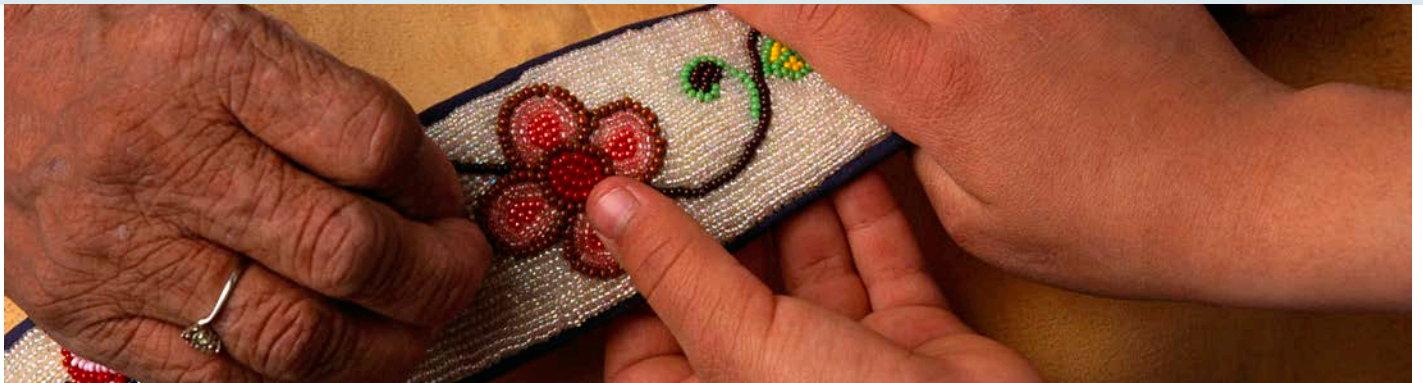


Introduction to AFCARS for Tribal Child Welfare Programs

AFCARS is the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System

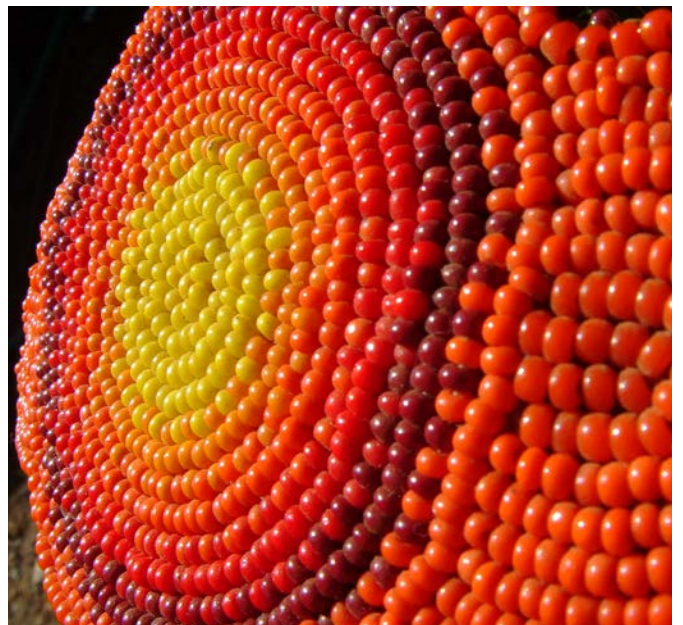


If you operate a direct title IV-E agency (meaning that you are claiming reimbursement for title IV-E-eligible foster care expenses from the federal government), you will be required to submit AFCARS data to the government twice per year. Despite its name, AFCARS is not a data system. It is two data files that contain case-level data, much of which you already may be collecting. Your case management system should be set up to take information from case files and move it to a report to submit to the government. If you receive IV-E reimbursement through your state as a pass-through, you are already reporting AFCARS data to the state regarding children who receive IV-E funding.

AFCARS helps the government learn about child welfare nationwide

Children's Bureau uses AFCARS data to learn about the characteristics, needs, and outcomes of children and families who are involved in the foster care system in every state, territory, and tribal nation that receives title IV-E funding. AFCARS data helps the government understand trends and make informed decisions on funding, technical assistance provision, regulatory change, and other planning. For example, Children's Bureau uses AFCARS data to [report child welfare outcomes to Congress](#) annually and to [conduct other important research](#).

Native children and families, although overrepresented in the child welfare system, historically have been underrepresented in AFCARS and other federal data. As more tribal nations begin to operate title IV-E agencies and report AFCARS data, policymakers and funders will understand more about tribal child welfare and how tribes are similar to or different from other jurisdictions.



AFCARS data elements include common child welfare information

The AFCARS report includes data on 1) all children who are placed in out-of-home care and 2) all children who exited care into adoption or guardianship assistance. There are 186 data elements on children in foster care, and 19 data elements on children in adoption or guardianship. Your case management system can be set up to extract these data elements to a file that you will upload to the federal data system. Your program is likely tracking many of these data elements in your daily casework. They include information on

- Demographics on children, parents/guardians, and foster caregivers
- Child health and schools
- Sex-trafficking history
- Removals and foster care placements
- Permanency plans and hearings
- Financial information
- Dates of caseworkers' monthly visits
- Child's exit from foster care

Technical assistance is available free of charge

It is important to prepare for AFCARS as early as possible because it can take longer to prepare than you might think. However, you don't have to figure it



out alone. If your tribal child welfare program is a title IV-E agency, has a title IV-E planning grant, or is a title IV-B agency and is considering direct title IV-E funding, then you can request technical assistance from the Capacity Building Center for Tribes or the Children's Bureau AFCARS team. All technical assistance is free to the tribe.

For more information on AFCARS and available technical assistance, please visit these websites:

[Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System \(Children's Bureau\)](#)

[Tribal Information Exchange \(Capacity Building Center for Tribes\)](#)

