



CDSS

WILL LIGHTBOURNE  
DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

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EDMUND G. BROWN JR.  
GOVERNOR

January 24, 2013

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. I-03-13

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS  
ALL COUNTY CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS  
ALL FOSTER CARE MANAGERS  
ALL CDSS ADOPTIONS DISTRICT OFFICES

SUBJECT: COMPLETE, ACCURATE, AND TIMELY DATA ENTRY AND UPDATES  
TO THE CHILD WELFARE SERVICES/CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM  
(CWS/CMS) DATA

REFERENCE: ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE (ACIN) 1-44-05

This notice serves as a reminder of the need to record complete, accurate, and timely case information into the CWS/CMS. The case record for each child receiving child welfare services must contain all documentation specified in Division 31 regulations. Robust data provides comprehensive information to facilitate critical decision-making for California's foster care population. The state and counties rely on the data within CWS/CMS as an important resource for policy decisions and providing California's foster children with the best possible outcomes.

Informed oversight of California's Child Welfare Services Program data can help show what is working, however data driven decision making requires quality data that is available in a timely manner. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) collects and analyzes county foster care data so that it may continue a data informed oversight of the California Child Welfare Services Program.

In December 2012, the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) reviewed the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data for the six month period of April 1 - September 30, 2012, and determined that, in several areas, California did not substantially comply with the federal reporting requirements (45 CFR 1355.40, and section 479 of the Social Security Act).

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- State Law Change
- Federal Law or Regulation Change
- Court Order
- Clarification Requested by One or More Counties
- Initiated by CDSS

The ACF is pending a final determination of the successful completion of the Child and Family Service Review Program Improvement Plan after the resubmission of corrected data from the state.

Over 2,000 cases reported as in foster care during the prior six month reporting period, were dropped from the April 1 - September 30, 2012 report due to a lack of timely data entry of when the date a child leaves foster care. As a result, the errors exceeded the federal compliance requirement. To correct or avoid this error, the day, month, and year a child is discharged from foster care must be entered into the *Placement Episode End Date* field within 30 days following discharge.

Several AFCARS elements need improvement, including the Caretaker *Year of Birth* data field. Some case data showed that the caretakers' date of birth was not only missing but entered incorrectly, indicating someone younger than the child in their care or in excess of 100 years of age. All children in care at least 30 days from the removal date must have their information, including year of birth, identified for the first principal caretaker, and second primary caretaker if applicable, from whom the child was removed for the current foster care episode.

When documenting the caretakers' information, it is important to capture their place of birth. The Latino Child Welfare Practice Advisory Committee has reviewed recent research suggesting that the relationship between race/ethnicity and child welfare services is complex. The interaction among socioeconomic status, location, child and family characteristics, and race/ethnic differences and/or similarities in child welfare involvement require that we track data on services, performance, and outcomes over time by race/ethnicity.

It is also essential to properly document the children's information. For example, reviews of case narratives show that the race/ethnic data has not been accurately recorded, resulting in an underreporting of children with Native American heritage. This type of inaccurate or incomplete data affects appropriate service delivery and placement decisions.

The CDSS is committed to working closely with the counties toward enhancements in data accuracy overall. Over the past year there has been a focused, collaborative effort between CDSS and the counties to identify foster care facilities that may be associated with a registered sex offender.

To understand what changes in policy and practice are needed to better serve and represent our children, data analysis and examination of promising practices must occur on a consistent basis.

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Without complete, accurate, and timely case information, counties do not have access to updated records for the children and families they serve; it is difficult to identify appropriate and effective services; and it will impact federal and state outcome measures and funding. To ensure data accuracy and compliance with state and federal reporting requirements, more details on the information provided in this ACIN will follow in future All County Letters and communications with the counties.

If you have any questions, please contact Debbie Williams, Chief, Child Welfare Data Analysis Bureau, at (916) 654-1192 or by sending an email to [CWSData@dss.ca.gov](mailto:CWSData@dss.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

***Original Document Signed By:***

GREGORY E. ROSE  
Deputy Director  
Children and Family Services Division