

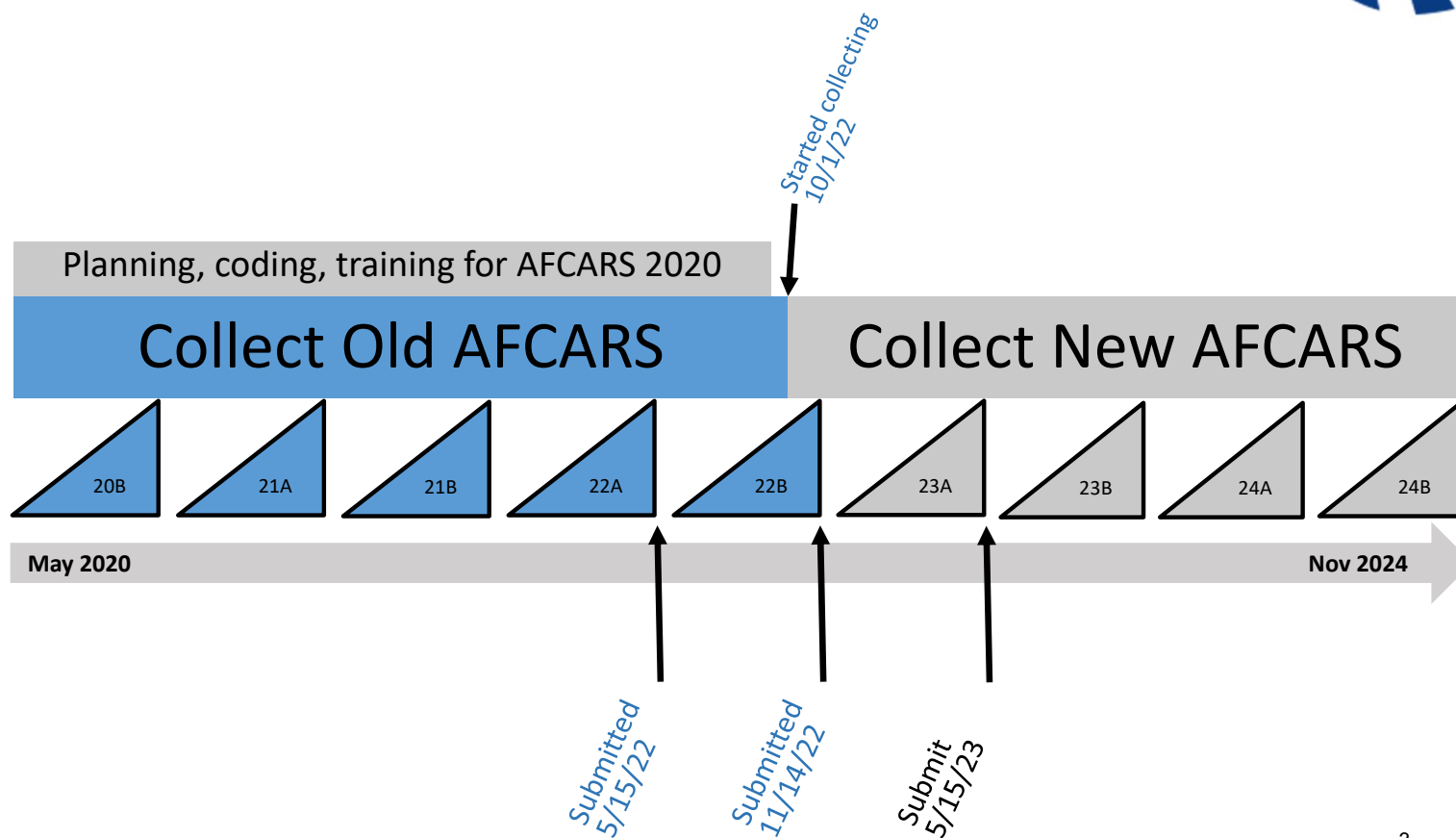


# AFCARS Open Office Hours for the implementation of AFCARS 2020

Children's Bureau Data Analytics and Reporting Team

December 12, 2022

# AFCARS 2020 Timeline



# Key Players



Name	Role
Jennifer Haight	Director, Division of Performance Measurement and Improvement
Rebecca Odor	AFCARS Program Administrator
Brendan Martin	AFCARS Technical Administrator
Malcolm Hale	Data Analytics and NCWDMS Liaison
John Hargrove	Data Analytics
Ramnik Bagai Nick Gompper Justin Spencer	NCWDMS Contractors



# AFCARS 2020 Technical Bulletins



U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Children & Families Select an ACF Office

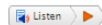
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## AFCARS Technical Assistance



Publication Date: August 31, 2012 | Current as of: June 30, 2022

The Children's Bureau develops technical bulletins (TBs) to supplement official guidance and assist states and tribes in implementing child welfare policies and practices. Below are the current technical bulletins to supplement AFCARS 2020 reporting, based on the AFCARS Final Rule published May 12, 2020 (85 FR 28410) and resources for AFCARS 1993 which ends September 30, 2022.

### AFCARS 2020

#### Technical Bulletin #20: Data Elements for Out-of-Home Care & Adoption and Guardianship Assistance Data Files

- Publication Date: October 29, 2020, Revised: January 14, 2022
- This TB gives reporting instructions and provides examples for the AFCARS 2020 out-of-home care and adoption and guardianship assistance data elements.

#### Technical Bulletin #21: XML File Structure & Encryption

- Publication Date: January 15, 2021, Revised: January 24, 2022
- This TB provides agencies with information required to create the AFCARS data files. It provides technical specifications on the structural layout of the XML data and shares the XML schema for the files. It also covers information on encryption of the file records.

#### Technical Bulletin #22: Reporting Population and Data Extraction

- Publication Date: June 22, 2021
- This TB addresses how to extract data for the Out-of-Home Care and Adoption and Guardianship Assistance Files defined in AFCARS Technical Bulletin #21. Additionally, this document includes guidance on extracting corrected files (previously referred to as subsequent files) after the required AFCARS reporting periods.

#### Technical Bulletin #23: Data Compliance & Data Quality

- Publication Date: June 23, 2021, Revised: June 6, 2022
- This TB provides title IV-E agencies with information on how compliance is determined and how penalties are assessed for noncompliant file submissions.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/laws-policies/technical-bulletins/afcars>

# Revisions to TB#20

## Appendix E



Version	Elements affected	Description
2.0	Terminology	Added clarification of null
2.0	<b>Reporting Population</b>	<b>Added clarification for reporting children over age 18 and title IV-E dollars</b>
2.0	<b>Elements 7 &amp; 10: Child's Tribal Membership, Date of Determination that ICWA Applies</b>	<b>Added clarifications of ICWA requirements</b>
2.0	Element 19 & A12: Race Abandoned	Added clarification that abandonment could be selected in combination with another race
2.0	<b>Element 36: Highest Educational Level Completed</b>	<b>Added null as a valid option</b>
2.0	<b>Element 52: Title IV-B Financial Assistance</b>	<b>Added clarification of Title IV-B funds</b>
2.0	Elements 147-148: Permanency	Added clarification that permanency plan is synonymous with permanency goal
2.0	<b>Element 155: Exit Reason</b>	<b>Added clarification of reunification as exit reason</b>
2.0	A16: Adoption or guardianship subsidy amount	Added clarification of the amount paid
2.0	<b>A19: Adoption or Guardianship Placing Agency</b>	<b>Added clarifications of definitions for adoption or guardianship placing agency</b>

## Question:

Do we report an 18-year-old who is in foster care under the placement and responsibility of the agency which is not funded using title IV-E?

## Answer:

Yes. The out-of-home care reporting population includes a child under the title IV-E agency's placement and care responsibility who:

- has run away or whose whereabouts are unknown at the time the title IV-E agency becomes responsible for the child, until the title IV-E agency's responsibility for placement and care ends;
- is placed into foster care after a non-foster care setting, until the title IV-E agency's placement and care responsibility ends;
- is placed at home, including a child on a trial discharge or trial home visit, until the title IV-E agency's placement and care responsibility ends;
- is placed from a foster care placement into a non-foster care setting, until the title IV-E agency's placement and care responsibility ends;
- is age 18 and older, including those in a supervised independent living setting, until the title IV-E agency's placement and care responsibility ends; or
- enters foster care after age 18 whether or not title IV-E dollars are used.

## Question:

What about the compliance for the ICWA elements for a state that is reporting on a child who is in the P&C of a tribe under a title IV-E agreement with the state?

## Answer:

- If a state title IV-E agency has a title IV-E agreement with a tribe where the tribe has placement and custody of the child, yet the reporting of the child record remains with the state agency, the compliance checks for responses to elements 7-12 and 61-62 will not be run.
- A state would have to indicate that the child is under a title IV-E agreement with the state by responding applies to element 104, Tribal Title IV-E Agreement, under Child and Family Circumstances at Removal.

### *Out-of-Home Care Element 104: Tribal Title IV-E Agreement (d)(4)(xxxiii)*

The child is in the placement and care responsibility of an Indian tribe, tribal organization or consortium with which the title IV-E agency has an agreement and on whose behalf title IV-E foster care maintenance payments are made.

## Question:

What would be reported if a child is 10 years old yet has never been enrolled in school since null isn't an option.

## Answer:

In the latest versions of the Technical Bulletins, we allowed null as a valid option. Null should be used if the agency indicated "0", not enrolled, for element 35 AND the child hasn't completed any educational level.



## Question:

Does element 52 only refer to title IV-B funds that are used to directly support a living arrangement? Or do we report the broader use of IV-B funds.

## Answer:

In the latest version of the Technical Bulletin #20, we clarified that for element 52, title IV-B, agencies should indicate “1”, applies, if any title IV-B funds are used to support the child’s living arrangement **or other child-specific services**.

## Question:

What would we respond for an exit reason when a child exits foster care to the other parent who was not the one from whom they were removed?

## Answer:

It is important to note that there was a change between AFCARS 1993 and AFCARS 2020 that specifies that an exit reason of reunification should be used to now include reunification with the parent or legal guardian from whom the child was not removed.

## Question:

For element A19, Adoption or Guardianship Placing Agency, would we use option 1 or 2 for our contracting organizations?

## Answer:

If a child was in the placement and care of the agency, was reported in the out-of-home-care file, and exits to adoption, the agency would report option 1, title IV-E agency as the placing agency in the assistance file.

This is true whether the state/county/tribe facilitated the adoption or if the state/tribe contracts with private organizations to do the work of the agency.

The only time the agency would respond with option 2, private agency under agreement, is when the child was not in foster care and the adoption was facilitated by a private agency, a law firm, or birth parent adoption of a child who was not in foster care.

Option 3 would only be used by agencies that have a title IV-E assistance agreement with a tribe and the tribe facilitated the adoption.

Option 1 would be used for all guardianships because the only guardianships in the assistance file would have been an exit from foster care.

## Question:

What if a child is known to have a disability or health condition, but the health assessment hasn't been done yet, so there is no diagnosis?

## Answer:

- Firstly, understand that element 22, health assessment, is completely separate from any of the diagnoses (elements 24-34). An agency only responds yes or no as to whether the child has had an initial (or follow-up) health screening during the current removal.
- Element 23, health condition, asks if the child has ever been diagnosed by a qualified professional with a health condition.
  - If the child had a diagnosis by a qualified professional in 2019 and that diagnosis doesn't change over time (e.g., cerebral palsy), then the child would still have that diagnosis. Element 23 would still be 1, child has a diagnosed condition.
  - If the diagnosed condition was resolved (e.g., eating disorder), then element 23 would still be 1, but Element 29 would be previous condition, 2.
  - If you don't have documentation from a qualified professional that the child no longer has the diagnosis (e.g., eating disorder), then you would continue to report element 23 as 1 and element 29 as existing condition, 1.

## Question:

It doesn't look like the schema allows for a child to be included in the file whose only removal started and ended before Oct 1, 2022, thus wasn't in the 23A reporting period. Can we still include a child exited before Oct 1, 2022, but due to the lateness of the data entry, is pulled for the 23A report?

## Answer:

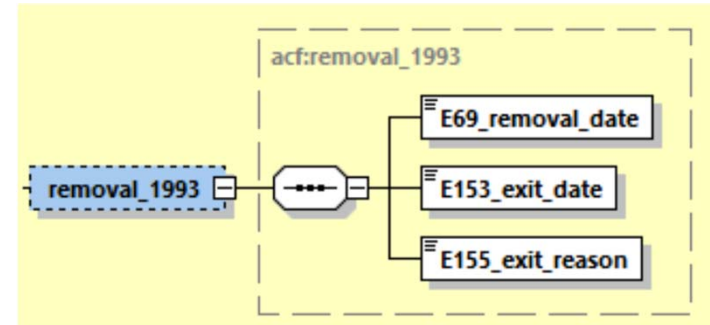
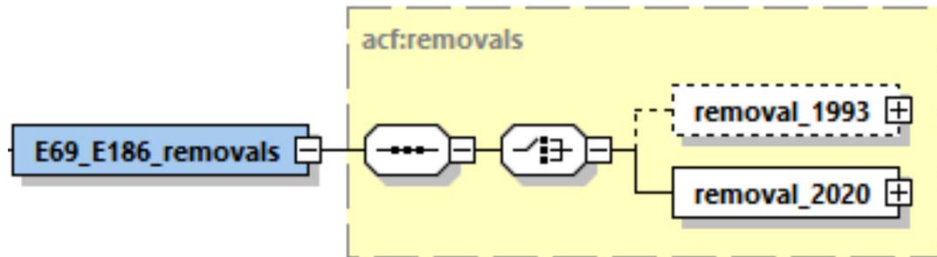
Yes, even though the schema says that there has to be a minimum of one <removal\_2020> for each child record, the file will still be able to be uploaded to NCWDMS with no compliance errors.

This record may result in a validation error against the schema. However, you may ignore it.

We determined not to change the schema, because in general, we *do* want there to be at least one <removal\_2020> type for each child in the file.

This should only affect a minor number of records in the 23A file.

# From the Schema



```

<xs:complexType name="removals">
  <xs:sequence minOccurs="1" maxOccurs="unbounded">
    <xs:choice>
      <xs:element name="removal_1993" type="acf:removal_1993" minOccurs="0" maxOccurs="unbounded"/>
      <xs:element name="removal_2020" type="acf:removal_2020" minOccurs="1" maxOccurs="unbounded"/>
    </xs:choice>
  </xs:sequence>
</xs:complexType>

```

\*Slide 14-15 were revised slightly from the original presentation for clarification.

# Revisions to Compliance Rules

## TB#23 Appendix D



- E2: included check to disallow future date
- E3: grouped with other removal-related elements
- E13-20: added check requiring at least one race
- E23: corrected the options for the internal consistency check
- E40: clarified not applicable as a valid option for the internal consistency check
- E45: corrected allowed values in the date field
- E68: included compliance check to enforce Null when there is no TPR for second parent
- E70 and E154: added condition to only implement the check if the transaction date occurred in the current reporting period
- E153: added check requiring an exit date before 10/1/2022 for <removal\_1993> elements
- E127-133: added check requiring at least one race
- E138-144: added check requiring at least one race
- E164-170: added check requiring at least one race
- E175-181: added check requiring at least one race
- E136-146: modified consistency check to allow Null for second foster parent when marital status (element 123) is not married or unmarried
- E173-184: modified consistency check to allow Null for second adoptive parent when marital status (element 157) is not married or unmarried

## Question:

For the foster parent elements, how do we report a same sex couple? Are we able to report them both as the first foster parent?

## Answer:

One of the parents would be listed as the first foster parent for elements 125-135 and the other parent would be listed as the second foster parent for elements 136-146. There may not be multiple 'first' or 'second' foster parents.



## Question:

Similarly, what about a single father as the foster parent? Our system uses the foster parent 1 fields for the mother, and in this case there isn't one. Should we report the first foster parent as null and report the father as the second foster parent?

## Answer:

Report the single father as the first foster parent for elements 125-135 and null for the second foster parent for elements 136-146. It would be a compliance error if the first foster parent elements were null.

## Question:

For circumstances at removal, if our data information system has a circumstance documented in the electronic record, but our extracted file submitted to CB does not report that specific circumstance, is that a compliance error?

## Answer:

No, that would not be a compliance error. But it could be a finding in your AFCARS site visit and become part of your AFCARS Performance Improvement Plan.

Compliance can only be checked against that data that has been submitted. The compliance checks for elements 72-105 are mainly:

- At least one of elements 72-105 must apply
- The element may not be null (either applies or does not apply)



# National Child Welfare Data Management System (NCWDMS)

AFCARS 2020 Pilot Overview  
12/12/22

# NCWDMS Pilot Objectives



## Background

- NCWDMS is a modernized enterprise application to consolidate data reporting, validation, and analysis for child welfare data from States, Tribes, and Territories (STTs).

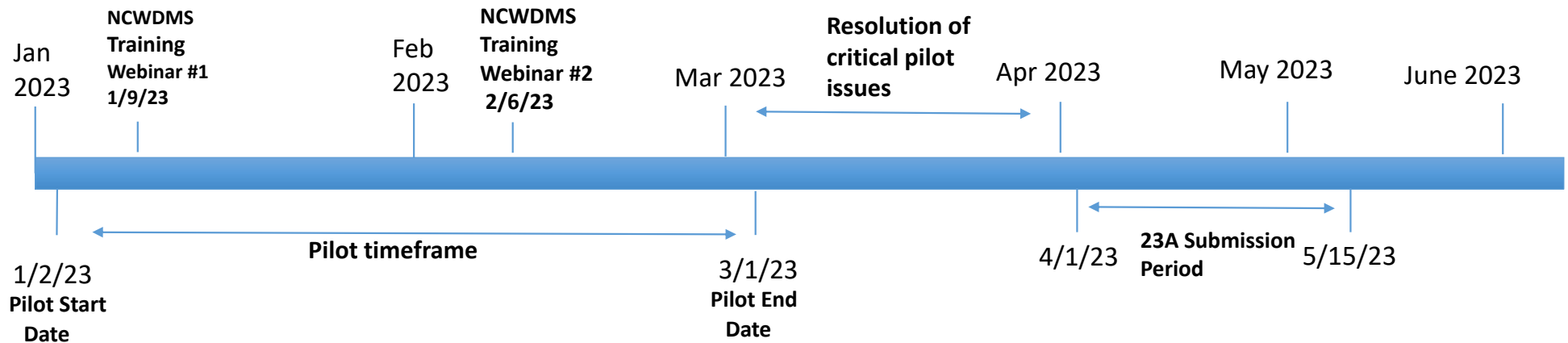
## Objectives

- Enable STTs to become familiar with the system before official submission period begins on 4/1/23.
- Identify and resolve any critical issues earlier before official submission period.
- Phased pilot approach reduces overall risk before official submission period.

Take advantage of the pilot time period to gain experience in the new system and a friendly reminder to avoid last minute experiences, if possible!



# Pilot Timeframe & Upcoming Milestones



**Remember:** Testing of the file upload process can continue after the pilot period ends and can even continue through the submission periods as transmissions can be done without having to become official submissions.

# Pilot Data Approach



- Users will receive an account that will work during the pilot and for the official submission period.
- Two webinars will be offered during the pilot.
- Sample test data files will be provided as examples for you to upload into NCWDMS.
  - You will need to update each of these files with your correct agency code.
- We encourage you to also create your own XML files using your own data from your information system. This will allow you to test your own extract and see what the compliance checks say about your data thus far.
- All data files that are uploaded and submitted during the pilot will be removed on 3/31/23 before the 23A submission process begins.

# NCWDMS Pilot Support



For technical issues with NCWDMS

- NCWDMS Help Desk e-mail box: [NCWDMS-HelpDesk@icf.com](mailto:NCWDMS-HelpDesk@icf.com)
- NCWDMS Help Desk number: (888) 851-3111

For any programmatic issues

- AFCARS Resource Mailbox: [AFCARS@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:AFCARS@acf.hhs.gov)

# NCWDMS Training Webinars



- Training sessions will be held during Office Hours covering key functionality in the system including:
  - Viewing STT Users
  - Viewing Transmission Files List
  - Uploading a Transmission File
  - File Checks
  - Compliance Reporting based on compliance rules
  - Data Quality Reporting Based on DQ Rules
  - Adding or updating File-level, Compliance Element-level, and DQ Error-level Commentary
  - Submitting a Transmission File
  - Re-submitting a Transmission File





## NCWDMS Key Concepts

# System Access



- The url is: <https://ncwdms.acf.hhs.gov>.
- Usernames and temporary passwords will be sent by the NCWDMS system via e-mail by January 2.
- Logging in requires Multifactor Authentication (MFA). Users will require a username and password, and a one-time passcode provided by an authenticator app to login.
  - Approved Authenticator Apps: Microsoft Authenticator, Google Authenticator, Twilio, OKTA, DUO



# STT Workspace – Transmission File Upload



- STTs transmit (upload) the data files to the STT workspace
- Transmitted files are checked by anti-virus software
- Transmitted files are also checked to make sure they are:
  - XML files
  - Structured based on the schemas published in [Technical Bulletin #21](#)



Transmit Data

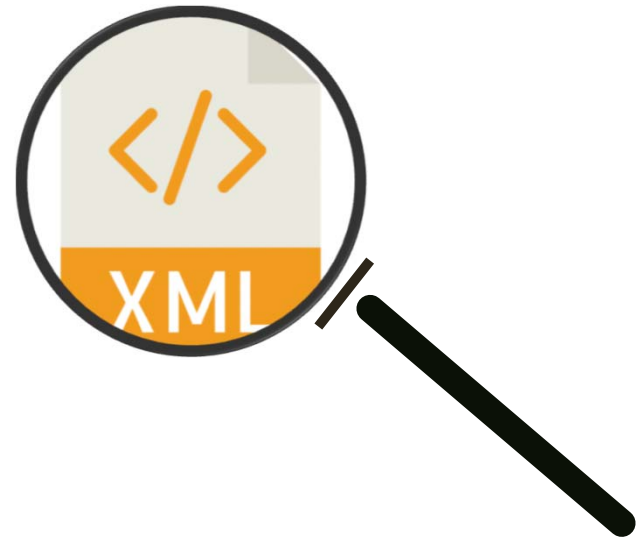
# STT Workspace

## – Compliance and Data Quality Checks



### **Rules Engine for Compliance Checks and Data Quality Advisories**

- configurable rules engine platform to support evaluation of rules for compliance and data quality of the incoming data files before official submission to CB



# STT Workspace - Commentary

- Allows for STTs to provide comments to CB with their data submission
- Commentary is available at the following levels:
  - Element level for compliance errors
  - Error level for data quality advisories
  - File level for overall comments



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## STT Workspace

- A STT can transmit and examine the compliance and data quality results for as many files as they wish.
- Once a STT is satisfied with a file and want to make it official, they can submit the file from within the STT workspace.



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Submit Data

## CB Database/Repository

- It is only after submitting the file that the Children's Bureau can see anything. This includes the:
  - original data,
  - results of any compliance or DQ checks,
  - any commentary provided.

# Upcoming Preparations for Pilot



- CB Regional Program Specialists will collect names and contact info for those who need an account in NCWDMS.
- By January 2, NCWDMS will do an initial mass creation of these STT users after which those users will receive instructions for logging in via e-mail.
- For any additional STT users that have to be created after January 2, please reach out to the NCWDMS Help Desk at (888) 851-3111 or e-mail them at [NCWDMS-HelpDesk@icf.com](mailto:NCWDMS-HelpDesk@icf.com).
- Information on the January and February trainings during upcoming AFCARS Office Hours will be sent out soon.

# Next Steps



- Regional Offices will get names and emails for STT NCWDMS account set up before **Dec 22, 2022**.
- Pilot testing for all agencies opens on **January 2, 2023**
- AFCARS Office Hours will continue each month
  - Same log in as today – no registration
  - **January 9, 2023**
  - **February 6, 2023**
  - **March 27, 2023**
  - **April 24, 2023**
- NCWDMS will be open for uploads and submissions on **April 1, 2023**





Questions???