

AFCARS Changes in WiSACWIS: Management Overview

Purpose

This memo provides managers and supervisors with an overview of the changes incorporated in WiSACWIS to better support state compliance with the federal Adoption and Foster Care Assistance Reporting System (AFCARS) reporting requirements for children in placement. These changes include modifications addressed in the August 26, 2002 release and creation of an AFCARS Exception Screen and production of Tickler Notices that will take place with the October 14, 2002 release.

Background

The Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) produces a semi-annual AFCARS file using data from WiSACWIS for children and juveniles subject to AFCARS reporting requirements. The federal government uses the state AFCARS file to establish to calculate state performance on the national outcome measures and to select cases for the federal Child and Family Services Review. The state also uses AFCARS data to support its Title IV-E claim and for other program statistics. In addition the AFCARS file will be used by the state and, ultimately, by individual counties to support continued program improvement efforts. As such, it is critical that efforts are put into place to ensure that AFCARS data reporting is correct and timely.

Cases subject to AFCARS reporting requirements are children or juveniles in out-of home care, including court-ordered kinship care placement cases and pre-adoptive foster care cases, who were in placement for more than one day and the case is not closed for services in WiSACWIS.

Overview of Changes

Changes to better support Wisconsin's compliance with AFCARS reporting requirements for the placement cases include the following:

- Changes to existing windows, screens and values that are used to generate AFCARS data;
- Development and implementation of an AFCARS Exception Screen to identify and correct reporting errors;
- Production and issuance of Tickler Notices to the assigned primary worker of cases with reporting errors; and
- Implementation of an edit check to prevent case closure if key AFCARS data elements are missing as indicated by the presence of a Tickler.

These changes apply to all placement cases where the child is in placement due to a child welfare court order, including court-ordered kinship care and presents-adoptive foster homes, or is placed under Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA).

Modifications to Existing Screens

As part of the August 26, 2002 Release, several screens and reference value lists were modified. While several changes were made, those most pertinent to AFCARS reporting requirements includes modifications to values and selection criteria available for the a child's

previous adoption and a child's disability status. The child's disability information is captured on a new screen. Because of this change location in WiSACWIS, almost **all children in placement will need to have this information entered.**

AFCARS Exception Screen

With the October 14, 2002 Release, the AFCARS Exception Screen will be activated and can be populated by data from a child's WiSACWIS information. The exception screen can be accessed from the "Utilities" pull down menu by selecting the "AFCARS" option. A blank exception screen is then presented, from which workers can search for children in placement. If a searched child has AFCARS errors, their data will be returned to the AFCARS window and workers will be able to see the errors. Errors include missing information and information that is otherwise inconsistent with AFCARS reporting requirements.

Tickler Notices

With the October 14, 2002 Release, Tickler Notices will be generated for open cases where AFCARS data is missing, incorrect or otherwise inconsistent with AFCARS reporting expectations. Tickler Notices will be sent to the current primary worker. Although the primary worker receives the tickler notice, any worker with an open assignment to the case may view and update the child's AFCARS errors on the AFCARS window. Tickler notices will be issued each day if cases subject to AFCARS reporting are found to have errors or continue to have errors that were not addressed in previous entries into the exception screen or the WiSACWIS record. If the AFCARS errors that generate ticklers are not fully corrected by the worker within fourteen (14) days from its issuance to the worker, the Tickler Notice will be forwarded to the worker's Supervisor. If, after seven (7) additional days the AFCARS errors that generate ticklers are not fully corrected, the tickler will be escalated to the person designated as the supervisor's Supervisor, often known as a Program Manager.

Please note that workers should wait one day and verify that AFCARS Ticklers have been deleted before attempting major casework, such as case closure.

Case Closure Edit Checks

As a final check to ensure AFCARS data accuracy, a case closure edit has been added. With this edit check, any case that has an outstanding Tickler Notice will not be able to be closed for services in WiSACWIS, even if the child is no longer in placement. Workers must correct the AFCARS errors that generate ticklers and verify that the Tickler is deleted before attempting to close a case.

Addressing Questions and Concerns

With the implementation of WiSACWIS and because AFCARS information is captured within the system as part of the routine data entry for placement cases, individual county agency staff have become increasingly responsible for the direct entry of AFCARS-related information for children in their care. It is likely that county agency staff, supervisors and management staff will have many questions about these requirements, the ways in which the data is used, and how to use the AFCARS Exception Screen designed to minimize reporting errors.

Workers should be encouraged to talk with their supervisors and agency program managers to better understand these reporting responsibilities and how to use the AFCARS Exception Screen. If a supervisor or program manager is unable to address worker questions, he or she should contact **Michelle Rawlings at (608) 264-9846** or via e-mail at rawlimm@dhfs.state.wi.us or **John Tuohy at (608) 267-3832** or via e-mail at tuohyjo@dhfs.state.wi.us.

If the workers questions or concerns related to problems with the exception screen or Ticker Notices, he or she should contact the [WiSACWIS Help Desk](#).