



# **AFCARS 2020**

## Technical Bulletin 22: Reporting Population & Data Extraction

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## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	1
Introduction.....	2
Background.....	2
About the Technical Bulletin .....	2
Out-of-Home Care Data File Extraction.....	2
Reporting Population .....	2
Extraction of Records .....	4
Extraction Logic .....	4
Extraction Coding .....	5
Special Considerations/Possible Extraction Issues.....	9
Adoption and Guardianship Assistance Data File Extraction.....	11
Reporting Population .....	11
Extraction of Records .....	12
Corrected Submissions.....	13
Appendix A – Out-of-Home Care Extraction Rule Examples.....	15
Appendix B – Summary of Revisions to Technical Bulletin #22.....	16

## Introduction

### Background

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Children's Bureau is responsible for the implementation and management of the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). State, Tribal, and territorial title IV-E agencies (collectively referred to as agencies) are required to report AFCARS case-level information on all children in foster care and children who have been adopted with title IV-E agency involvement (per §479 of the Social Security Act). The regulations were updated via the final rule published in May 2020 (85 FR 28410). The first submission of AFCARS 2020 was due May 15, 2023.

Two 6-month report periods exist based on the federal fiscal year: October 1 to March 31 (A submission) and April 1 to September 30 (B submission). The agency must submit the Out-of-Home Care and Adoption and Guardianship Assistance data files to the Children's Bureau within 45 days of the end of the report period (by May 15 and November 14). If the reporting deadline falls on a weekend, the agency has until the following Monday to submit the data file.

### About the Technical Bulletin

This technical bulletin 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.

### Out-of-Home Care Data File Extraction

To submit an AFCARS report, the agency must extract the data from its information system in an effective, economical, and efficient manner, compile the data in the XML file format, and then transmit the file to the Children's Bureau. The following section describes how to write the extraction logic to correctly select the child records that meet the AFCARS reporting population requirements.

### Reporting Population

#### ***Out-of-Home Care Reporting Population §1355.42(a)(1)–(a)(2)***

- (1) A title IV-E agency must report a child of any age who is in out-of-home care for more than 24 hours. The out-of-home care reporting population includes a child in the following situations:
  - (i) A child in foster care as defined in §1355.20.
  - (ii) A child on whose behalf title IV-E foster care maintenance payments is made and who is under the placement and care responsibility of another public agency or an Indian tribe, tribal organization, or consortium with which the title IV-E agency has an agreement pursuant to section 472(a)(2)(B)(ii) of the Act.
  - (iii) A child who runs away or whose whereabouts are unknown at the time the child is placed under the placement and care responsibility of the title IV-E agency.
- (2) Once a child enters the out-of-home care reporting population, the child remains in the out-of-home care reporting population through the end of the report period in which the title IV-E agency's placement and care responsibility ends, or a child's title IV-E foster

care maintenance payment pursuant to a title IV-E agreement per section 472(a)(2) of the Act ends, regardless of any subsequent living arrangement.

***Out-of-Home Care Data Reporting Requirements Section 1355.43(b)(1) -(b)(3)***

(b) Out-of-home care data file. A title IV-E agency must report the information required in §1355.44 pertaining to each child in the out-of-home care reporting population, in accordance with the following:

- (1) The title IV-E agency must report the most recent information for the applicable data elements in §1355.44(a) and (b).
- (2) Except as provided in paragraph (b)(3) of this section, the title IV-E agency must report the most recent information and all historical information for the applicable data elements described in §1355.44(c) through (h).

For a child who had an out-of-home care episode(s) as defined in §1355.42(a) prior to October 1, 2022, the title IV-E agency must report only the information for the data described in §1355.44(d)(1) and (g)(1) and (3) for the out-of-home care episode(s) that occurred prior to October 1, 2022.

The out-of-home care reporting population includes children of any age who are under the agency's placement and care responsibility for more than 24 hours. This includes youth who are over the age of 17. It also includes a child who has run away at the time the agency receives placement and care responsibility. Additionally, if an agency has an agreement with another public agency or Tribe and is making title IV-E foster care maintenance payments (FCMPs) for that child, then the child would be included in the reporting population.

The reporting population is ***revised in AFCARS 2020*** to include children of any age who are under the agency's placement and care responsibility and are in foster care as defined in §1355.20. This expanded reporting population includes children who are in living arrangements that are not traditionally considered foster care settings under title IV-B and IV-E program rules once the child enters the reporting population.

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; or
- is age 18 or 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, regardless of whether title IV-E dollars are used.

The out-of-home care reporting population includes a child: (1) under the placement and care responsibility of another public agency or Tribe that has an agreement pursuant to section 472(a)(2)(B)(ii) of the Act, and (2) on whose behalf title IV-E FCMPs are made. Agencies have asked for clarification specific to juvenile justice agencies, which we provide below:

- If the title IV-E agency has placement and care responsibility of the child and the child moves from a foster care placement to a juvenile justice placement, then the child is in the reporting population until the title IV-E agency's placement and care ends. This is revised from AFCARS 1993 to AFCARS 2020.
- If the title IV-E agency is making a FCMP on behalf of a child who is under the placement and care responsibility of the juvenile justice agency pursuant to a title IV-E agreement under section 472(a)(2)(B)(ii) of the Act, then the child is in the AFCARS reporting population until the FCMP ends.

In some instances, agencies are unclear about when to include within the AFCARS reporting population a child who is receiving services/intervention from the agency. A child must be 1) in a foster care placement per §1355.20, and 2) in the placement and care responsibility of the agency.

In the case where a child is placed under “protective supervision” (or another state or tribal specific term), yet it was determined that the child did not need to be removed from their parents, the child would not be included in the reporting population for AFCARS. The agency may have placement and care responsibility for the child, but because the child did not need to be removed from their parents, no removal and foster care placement per §1355.20 occurred, so the child is not part of the AFCARS reporting population.

In the case where an agency removes a child from one parent and then places the child directly in the noncustodial parent's home, the child would not be included in the reporting population. This is because the noncustodial parent's home is not a foster care placement per §1355.20, even though the agency has placement and care responsibility for the child.

For each child in the reporting population, agencies should report the most recent information for elements 1-68 and 106-111. If a child in the reporting population has experienced more than one removal, agencies should report applicable information for elements 3, 69-105, and 112-186 for each removal episode. However, for any removal episode that ended before October 1, 2022, the agency is only required to report the following three elements:

- Element 69 – Date of Removal
- Element 153 – Date of Exit
- Element 155 – Exit Reason.

## Extraction of Records

### Extraction Logic

Agencies must develop selection logic that correctly extracts child records consistent with the definitions of the AFCARS reporting population (per §1355.42(a)(1) and described in the above section) and of children served within the reporting period. In addition, the logic should extract the

relevant responses for the applicable AFCARS data elements, such as all elements related to the current removal episode and only the three mandatory elements for removals before October 1, 2022.

*For example, for the 23A submission period, the agency would report all children who met the criteria for being included in the AFCARS reporting population AND who were in care during the reporting period (October 1, 2022, through March 31, 2023).*

Agencies must compile their AFCARS submissions from their data system based on logic that selects the records for any child meeting the AFCARS reporting requirements who was in care during the reporting period. This extraction logic would be based on the data fields specific to the agency's data system and should be coordinated to the dates the child entered and exited care.

*For example, an agency is preparing its submission for the A reporting period.*

*A child entered out-of-home care on November 16 and is still under the agency's placement and care responsibility at the end of the reporting period. The extraction code would select this record for the submission because the removal date is during the reporting period.*

*A child was removed in the prior submission period on August 27 but exited care on March 1, which is the A submission period. The extraction code would select this record for the A submission because the child was in care during the reporting period and exited during the reporting period.*

The above logic includes child records based on whether the child entered or exited care during the reporting period. However, relying on dates of entry and exit may not capture records where the data wasn't entered into the data system in a timely manner.

*For example, if an agency extracted its data on October 17 and only relied on the date of exit to select the child records for submission, the B submission (April 1 – September 30) would miss a child who exited care on September 25 but whose exit date was not entered into the data system until October 18.*

To capture such child records, agencies must use logic based on the exit transaction date for the removal episode. This is element 154, Transaction Date of Exit, of the AFCARS file and is a system-generated, non-modifiable date associated with the exit date. This date is automatically generated through the agency's data system and documents the actual date that the case worker input the child's exit date.

### Extraction Coding

Agencies will use the logic described above to develop their own extraction code for their data systems. Below are the rules for developing the extraction code. These rules are applicable for both initial file submissions and corrected file submissions. A comprehensive visual representation of the rules is included as Appendix A. An agency will need to extract records using logic rules A and C, but may choose either logic rules B1 or B2a-c. The "B" rules relate to the exit date and could rely on either exit date or exit transaction date, depending on the chosen method.

*For example, an agency may use extraction logic based on rules A, B1, and C,*

OR

*an agency may use extraction logic based on rules A, B2a, B2b, B2c, and C.*

- A. Include all records that meet the AFCARS reporting population requirements where the child entered care during the reporting period or continued to be in care from a prior reporting period.

*For example, part of an agency's extraction code to select the records of children who are still in care might be:*

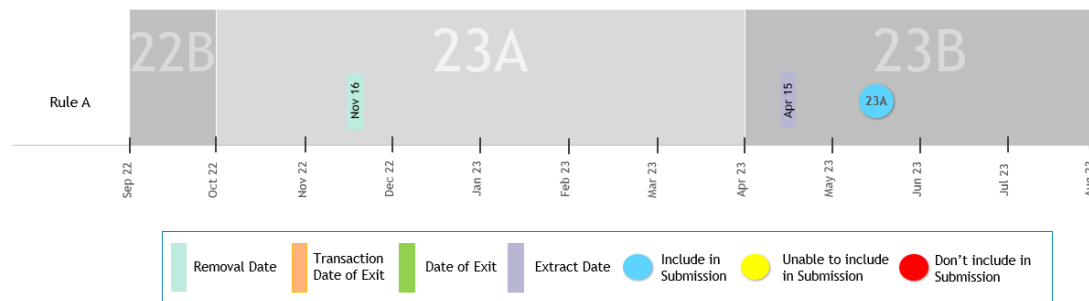
*IF any Date of Removal is on or before the Last Day of Reporting Period,*

*AND*

*Date of Exit is Null for that removal episode OR date of exit occurs after the first day of the reporting period.*

*THEN*

*include that record.*



- B. Include all records that meet the AFCARS reporting population requirements where the child exited care within the reporting period.

Two methods exist for selecting the records of children who have exited care. An agency is free to choose which method it wishes to implement. The first method is to use the exit date and requires one logic rule (B1). The second method is to use the transaction date of exit and requires three logic rules (B2a, B2b, and B2c).

Using the exit date with rule B1:

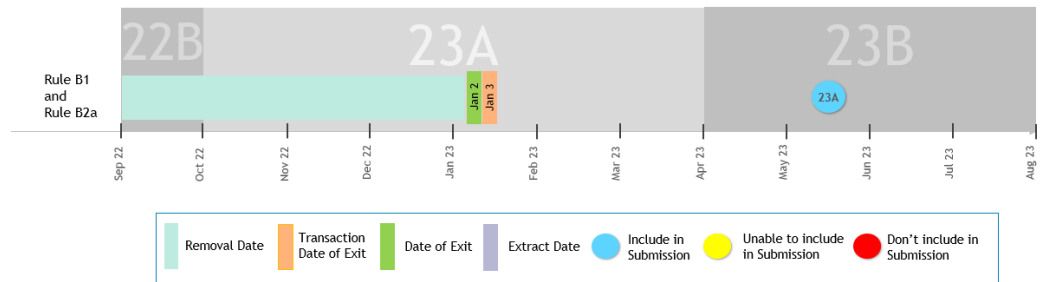
B1 Include all records that meet the AFCARS reporting population requirements by using the exit date in the extraction code. [Note that the agency still will have to use the transaction date of exit for rule C below.]

*For example, here is an agency's extraction code to select the records of children who exited care during the reporting period:*

*IF any Date of Exit is on or after the First Day of Reporting Period AND on or before the Last Day of Reporting Period*

*THEN*

*include that record.*



Or, using the transaction date of exit with rules B2a, B2b, and B2c:

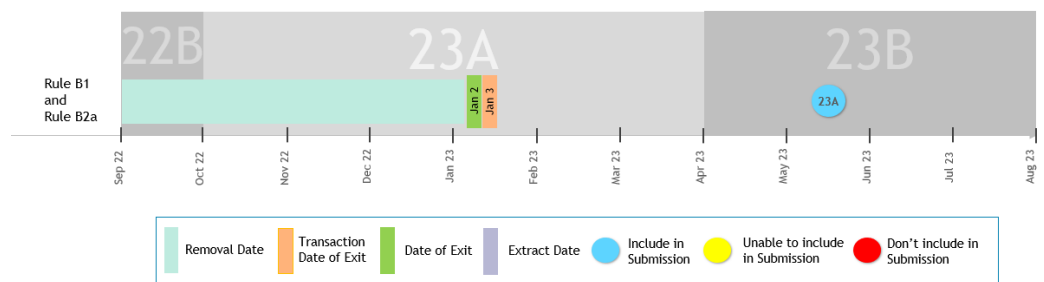
B2a Include all records that meet the AFCARS reporting population requirements by using the transaction date of exit in the extraction code. [Note that the agency will still have to use the transaction date of exit for rule C below.]

*For example, here is an agency's extraction code to select the records of children who exited care during the reporting period:*

*IF any Transaction Date of Exit is on or after the First Day of Reporting Period AND on or before the Last Day of Reporting Period*

*THEN*

*include that record.*



B2b Include all records that meet the AFCARS reporting population requirements where any transaction date of exit for a record occurs after the reporting period but before the date the agency extracts its data for submission.

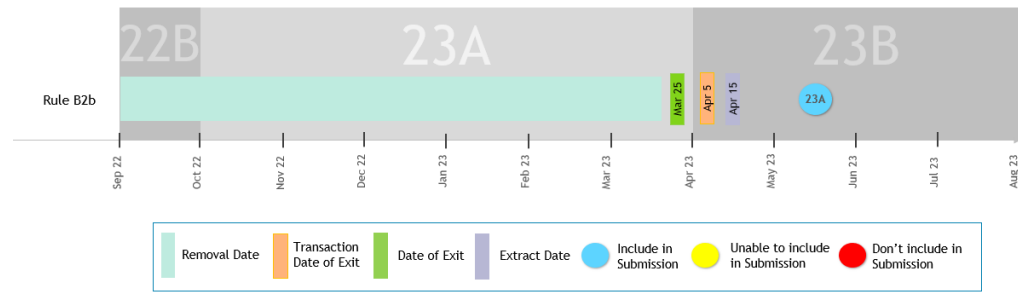
*For example, here is an agency's extraction code to select the records of children where the child exited care during the reporting period, but the data was not entered into the system until after the last day of the reporting period:*

*IF any Transaction Date of Exit is after the Last Day of Reporting Period AND before the Date of Extraction*

*THEN*



*include that record.*



**B2c Do not include** records where both the removal and transaction date of exit for a record occur after the last day of the reporting period.

*For example, here is an agency's extraction code to exclude the records of children who entered and exited care after the current submission period:*

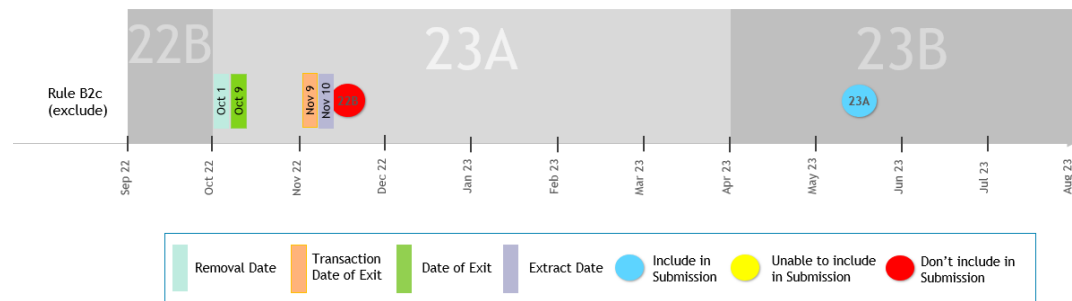
*IF any Transaction Date of Exit is after the Last Day of Reporting Period*

*AND*

*the Date of Removal associated with that Transaction Date of Exit is after the Last Day of the Reporting Period*

*THEN*

*exclude that record.*



- C. Include all child records meeting the AFCARS reporting population requirements where the transaction date of exit occurs during the reporting period, but the exit date occurs before the first day of the reporting period.

*For example, here is an agency's extraction code to select the records of children who exited care during the **prior** reporting period, but were not yet reported as exited due to late data entry by a worker:*

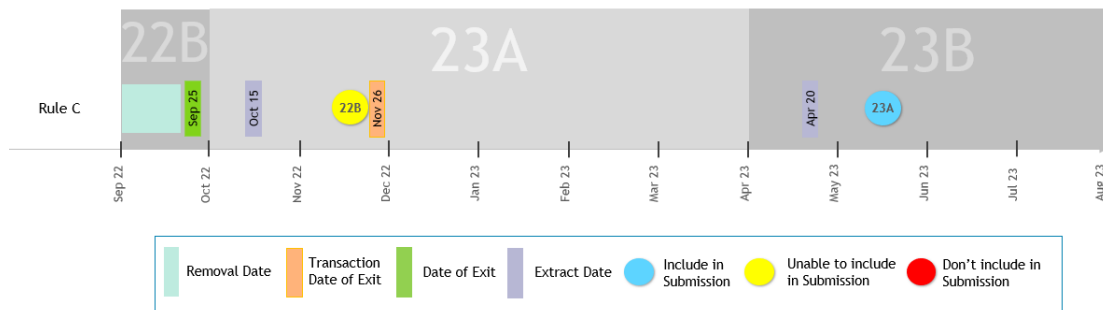
*IF any Transaction Date of Exit is on or after the First Day of the Reporting Period AND on or before the Last Day of Reporting Period*

AND

the Date of Exit **does not occur** on or after the First Day of the Reporting Period

THEN

include that record.



## Special Considerations/Possible Extraction Issues

For an agency's AFCARS submission to reflect the required data as of the end of the data collection period, the agency must meet the requirements for selecting the children who meet the requirements of the reporting population and ensure that data for each element corresponds to the timeframe of the required data. This means implementing logic that:

- uses general criteria for selecting children who meet the requirements of the AFCARS reporting population;
- selects children in care within the reporting period; and
- excludes children whose exits were not reported during the prior submission due to delayed entry of the exit date.

If the above logic is not used to write the extraction code, the submission may not include all the child records that should be reported during that reporting period. This could include issues such as:

- Incorrectly including records for children who did not meet the definition for the AFCARS reporting population.
- Incorrectly including records for children who were not in care during the reporting period.
- Missing child records that should have been included.
- Dropped child records.
- Invalid future dates.

## Dropped Records

A dropped record occurs when the child record is included in one submission as currently in out-of-home care, but the record is not included in the next submission at all, and therefore no record of the child's exit from care is ever recorded. This will cause a problem with the files the Children's

Bureau uses for data analysis. A dropped record can happen in both the out-of-home-care and the adoption and guardianship assistance files.

The most likely reason for a dropped record is that the child exited care, but the worker did not enter the exit in the data system prior to the data extraction date. In addition, the agency did not catch this case by using the transaction date in its extraction, as in rule C.

*For example, if a child exits on March 29, 2026, and the worker does not enter the date of exit before the agency prepared its submission, the 26A submission would indicate that this child is currently in a living arrangement and has not yet exited. If the worker then enters the exit date after the submission, the 26B submission would not include the child record because the child exited in the 26A submission period. This means that the child's exit will never be accurately reported, and it will appear as though the case has been dropped.*

If, however, the agency uses the proper transaction date of exit logic as explained in rule C, the record will appear with the exit properly recorded, thus ensuring that exit information is complete for all records.

In addition, we do expect that the child would be reported in both the previous and current submission with the exit date and exit transaction date for the child. Inclusion in the previous submission would be based on either Rule B1 or Rule B2b (depending on the extraction method chosen) and inclusion in the current submission would be based on Rule C.

*For example, if a child exits on March 29 and the worker enters the exit date into the system on April 4, the child would be reported in the 26A file due to Rule B1 based on the exit date occurring in the 26A period. The child would also be reported in the 26B file due to Rule C where the exit transaction date of April 4 is within the 26B reporting period.*

A dropped record also can occur when an agency submits a file with a child record that subsequently turned out to already exist under a different record or that was not supposed to be part of the AFCARS reporting population.

### Invalid Future Dates

Sometimes an initial submission or corrected submission will incorrectly include records for children who have not yet had a removal episode during the reporting period but were removed at the beginning of the next one. A common cause of this issue is that the agency's extraction logic is not implementing rule A correctly from the section above. Rule B2c should address that. This rule excludes records where the child entered and exited care after the last day of the reporting period. If the extraction code is based on the transaction date of exit (rule B2) and does not use this rule, dates entered between the end of the report period and the actual extraction of the data will result in the child being incorrectly included in the submission.

*For example, an agency is preparing its submission for the A reporting period on May 4. A child entered foster care on April 2 and exited on April 14, and the worker entered the information on April 16. If the agency does not use the transaction date of exit in conjunction with checking whether the removal date was in the current or prior period, then the A submission will incorrectly include this child for the reporting period ending March 31, when the child's removal episode did not, in fact, begin until April 2.*

## Adoption and Guardianship Assistance Data File Extraction

To submit the AFCARS report, the agency must extract the data from its information system in an effective, economical, and efficient manner, compile the data in the XML file format, and then transmit the file to the Children's Bureau as the Adoption and Guardianship Assistance Data File (following the guidance in [Technical Bulletin #21](#)). The first task is to write an extraction code within the agency's data information system to correctly select only the child records that meet the AFCARS reporting population requirements.

### Reporting Population

#### **Adoption and guardianship assistance reporting population §1355.42(b)(1)–(b)(2)**

- (1) The title IV-E agency must include in the adoption and guardianship assistance reporting population any child who is:
  - (i) In a finalized adoption under a title IV-E adoption assistance agreement pursuant to section 473(a) of the Act with the reporting title IV-E agency that is or was in effect at some point during the current report period; or
  - (ii) In a legal guardianship under a title IV-E guardianship assistance agreement pursuant to section 473(d) of the Act with the reporting title IV-E agency that is or was in effect at some point during the current report period.
- (2) A child remains in the adoption or guardianship assistance reporting population through the end of the report period in which the title IV-E agreement ends or is terminated.

The adoption and guardianship assistance reporting population includes children who were adopted or are under a legal guardianship and with a title IV-E assistance agreement. The child remains in the assistance data file as long as the title IV-E agreement is in place.

The Adoption and Guardianship Assistance Data File is ***new in AFCARS 2020***. This data file newly collects information on title IV-E guardianships. In addition, a child will now have an entrance and an exit into the reporting population, as the child will enter the reporting population when the adoption or guardianship is finalized, will remain there for the entirety of the title IV-E agreement, and will exit when the agreement ends. This means that a child will remain in the reporting population for multiple submissions.

If there are multiple title IV-E adoption assistance or title IV-E guardianship assistance agreements for a child, report the child in the file separately for each agreement. Multiple times in this file for each agreement. However, the child's agreement dates cannot overlap.

*For example, an agency enters into a title IV-E guardianship assistance agreement on October 5, 2024 with a grandmother of the child. Unfortunately, the circumstances change and the child can no longer stay with the grandparent so the agreement ends on December 14, 2024. The agency enters into another guardianship assistance agreement with a paternal aunt on the same day. The agency would report the same child twice in the file for the 25A reporting period:*

<i>A3: Child Record Number</i>	<i>A17: Adoption Finalization or Guardianship Legalization Date</i>	<i>A18: Agreement Termination Date</i>
<i>012345678910</i>	<i>20241005</i>	<i>20241214</i>
<i>012345678910</i>	<i>20241214</i>	<i>NULL</i>

AFCARS 1993 had an Adoption File that included in the submission the child in whose adoption the title IV-E agency had any involvement only if the child's adoption was finalized during the reporting period. Many of the elements that were collected in the adoption data file for AFCARS 1993 are now part of the out-of-home care data file in AFCARS 2020.

## Extraction of Records

Agencies must compile their AFCARS submissions from their data systems based on logic that selects the records for any child who was in the reporting population during the reporting period. The extraction code is based on the data fields specific to the agency's data system and corresponding to the date the child's adoption was finalized or guardianship became legalized and the date the agreement was terminated.

*For example, an agency preparing its submission for the A reporting period would include:*

*a child who had an adoption finalized on November 28;*

*a child whose guardianship became legalized on February 15;*

*a child who is currently under a title IV-E adoption or guardianship assistance agreement; and*

*a child whose adoption or guardianship assistance agreement ended on January 11.*

*The extraction code would select each of these records for the submission because the children were in the reporting population during the reporting period.*

Agencies will use the logic described above to extract the records from their information system(s). The extraction rules are as follows:

- AA. Include all records where the child had an adoption finalized or the guardianship became legalized, and the child is currently under an assistance agreement.

*For example, part of an agency's extraction code to select the records might be:*

*IF any Date of Adoption Finalization OR Date of Guardianship Legalization is on or before the Last Day of Reporting Period*

*AND*

*Date of Agreement Termination is Null*

*THEN*

*include that record.*

- BB. Include all records where the child's adoption or guardianship assistance agreement ended during the reporting period.

*For example, part of an agency's extraction code to select the records might be:*

*IF any Date of Agreement Termination is on or after the First Day of Reporting Period AND on*

*or before the Last Day of Reporting Period*

THEN

*include that record.*

The Adoption and Guardianship Assistance file does not contain transaction dates. Agencies must devise methods to capture all adoptions and guardianships, including those that are finalized or terminated in one reporting period but are not recorded in the data system until later. An agency can still capture this date in the data system and use a rule similar to the Out-of-Home Care File Rule C listed above to ensure those records are reported.

*For example, an agency is preparing its submission for the B reporting period on November 7, but a case worker hasn't yet entered their case data due to being out on medical leave. They enter the information on November 12.*

*IF a child's adoption was finalized on September 25 AND/OR*

*IF a child's adoption assistance agreement was terminated by the agency on September 30*

THEN

*the records still must be reported either in the B submission (where it officially occurred) or in the next A submission.*

## Corrected Submissions

### **Compliance Determination and Corrected Data §1355.46(e)(3)**

In general, a title IV-E agency that has not met either the data file formatting standards or data quality standards must submit a corrected data file(s) no later than when data is due for the subsequent six month report period (i.e., by May 15 and November 14), as applicable.

An agency might want to submit a corrected file for two reasons: (1) it wants to correct a file that was deemed noncompliant, or (2) the agency found issues with its prior data during a quality assurance process and wants to correct that data. The process for submitting a corrected file is the same as submitting a regular file. The rules for extracting regular files also applies to corrected files.

When an agency submits a corrected file for a prior reporting period, some of the data in the agency's data system will have changed since the data reported for the child record in the prior period. It is recommended that agencies submit the data for the child record that was accurate at the time of the original submission. The below example demonstrates the challenges in submitting a corrected file for a quality assurance systems issue where one or more records were updated to reflect circumstances that had changed but were unrelated to the file correction.

*For example, an agency submitted a 23A file in May 2023 and then a corrected file for the 23A period in May 2025 due to an unrelated systemwide quality assurance issue. In the original 23A file, the child had no diagnosed health conditions but was pregnant at the end of the 23A period. After six months, the child gave birth and was diagnosed with ADHD.*

	23A File	24A – 25A Files	23A Corrected File
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<b><i>Element 23: Health Conditions</i></b>	<i>0 = No exam or assessment conducted</i>	<i>1 = Child has a diagnosed condition</i>	<i>0 = No exam or assessment conducted</i>
<b><i>Element 30: ADHD</i></b>	<i>Null</i>	<i>1 = Applies</i>	<i>Null</i>
<b><i>Element 38: Pregnant</i></b>	<i>1 = Yes</i>	<i>0 = No</i>	<i>1 = Yes</i>
<b><i>Element 39: Ever Fathered or Bore Children</i></b>	<i>0 = No</i>	<i>1 = Yes</i>	<i>0 = No</i>

An agency's data system may not capture data in a manner that allows the agency to report information that would have been accurate and applicable during the period of the corrected file. This may be due to the data in the system not having corresponding dates. However, agencies should strive to report data as it was at the time of the original submission.

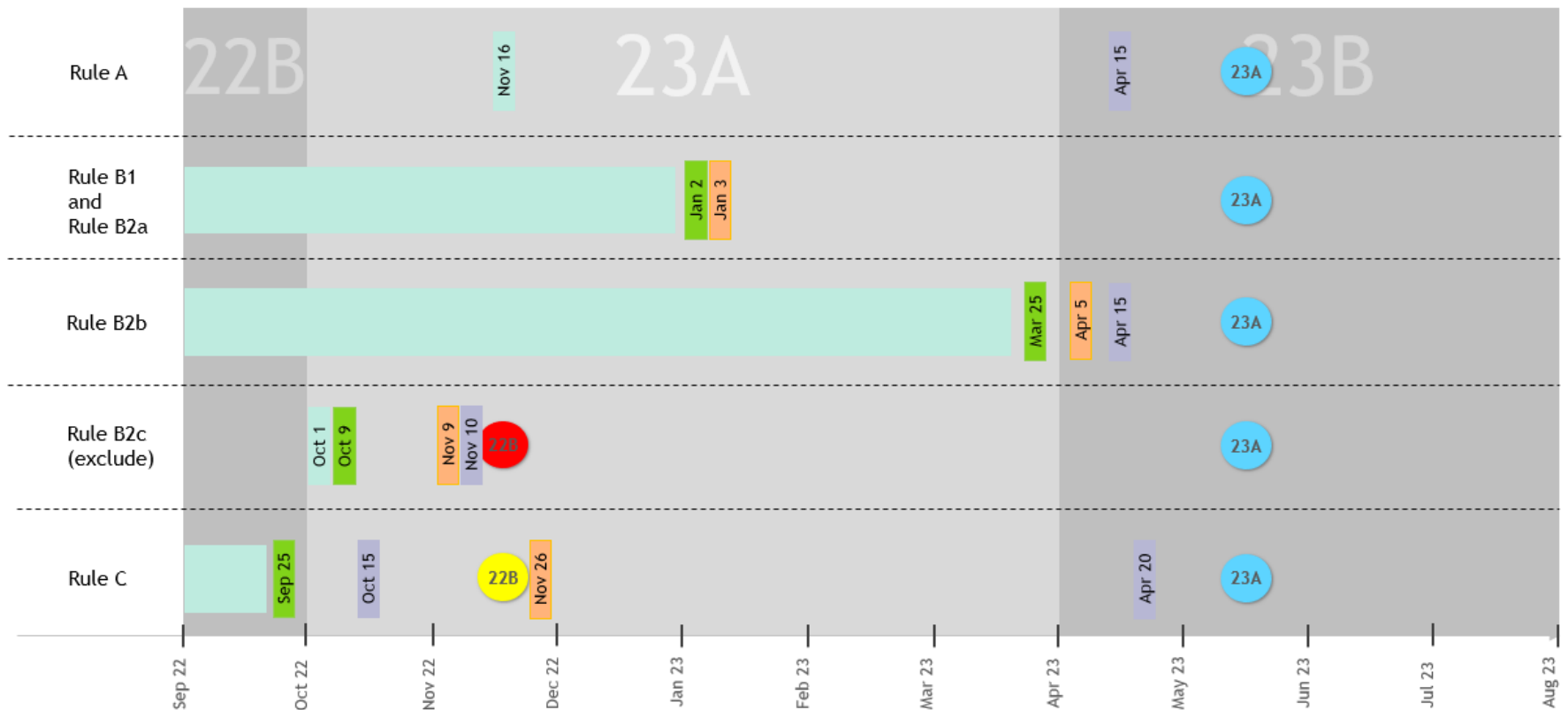
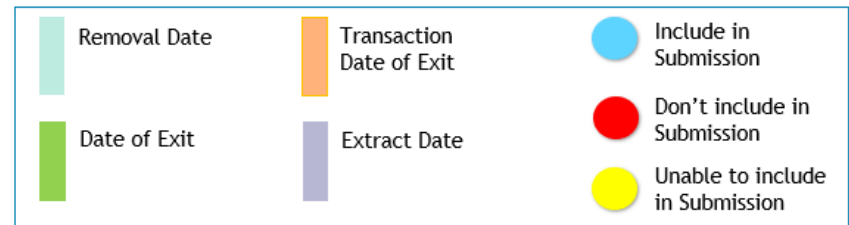
## Appendix A – Out-of-Home Care Extraction Rule Examples

An agency may use extraction logic based on rules A, B1, and C.

OR

An agency may use extraction logic based on rules A, B2a, B2b, B2c, and C.

### Out-of-Home Care Extraction Rule Examples





## Appendix B – Summary of Revisions to Technical Bulletin #22

Version	Sections Affected	Description
2.0	Reporting Population	Added clarification to include over 18 regardless of the use of IV-E funds
2.0	Appendix A	Added extraction rules to graphic
2.0	Appendix B	Added Summary of Revisions
2.1	Extraction Coding	Added clarification that rule A also covers if the date of exit occurs after the first day of the reporting period in the example of the logic
2.1	Corrected Submissions	Corrected error in element 30 in table of examples
2.2	Dropped Records	Clarified that a dropped record can happen in both the out-of-home-care and the adoption and guardianship assistance files
2.2	Dropped Records	Added clarification that a child whose exit transaction date is after the period ends will be included in the previous and current submissions
2.2	Reporting Population: Adoption and Guardianship Assistance	Added the ability to report the same child to appear multiple times in a file if the child has multiple title IV-E adoption assistance or title IV-E guardianship assistance agreements