the need to have data that reflect both a recent level of performance and change in performance during the period of program improvement. For example, the data used at the time of the second round of the CFSR for a given State cannot overlap with a State's Program Improvement Plan (PIP) implementation period. Within the context of the CFSR timeframes, it is not feasible to follow children for longer than a 12-month period and no measure can incorporate more than four AFCARS reporting periods (2 years).

Given this situation, most of the final composites include a combination of types of measures. Each type of measure contributes to an understanding of States' performance from a particular perspective.

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- longitudinal measures that follow a cohort of children over time;
- measures that capture outcomes experienced by children exiting foster care in a given year; and,
- measures that assess the status of children in foster care within a particular timeframe.

Descriptive Information Included in the State Data Profile

- The State Data profile includes contextual data that is not used to assess performance, but provides some additional information regarding the child welfare population.
- Where relevant, the descriptive data identified will be provided for both a point-in-time analysis and for a cohort of children entering foster care in a given year.

Descriptive Information Included in the State Data Profile

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A. Descriptive information from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS).

1. The number of reports alleging maltreatment of children that reached a disposition within the reporting year; the total numbers of reports, and the number of unique children associated with reports alleging maltreatment
2. The numbers and percentages of reports that were given a disposition of “Substantiated and Indicated”, “Unsubstantiated”, and “Other”
3. The numbers and percentages of child cases opened for services, which is based on the number of victims during the reporting period under review
4. The numbers and percentages of children entering foster care in response to a child abuse/neglect report
5. The number of child fatalities

Descriptive Information from NCANDS

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4. The numbers and percentages of children entering foster care in response to a child abuse/neglect report.
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New Descriptive Information from NCANDS

1. The median time from receipt of an allegation of child maltreatment to the initiation of an investigation (Child File).
2. The mean time from receipt of an allegation of child maltreatment to the initiation of an investigation (Child File).
3. The average time to investigation (Agency File).
4. The percent of children in foster care who are the subject of a substantiated or indicated maltreatment where the perpetrator is a parent

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2. The mean time from receipt of an allegation of child maltreatment to the initiation of an investigation (Child File).
3. The average time to investigation (Agency File).
4. The percent of children in foster care who are the subject of a substantiated or indicated maltreatment where the perpetrator is a parent.

Descriptive Information from AFCARS

1. Number of children in foster care on the first and last day of the fiscal year and number of children entering and exiting foster care in the fiscal year.
2. Placement settings for children in foster care.
3. Case plan goals for children in foster care.
4. Number of placement settings in the current foster care episode.
5. Number of foster care episodes of children in foster care at the end of the fiscal year.
6. Number and percentage of children in foster care for 17 of the most recent 22 months, calculated from the number of all children in foster care on the last day of the fiscal year.
7. The median length of stay (months) in foster care of children in care on the last day of the year.
8. Number of children who discharged to each type of permanency goal and the length of stay in foster care (in months) for those children who discharged to each permanency goal.

Descriptive Information from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS)

1. Number of children in foster care on the first and last day of the fiscal year and number of children entering and exiting foster care in the fiscal year.
2. Placement settings for children in foster care.
3. Case plan goals for children in foster care.
4. Number of placement settings in the current foster care episode.
5. Number of foster care episodes of children in foster care at the end of the fiscal year.
6. Number and percentage of children in foster care for 17 of the most recent 22 months, calculated from the number of all children in foster care on the last day of the fiscal year.
7. The median length of stay (months) in foster care of children in care on the last day of the year.
8. Number of children who discharged to each type of permanency goal and the length of stay in foster care (in months) for those children who discharged to each permanency goal.

**New Descriptive Information from
AFCARS**

1. The number and percent of children entering foster care in the fiscal year who were in care for 7 days or less before being discharged from foster care.
2. The number and percent of children exiting foster care in the fiscal year who were in foster care for 7 days or less.

New Descriptive Information from AFCARS

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Current Analytical Information from NCANDS

1. Maltreatment recurrence: Of all children who were victims of abuse and/or neglect during the first 6 months of the reporting year, the percent that were victims of another abuse or neglect incident within a 6-month period.
2. Maltreatment of children in foster care: Of all children who were in foster care during the reporting year, the percent that were victims of abuse and/or neglect by a foster parent or facility staff member.

Current Analytical Information from NCANDS

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2. Maltreatment of children in foster care: Of all children who were in foster care during the reporting year, the percent that were victims of abuse and/or neglect by a foster parent or facility staff member.

Please note that these are measures from Round 1. They are used primarily by States completing Round One Program Improvement Plans, but States may also review them to compare to prior performance.

New Analytical Information from NCANDS

1. Absence of maltreatment recurrence: Of all children who were victims of abuse or neglect during the first 6 months of the reporting year, the percent that were **not victims** of another maltreatment within a 6-month period.
2. Absence of maltreatment of children in foster care: Of all children who were in foster care during the reporting year, the percent that were **not victims** of maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff member

New Analytical Information from NCANDS

1. Absence of maltreatment recurrence: Of all children who were victims of abuse or neglect during the first 6 months of the reporting year, the percent that were **not victims** of another maltreatment within a 6-month period.
2. Absence of maltreatment of children in foster care: Of all children who were in foster care during the reporting year, the percent that were **not victims** of maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff member.

Current Analytical Information from AFCARS

1. Time to Reunification: For the reporting year, of all children who were reunified with their parents or caretakers at the time of discharge from foster care, the percent that were reunified in less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home.
2. Time to Adoption: For the reporting year, of all children who exited foster care to a finalized adoption, the percent that exited foster care in less than 24 months from the time of the latest removal from home.
3. Placement Stability: For the reporting year, of all children served who have been in foster care less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home, the percent that have had no more than two placement settings.
4. Re-entry into foster care: Of all children who entered foster care during the reporting year, the percent that re-entered foster care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.

Current Analytical Information from AFCARS (included in the Round 1 Data Profile)

1. Time to Reunification: For the reporting year, of all children who were reunified with their parents or caretakers at the time of discharge from foster care, the percent that were reunified in less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home.
2. Time to Adoption: For the reporting year, of all children who exited foster care to a finalized adoption, the percent that exited foster care in less than 24 months from the time of the latest removal from home.
3. Placement Stability: For the reporting year, of all children served who have been in foster care less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home, the percent that have had no more than two placement settings.
4. Re-entry into foster care: Of all children who entered foster care during the reporting year, the percent that re-entered foster care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.

New Analytical Information from AFCARS

1. The composite score for Permanency Composite 1: Timeliness and Permanency of Reunifications.
2. Data pertaining to actual performance on the measures included in Permanency Composite 1.

New Analytical Information from AFCARS

1. The composite score for Permanency Composite 1: Timeliness and permanency of reunifications and the national standard for this composite.
2. Data pertaining to actual performance on the measures included in Permanency Composite 1. These are as follows:

Component A – Timeliness of Reunification

Measure C1 (a1): For the reporting year, of all children discharged from foster care to reunification who had been in foster care for 8 days or longer, the percent that met either of the following criteria: (1) the child was reunified in less than 12 months from the date of the latest removal from home, or (2) the child was placed in a trial home visit within 11 months of the date of the latest removal and the child's last placement prior to discharge to reunification was the trial home visit.

Measure C1 (a2): For the reporting year, of all children discharged from foster care to reunification who had been in foster care for 8 days or longer, the median length of stay in months from the date of the most recent entry into foster care until either of the following: (1) the date of discharge to reunification; or (2) the date of placement in a trial home visit that exceeded 30 days and was the last placement setting prior to discharge to reunification.

Measure C1 (a3): For the prior reporting year, of all children entering foster care in the second 6 months of the year who remained in foster care for 8 days or longer, the percent who met either of the following criteria: (1) the child was reunified in less than 12 months from the date of entry into foster care, or (2) the child was placed in a trial home visit in less than 11 months from the date of entry into foster care and the trial home visit was the last placement setting prior to discharge to reunification.

Component B – Permanence of Reunification

Measure C1 (b1): Of all children discharged from foster care to reunification in the year prior to the reporting year, the percent that re-entered foster care in less than 12 months from discharge from a prior episode.

New Analytical Information from AFCARS (cont)

3. The composite score for Permanency Composite 2: Timeliness of Adoption.
4. Data pertaining to State performance on the measures included in Permanency Composite 2.

3. The composite score for Permanency Composite 2: Timeliness of adoptions

4. Data pertaining to State performance on the following measures included in Permanency Composite 2.

Component A - Timeliness of Adoptions of Children Discharged From Foster Care.

Measure C2 (a1): For the reporting year, of all children who were discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption during the year, the percent that was discharged in less than 24 months from the date of the latest removal from the home.

Measure C2 (a2): For the reporting year, of all children who were discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption, the median length of stay in foster care (in months) from the date of removal from the home to the date of discharge to adoption.

Component B - Progress Toward Adoption for Children Who Meet ASFA Time-In-Care Requirements.

Measure C2 (b1): For the reporting year, of all children in foster care on the first day of the year who were in foster care for 17 continuous months or longer, the percent that was discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption before the end of the fiscal year.

Measure C2 (b2): For the reporting year, of all children in foster care on the first day of the year who were in foster care for 17 continuous months or longer, the percent that became legally free for adoption within 6 months from the beginning of the fiscal year.

Component C - Progress Toward Adoption of Children Who Are Legally Free for Adoption.

Measure C2 (c1): Of all children who became legally free for adoption in the prior fiscal year, what percent was discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption in less than 12 months?

New Analytical Information from AFCARS (cont)

5. The composite score for Permanency Composite 3: Achieving Permanency for Children in Foster Care.
6. Data pertaining to State performance on the measures included in Permanency Composite 3.

5. The composite score for Permanency Composite 3: Achieving permanency for children in foster care.

6. Data pertaining to State performance on the following measures included in Permanency Composite 3.

Component A - Achieving permanency for Children in Foster Care for Extended Periods of Time.

Measure C3 (a1): For the reporting year, of all children who were discharged from foster care who were legally free for adoption (i.e., there was a TPR for each living parent), the percent that was discharged to a permanent home prior to their 18th birthday, with a permanent home defined as having a discharge reason of adoption, reunification (including live with relative), or guardianship.

Measure C3 (a2): Of all children who were in foster care for 24 months or longer on the first day of the reporting year, the percent that were discharged from foster care to a permanent home prior to their 18th birthday and by the end of the fiscal year.

Component B - Growing up in foster care.

Measure C3 (b1): During the reporting year, of all children who were emancipated from foster care or reached their 18th birthday while in foster care, the percent that had been in foster care for 3 years or longer.

**New Analytical Information from
AFCARS (cont)**

7. The composite score for Permanency Composite 4: Placement Stability.
8. Data pertaining to the measures included in Permanency Composite 4.

7. The composite score for Permanency Composite 4: Placement stability

8. Data pertaining to the following measures in Permanency Composite 4.

Measure C4 (1): For the reporting year, of all children in foster care who were in foster care for 8 days or longer and less than 12 months, the percent that had two or fewer placement settings.

Measure C4 (2): For the reporting year, of all children in foster care who were in foster care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months, the percent that had two or fewer placement settings.

Measure C4 (3): For the reporting year, of all children in foster care during the year who were in foster care for 24 months or longer, the percent that had two or fewer placement settings.

Outcomes

- Outcomes are for children and families in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being.
- Data profiles address only safety and permanency.
- 2 safety measures and 4 permanency composites on the data profiles are compared to the national standards for substantial conformity.

What Are “Outcomes” in the CFS Reviews?

The data of the CFS Reviews evaluate outcomes for children and families in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. It is important to note that State Data Profiles address only safety and permanency. The national standards are generated from NCANDS and AFCARS data. They have been established for each of the 2 safety measures and 4 permanency composites.