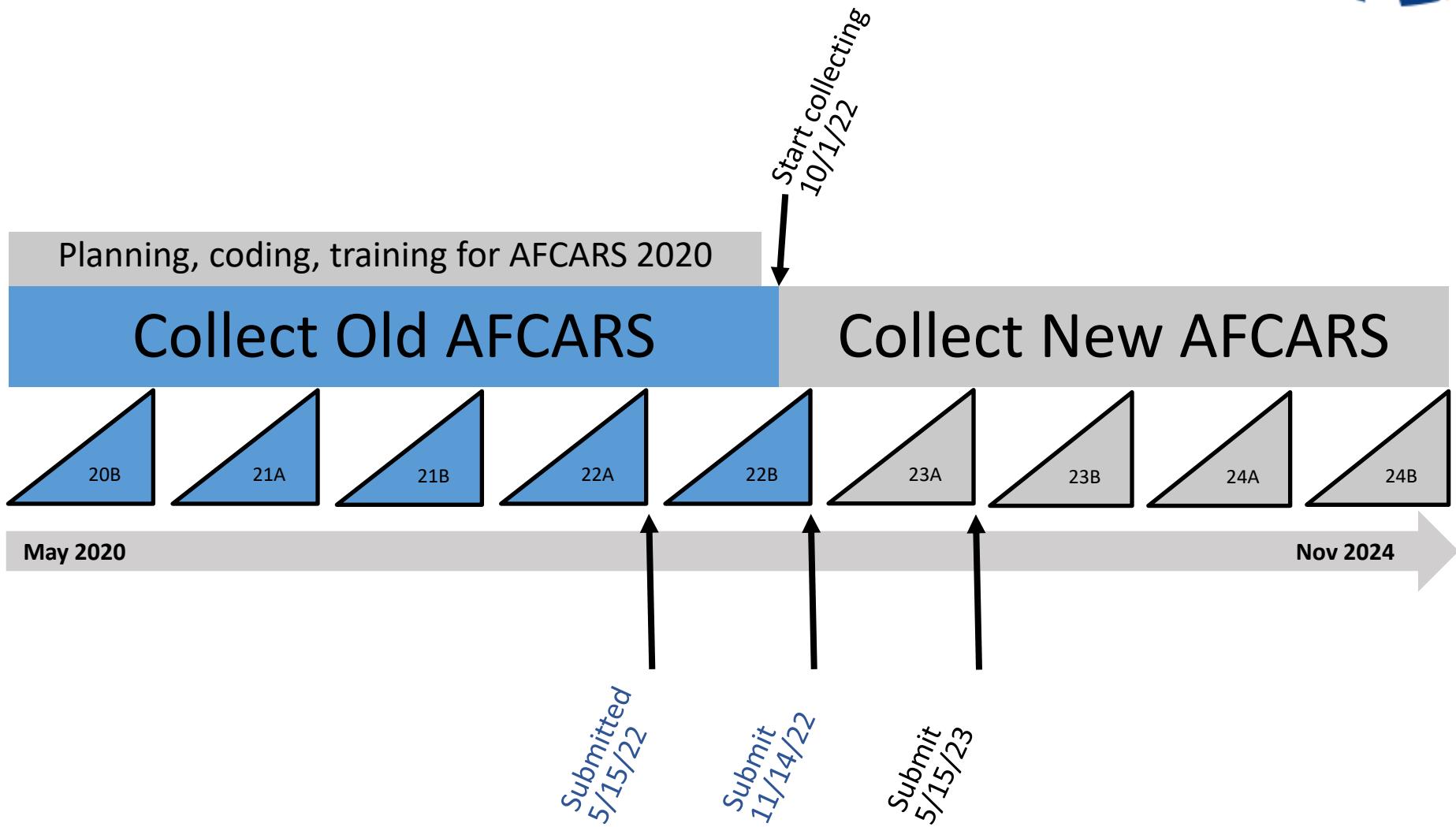


# AFCARS Open Office Hours for the implementation of AFCARS 2020

Children's Bureau Data Analytics and Reporting Team

# 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



# AFCARS 2020 Technical Bulletins



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## AFCARS Technical Assistance

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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>

# Next Steps



- Revisions to technical bulletins planned for **November**
- Office hours each month
  - Note that the November 14, 2022 event is cancelled
  - The next office hours is **December 12**, 2022
  - Same log in as today – no registration
- Pilot testing for all agencies is planned for **January**
  - Open to all agencies
  - Opportunity to test the log in process and the XML file and its structure
  - Agencies will be able to upload their own data and see the results of the compliance checks
- NCWDMS will be open for uploads and submissions on **April 1** for the 23A files



# Questions and Answers

Email additional questions to [AFCARS@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:AFCARS@acf.hhs.gov)

General Questions

Youth over 18 in Reporting Population

Adoption and Guardianship Assistance Reporting Population

Element 52

Elements 65-68

Element 120

Elements 151-152

Element A19

## Question:

Due to issues with financial resources and our timing around implementing a new data system, our state will not have a report that meets compliance by May 2023. What should we do?

## Answer:

We understand this issue. But please don't give up. Plan to submit an XML file with whatever data you have that is available.

If a state doesn't submit any data, it is more than just noncompliance and a negative financial penalty to the state. There are downstream effects:

- potential related to the calculation of performance under the CFSR PIP
- no way for the state context data to be run twice a year
- not included in any national reporting with a notation that the state did not submit
- state's data left out of NDACAN national dataset
- inability to calculate a potential adoption incentive
- potential penalty related to reporting of the caseworker visitation data
- potential for negative financial impact on CCWIS funds

## Question:

How do you handle the living arrangement and provider information for elements 112-146 for clients that have an open removal episode on October 1, 2022? It says to report all removal history information, as well as living arrangements and provider information, but some of this historical information that is being requested was not collected as a part of AFCARS 1993.

## Answer:

We understand this concern. Our direction at this time is to implement the regulation as written. An element with missing data for a child in care on or after October 1 will be an error. If the number of errors for an element is over the compliance threshold, the file will be noncompliant.



## Question:

Are youth over the age of 18 included in the AFCARS reporting population?

## Answer:

Yes. If they are in the placement and care of the agency, they are in the reporting population.

# From the AFCARS Regulations

## ***Out-of-Home Care Reporting Population Section 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 are 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.



# From Technical Bulletin #20

The out-of-home care reporting population includes:

- “children of any age who are under the placement and care responsibility of the agency for more than 24 hours. This includes youth who are over the age of 17” (page 5).
- “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” (page 5-6).
- “a child under the title IV-E agency's placement and care responsibility who: ... 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” (page 6).

## Question:

What about a 17-year-old who is in the reporting population, is placed in a non-IV-E eligible setting, and then turns 18?

## Answer:

Yes. Once a child enters the reporting population, they remain in the reporting population until the agency's placement and care responsibility ends.

## Question:

What about a youth who is in the reporting population, turns 18 and is discharged. Then the next month the 18-year-old comes back to the agency seeking services?

## Answer:

Yes. If the agency is given placement and care responsibility through a voluntary placement agreement, the youth would again enter the reporting population.

## Question:

What about a youth under the placement and care of the agency for whom the agency is not receiving IV-E funds?

## Answer:

Yes. As long as the agency has placement and care (through a voluntary services agreement) and is in a foster care setting, the youth would be in the reporting population.

## Question:

Are youth who are over 18 included in compliance determinations?

## Answer:

No. Although youth who are over 18 remain in the reporting population while they are under the placement and care responsibility of the agency, they will be excluded for compliance determination purposes. This means that the child records will be included in the compliance determination for all files up to and including the one where the child turns 18.

This is the same for the adoption and guardianship assistance file also.

## Question:

Will you clarify the flow of children into the adoption and guardianship file. The guidance is clear about when not to include a child in the adoption and guardianship file, but will you clarify when a child should be in both files and when the child can only be in the adoption and guardianship file?

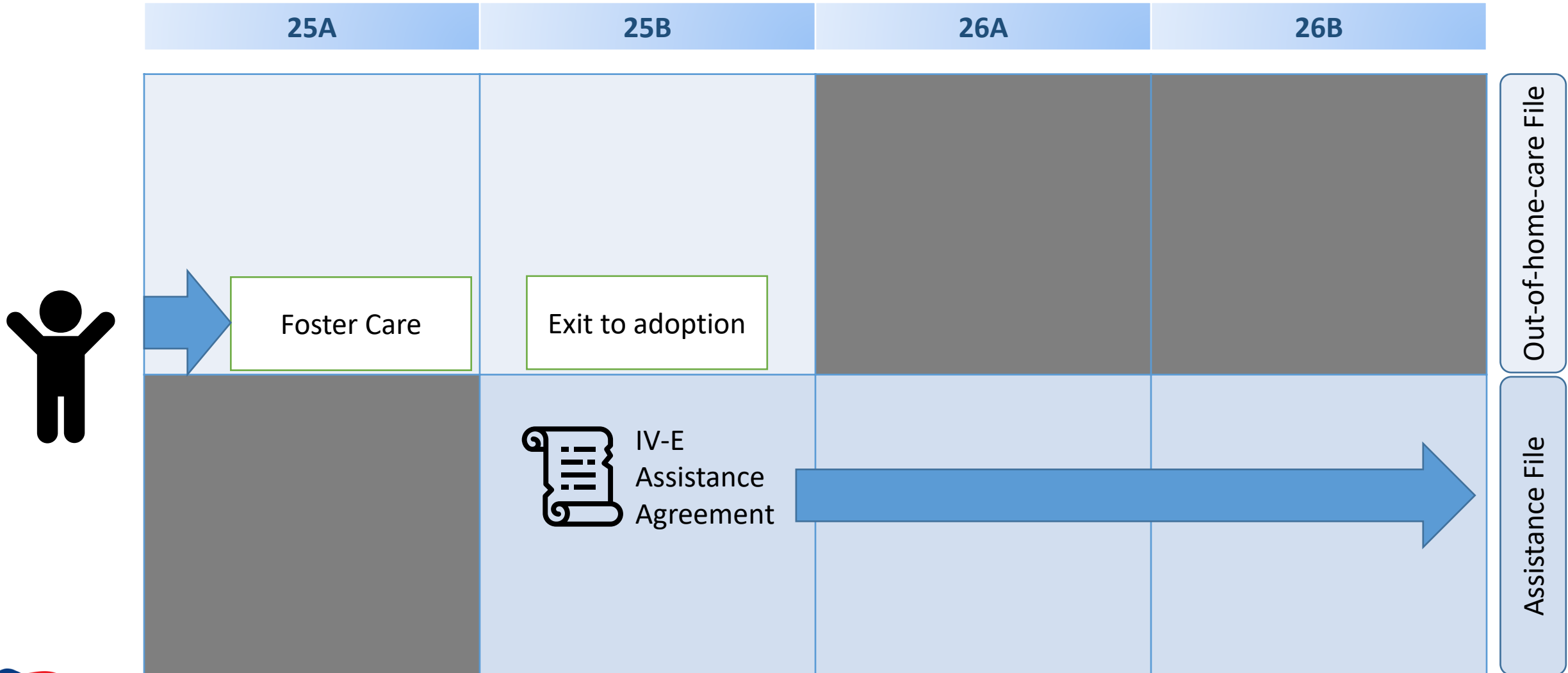
## Answer:

A child would be included in both of the AFCARS data files in the reporting period where the child who had been under a state or tribe's placement and care exits to an adoption with a title IV-E adoption assistance agreement.

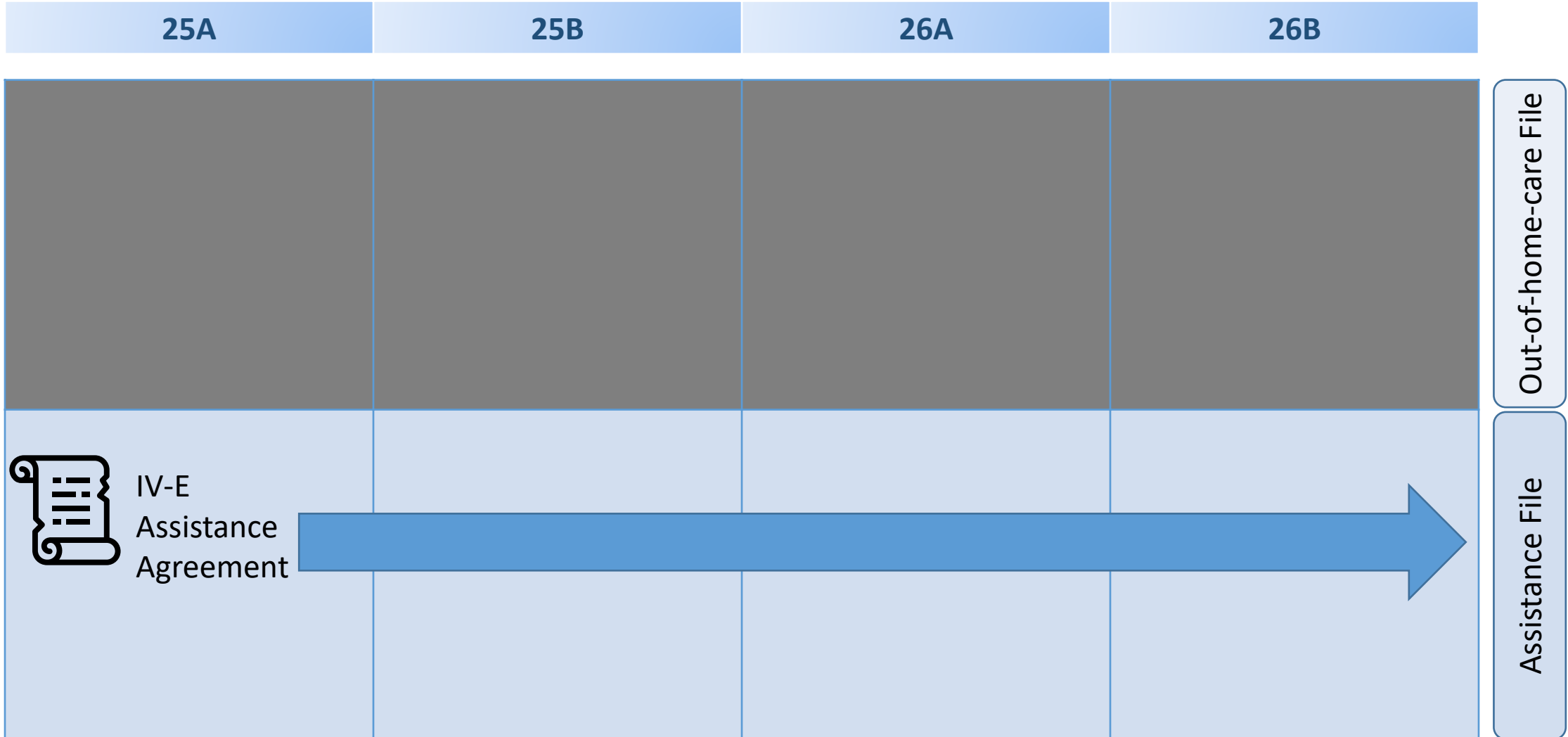
A child would only be included in the adoption and guardianship assistance file if the child was **not** coming directly from foster care (e.g., the adoption was facilitated by a private agency or a lawyer) AND there is a title IV-E adoption assistance agreement.



# AFCARS files for child exiting to adoption



# AFCARS files for child not coming from foster care, but still has an adoption assistance agreement



## Question:

*Out-of-Home Care Element 52: Title IV-B (b)(17)(vi)*

The child's living arrangement is supported by funds under title IV-B of the Act.

Does element 52 in the Types of Financial Assistance section cover any Title IV-B funds, or just funds directly related to supporting the child's living arrangement?

## Answer:

Report applies if the child is receiving Title IV-B funds for any reason, including for the living arrangement or for other services.

## Question:

If a TPR is reversed through appeal, or vacated, or there is a reinstatement of parental rights, do we no longer report the TPR petition date and TPR date for that parent?

## Answer:

If a TPR date (element 67 or 68) is reported for one submission, and later on, the TPR is vacated, the TPR date would then be reported as null for the reporting period.

If a petition date (element 65 or 66) is reported for one submission, but ultimately there is no TPR awarded or one is awarded with a later reinstatement of rights, the petition date will continue to be reported and the TPR date will be null.

## Question:

Qualified Residential Treatment Program is a new option for the living arrangement type (element 120). When do we use this option because the status of the program as QRTP can change, along with the whether the child's case meets all the requirements to be placed in a QRTP?

## Answer:

Element 120 is only based on the status of the placement. If the living arrangement has met all of the requirements of section 472(k)(2)(A) and (4) of the Social Security Act, then the response option reported for element 120 would be QRTP if the child is placed in a QRTP.

AFCARS data reporting does not require jurisdictions to indicate if a child **is eligible or not** for reimbursement for a QRTP placement, thus that information would not be captured in this AFCARS element.

## Question:

Now that the data for caseworker visits are reported through AFCARS, does this change what agencies do or how the performance requirements are calculated, and are there implications any for Federal Financial Participation (FFP) reduction?

## Answer:

There are performance requirements for states related to reporting monthly caseworker visits under title IV-B of the Social Security Act. CB issued a Program Instruction in January 2012 (ACYF-CB-PI-12-01) detailing this reporting.

The data collected through AFCARS 2020 in elements 151 and 152 is meant to replace the current data reporting method.

However, it is CB's intention that there be an overlap in the reporting methods for the beginning of the AFCARS 2020 implementation.

More guidance will be forthcoming from CB in the future.

## Question:

For the adoption or guardianship subsidy amount (element A16), are we to report the last payment or last full monthly payment?

For example, what if a child's last payment only covers 5 days? Should we report this 5-day payment amount or the previous month's full payment?

## Answer:

You will report whatever was paid during the last month the child was in the reporting population.

If a child's adoption agreement ends on September 5 and the agency prorated its subsidy payment so that it only covered 5 days instead of the full 30 days of September, the agency would only report the amount paid for September.

AFCARS 1993 required agencies to report the 'last full monthly payment.' AFCARS 2020 requires agencies to just report the last amount paid.