

## Webinar Series

*AFCARS Open Office Hours February*

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Amber Nagorski: Hi everyone. Thanks for joining us. We're gonna give it just a minute. And let everybody get here, then we'll get started. Alright. We'll go ahead and get started. Thank you, everybody for joining us for AFCARS office hours. This office hours will be recorded. Right now, the office hours from January are on NCWDMS and we are going to have those on the website as well. So for a couple of things at the bottom. So today we will have a lot of different presenters. And if at any point you have any questions, please feel free to put those in the chat. At the bottom of the screen, there will be a chat function. And you can just type your question in there. If at any point you need to ask a question verbally or if you need to clarify a question that you've asked, you can use the raise hand feature, which will be under the reactions icon at the bottom of your screen. And then if you are on your phone and you need to unmute your line, just dial \*9 and we'll be able to do that. If you have any questions that are not answered during the office hours, please feel free to email those to us at [afcars@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:afcars@acf.hhs.gov). Then there's also the availability at the bottom of your screen to click on the CC icon, which will allow you to have closed captioning on the bottom of your screen. My name is Amber Nagorski and I am so happy that all of you are here today. So I will pass it over to Rebecca.

Rebecca Odor: Hello, all. Welcome to our let's see, this is our February office hours. And so now we have this, the second-to-last one before your first file is due in April or May. Well, yeah, it's the second one we have in the books. So I'm glad you're able to join today. Hopefully you were able to see that we're having NCWDMS present on the pilot. And I'll share a little bit about what is online to make sure that you know about all the resources that we have available for us. So we have technical bulletins and I will get us to the right page to see those technical bulletins. So, on our website, here's our technical assistance page. And right now we're having a little issue with this. If you have this link saved in the other slideshows and such like that, it's not exactly correct, so we're trying to get that fixed. But in the meantime, in the chat is the actual link to get to this technical assistance page, you can sort of see it up there, but Amber's going to put it in the chat. And that other, it should be working in

the next couple of days, just FYI. So here on our technical assistance page, you do have access to all of the technical bulletins and I'm just going to go over quickly what's in each of those so that you know, and then here is all of the ones that we have materials for from our webinars thus far. So you can look through those and see what has been missing. This office hours August through October, this is three presentations worth in one just so that you know. Below that, we have the 1993 technical bulletins and such which you shouldn't really need right now. So let me just show you a little bit of what we have in the technical bulletins. So this is technical bulletin 20. So hopefully you all are all, this one has been out forever, so you're, you know that this has the blue is what's actually written in the regulation. I just wanted to bring that to your attention. And then the rest is the explanatory text and examples. And then we have the data constraints. So this is where all of this is in, it's in technical bulletin, you can see here. The health assessment one is on page 23. Technical Bulletin 21 has the schema and all about making your extract. So that is here. In fact, this is technical bulletin 21, Appendix E. You will see the schema which we're going to talk more about today. Technical Bulletin 22 has the extraction and the encryption information. So this is Appendix A from that. So if this doesn't look familiar to you, then pull out that Technical Bulletin 22 because this bulletin is necessary for you to write your extract, you have to use these rules that are listed out in this Technical Bulletin. And this is a compilation of what all the rules are. And then Technical Bulletin 23 here, this is page 18, is showing you exactly what lines of your 496 are part of the penalty calculations, so this is good for you to be familiar with, along with what the timeline is for the penalties. So if you are wondering about this first submission and you're not sure if your file is going to be compliant, then all the information is in Technical Bulletin 23, this is in particular Appendix C. So you can have all that information at your fingertips. So, I am going to turn it over to our contractors at NCWDMS, so, Ramnik, I will turn it over to you to get us started.

Ramnik:

Okay, Thanks very much, Rebecca. I'm gonna be sharing my screen here. First. I'd like to thank everybody very much for the participation in the pilot thus far. We've had a lot of great usage. Just a few metrics here, at a glance. There were 212 new accounts that were created for users for participation in the pilot. And we have at this 105 logins from unique users that have occurred since then. And that is we have about 21 STTs that have participated in the pilot thus far. A lot of uploading of files. So we have 221 total transmission files that have been uploaded into NCWDMS thus far for the pilot, from a test pilot testing perspective. So great work by everybody participating and learning the new system. And please continue to do that. This is a great time to obtain your feedback. Not only is this time period helpful for you to help learn and train in the system, but it's also very beneficial for us from a development perspective because we can see the actual real-life nuances that can occur and we can make adjustments and tweaks as needed to update the system so that we are giving the best possible user experience and functionality possible as we move forward. Just a reminder on the pilot timeframe, we mentioned this last time, but just a quick recap, you know, obviously we started back in early January, we're a little bit past the halfway point right now in early February. The pilot goes through early March, March 1st is when we're wrapping it up. And then we'll have a month here to look at the feedback, work to prioritize any items that we want to get included in prior to the official submission period beginning on April 1st.

And one thing I do want to mention is, as we've been tracking your feedback, if there are incremental or updates we can make as we go, we've been doing that as well already. We've had a couple of releases to production where we've made a few adjustments already. And then for the larger items, we'll take a look at them and focus in on them between the March and April timeframe for completing those as priority and as feasible. One other reminder that I also want to give here is that the testing of the file upload process can continue even after this pilot period ends, right? Because as you've seen, you can upload files without having to do official submissions. And that helps give you an awareness of the file upload process and also helps you learn the compliance and data quality rules and where there might be issues and how to handle those. So it's really a great way to do that. Now, what I want to point to next is that as you will recall during the last session, we had presented key functionalities of the system, provided a demonstration of those. What we've done is taken a recording of that last session and posted it up on the login page for NCWDMS. You can see here right now is a recording. In addition to that, we've also added in some additional training materials. We have our STT user's guide, which provides a breakdown of all the different functionalities in the system and step-by-step procedures. And our multifactor authentication fact sheet as well, which gives you tips on the authentication process using the MFA applications. We also have a transcript as well along with the recording. So these are the four items we have up at this point. As time goes on, we may be adding some additional items as well to help as training materials. It's really easy to download any of these, simply click here and you will see this, in this case this opened. You can also download file. As you can see on the right side, it downloaded to my default download folder. If I go there and click on it, I can open it up, I can always have that available as needed to utilize while I'm in the application. For today's session, our focus will be on starting to take, analyze and take a look at where some of the help desk feedback has come in thus far. And some of the troubleshooting we've done with users. We want to kind of go through some of the common themes that we have come across. Specifically in the areas of authentication, as I mentioned, as well as error handling for XML files on upload. And also some ways that you can troubleshoot your XML file based on common issues that we have seen. Presenting along with me today will be a couple of our team members. We have Christian Nelson, as well as Nick Gompper will be coming on shortly to talk about those different areas. Before we get into the XML related areas, I did want to cover a couple of quick topics on the authentication side and logging in. Really two things in particular. One thing, one of the things that I wanted to mention is when STT user accounts are created, after approval, a temporary user password is sent via email along with instructions for logging in to that STT user. That password, and this is a system setting does expire in 24 hours. So if you're unable to login within 24 hours, at that point, you would have to contact the help desk. The forgot password that you see here will not work because at that point you haven't really been fully set up in the system from an authentication standpoint. Once you have been set up, then in the future, and you've updated your password, then this Forgot Password could be utilized. But at that point, since it's on the initial login, it does require a call to the help desk, and then we reset your account and you'll get a new temporary password. We are going to be adding a line about that in that email that goes out, that that temporary password does expire in 24 hours. That's not anything we have the ability to change. So that is a system

setting that will remain the 24 hours, but we do, we'll add a line to the emails just for everyone's awareness, in the future, and there'll be a future update that we'll, going to include in an upcoming release. The other thing that we've noticed working with several of the STTs is that there have been situations where as users are going through that initial setup process, where you've now updated your temporary password and are now on the initial MFA setup screen, you go through the process to set up your MFA using one of the approved authenticators. And as you reach the point where you're typing in your passcode for the initial time, we've noticed several instances where the spinner, that displays when a page is loading, that spinner will keep spinning. And what we've discovered in those situations is there has been a firewall blockage at several of the STTs local network side. So essentially what that requires is, if you run into that situation, provide the NCWDMS URL, which we have up here, to your STT agency local IT support and they will be able to work with you to open up access to this site. Until that access is opened up, that final step for completing that authentication process will not work, which is entering in that MFA code. If you still experience issues after that, then please contact our NCWDMS help desk and we will be happy to work with you to resolve any issues. So those are a couple of things that we have noticed as common patterns in the authentication and login process. Next, we want to go into some of our XML error handling. And for that, I'll turn it over to Christian Nelson. Christian.

Christian Nelson: Thanks, Ramnik. I'm gonna go ahead and share my screen now. Alright. Can everyone see my screen?

Ramnik: Yes.

Christian Nelson: Thanks. So I'm gonna go over some of the XML error handling when uploading a transmission file. There are two parts of error handling on this page physically. The first part we're going to call pre-file processing and the second part we're going to call post-file processing. In pre-file processing, it's all on this Upload File screen so that the user can quickly fix various issues with the uploaded file. This process starts by only sending a small initial chunk of your file to our server to validate the program data type, reporting period and the initial record child identifier. Failures in these areas will be displayed immediately on the modal here so that the user can adjust their files. So we're gonna go through an example right now. I'm going to upload a file that will be an AFCARS out-of-home care file. And let's just say I instead put Family First as the datatype. If I try uploading, I will see an error message on this screen. So it will say a validation error and it'll say the specific error, this program data type does not match the program data type in the file. So I can go ahead and fix that. And then I can also select just a different reporting period. And when I try to upload that, a different error message will show there too. So the reporting period does not match the reporting period in this file. There are also messages that will say those two fields are missing if they're completely missing from the top of this file. So now I'm going to go ahead and try to upload a different file that has the first child identifier with some issues on it. Now this is an adoption assistance file. And now we have more specific error messaging here. It'll state the child identifier exactly what it is. And it'll say this one has illegal characters in it, which is this apostrophe symbol. And it's also an invalid length. Child identifiers must be 12 characters, whereas this one is five. So just to remind you

that this portion of the file processing will only do it on the first record and not the entire file. That will then lead into the second part of processing and that's once a file has been, successfully passes this portion. And I can actually demonstrate that too. So we're gonna go ahead and upload this file with the correct fields. So now the file is uploading and it'll begin processing when the whole file is then pushed to our server and we will process the entire file. That is when, that is shown by this transmitted state in the file status for our file. So now in the second part of processing, our system is going to validate the entire file. And it will validate more specific issues, such as their unknown elements, duplicated elements, and missing elements. Errors found in this portion of processing will be sent to the user via email so that they can correct their file. This email also only contains the first 25 errors and will dictate the child identifier of the record that contains the error and the value of the element that has created, creating this error. Let me go ahead and show what this email would look like. So, the title of the email will say NCWDMS file processing failed. It'll say the filename and the file ID that was associated to the file. And then it'll have a little table of issues found in the file. So, this issue was an unknown element. And then it'll state the element right here and then the child record that it found this error. Now I'm going to show a duplicated element email. Pretty much the same thing. It'll say specifically, duplicate data element has been detected. And then finally, this is missing elements. And then it will stop at the first 25 errors found in a transmission file. Once the file has failed processing, the file status in the transmission list will be failed. It will stay at failed. And then you will also no longer or you will not have any final details or any other links that will associate to this file because the file was uploaded to our system. And with that, that's pretty much all the error handling on this page. So I will go ahead and hand it off to Nick, I believe.

Nick Gompper: Yep. Thank you. Christian, let me just share my screen as well. Can everyone see my screen?

Ramnik: Yes.

Nick Gompper: Okay, Great. So I want to talk a little bit about the sources of XML upload failures, which are useful to prevent the situation where you go through the trouble of uploading a file only to get a failed message and little, if any, indication of the source of that. So what we've found is that there are actually two main sources of problems in terms of the constructing the files that can be leveraged to preemptively correct the files before uploading. The first of these is the invalid XML syntax. These include things like unclosed tags, unmatched opening closing tags, improper nesting of tags. All three of those things are pretty closely related and I'll show you some examples later. In addition to that, invalid characters are also something that we haven't encountered as much, but I just wanted everyone to be aware of that. The good news with these types of XML syntax errors is that the problems can be easily detected, so that there's no real reason to go through the trouble of uploading if this is the source of your problem. At its easiest level, you can just simply open one of these files in your browser. Now obviously, many of the XML files can be quite large, so we would recommend starting out with just one or a couple of records to test your files to make sure that they're structured properly and have the right tags and that everything is closed appropriately. Now the second

type of upload failure error involves some invalid XML schema. Now, the schema represents the element relationships, the structure, the datatypes, etcetera of the XML document reflected in the XML schema definition or an XSD. I'll talk a little bit about the AFCARS XSD in a minute. But some of the types of errors we've seen with an invalid XML schema include unknown tags, missing tags, missing namespace on the data tag, that's, that's a pretty common one. And then other structural issues. It's important to note in this case that the problems can't be detected just by opening the file in your browser because these are valid XML documents. So in this case, you have to compare the XML that you're constructing against the XSD. You can also use a range of different available parsing tools, which can make things a lot easier to do. But for now, I'll just sort of go through the process of explaining how you could do it manually. Unlike the invalid XML syntax, which will always result in a file upload failure, some of these XSD issues may result in failures, others may result in compliance or data quality errors because of we're, actually we accept certain errors which are reflected in for example out of range error or missing errors, some of the examples that Christian gave. Rebecca already talked a little bit about the Technical Bulletin number 21, which includes the XSD schema information. The overall file for that is a PDF. And that includes the sort of overview of the file structure, its elements, and the element groupings. That's the place to start to get an understanding of what needs to be in your XML document. But the XSDs are actually there as well off that initial homepage for the bulletin. And so there's one there for out-of-home care data and then there's another one there for the adoption and guardianship assistance data. Each of those is a zip file and inside is the associated XSD. The schema\_oohXSD for out-of-home care and the schema\_assistance.xml file for the adoption in guardianship XSD. Don't be concerned about the XML extension on the adoption and guardianship assistance file because XSDs are themselves XML file. So that's not actually a problem. I've also put in the footnote, the Family First, a link to the Family First XSD for anyone who's involved in that as well. So as I mentioned, the XSDs define elements, data types, relationships, et cetera, within the XML documents. They also describe attributes. The good thing is that's one less thing to worry about in the case of these AFCARS XML files, because we don't use any attributes, they're just tags and data within those. Actually our XSDs are fairly straightforward. Each specifies a root data element, which in turn contains a sequence of other elements, including a set of one or more record elements. And I'll show you these in a second. Then below that are a series of simple and complex data types that define each element. Let me switch over to show you an example. This is the out-of-home care XSD. And I've collapsed the various groups so you can see things clearly. So up top is the root data element and its, and the sequence that it defines with a sequence of records. And each record, if I expand it includes all these different data elements. Now the definitions for each of those is below. So we have simple types and we have these complex types. So looking for example at here, this yes, no numeric type is defined down below here. And it's basically saying it's going to be a zero or a one based on this. Likewise, some of the data types are more complex. So, for example, if I look at specific health conditions, that's a sequence of all these different elements, each of which in turn has a type of its own that is defined as a simple type. The adoption assistance file is similar, actually a little simpler because it doesn't have as many complex types. I've already got one expanded here. This No, Yes numeric type, which is defined by, which is the type used by a number of

these different elements. And again, it just accepts an enumeration of zero or one, in this particular case an integer. Okay, so how do you go about manually inspecting your XML against the XSD? So what you wanna do is first and foremost check that any of the tags that you're using in your XML are included in the XSD. There's no reason for any tag in the XML to not be in the XSD. Secondly, you're going to want to validate the data types, that is verify that data that you have for that tag is consistent with the definition in the XSD for that. And then thirdly, you're going to want to validate the structure. Many of these XSDs include sequences, a sequence of for example three different tags. You're going to want to make sure that your tags are there and in the correct order as specified in the XSD. Now I want to show a few examples. First, I'm going to open a valid file. I'm going to open that in a browser. So you can see that it renders properly. This is a simple three record out-of-home care file. So if I collapse the three records, you can see it very clearly. In this case, the sequence that is defined in the XSD includes E1, E2, and the records collection, which includes all the records and in turn each one of those records, all the elements beneath it, and some of those being complex elements have, in turn, elements beneath them, as well. Now let's take a look at a few examples where things go bad. I'm gonna look at this tag prematurely closed for example on line 29. If I open it in Firefox, I just get this ugly error. And what it shows is that there's a mismatch between record and this tag here, which obviously you wouldn't expect because you'd want this tag to be closing the corresponding opening tag. So let's look in turn at the same file inside Notepad Plus Plus, which is just a text editor. What line did we say it was at? 29. So here is where that tag gets opened. But look, it's also closed. That slash at the end indicates the tag was closed, but obviously shouldn't have been because it should have been closed over here. So what the parser did, it saw that this was closed, it didn't care about these other tags and it said, well, which is the tag that was open? And it looks back and sees that record was open. So it sees that that record and this do not match. And that's the cause of that syntax problem. So obviously the solution in this particular case is to remove this closing, this closing tag at the end of the opening tag. I'm going to skip ahead a little bit and give another example of an invalid schema. Now again, for an invalid schema, the XML can be perfectly fine and it'll render properly inside the browser, but it won't be consistent with the XSD. So let's look at, for example, this, this mis-ordered sequence. So again, opening in my browser, it looks fine. But then by opening it, you can see that I've already written out the problem. E15 precedes the E14, which is not consistent with the sequence that's defined in the XSD. Let's open it and take a look at it. Right there. So you can see it can be quite tricky to find the problems in the XSD that are in your XML file. I think that it's easiest again, if you just have one or two records when you're constructing your initial, initial XML file and then only after you have the automation down should you add the additional records using the same methodology. There are, however, as I pointed out initially some automated ways to check against the XSD. There are a lot of free and open source parsers that will do that. And a lot of them are integrated into editors such as Notepad Plus Plus. I'm not endorsing Notepad Plus Plus, but it's an example of a tool that a lot of people have handy and that has this sort of validation built-in. So, sorry, I have to move that because the Zoom bar is in the way. If I wanted to validate this file, go to plug-ins here, the XML Tools plug-in. And by the way, it also includes the syntax checker. So I can check that. Says the syntax is fine, as we knew because we opened it in the browser. And then I can check validated against

the XSD. It asks me which XSD file. So I want the out-of-home care XSD. And I run that. And sure enough, it recognizes that it expects to see E14 first, but instead it saw E15. So this is the type of thing that you want to either run if you're, you know, if you can otherwise do a manual inspection to avoid this sort of situation. So in addition to these steps that can be taken to preemptively avoid problems in uploading files, we are actually working on a number of different enhancements to improve the usability of the system overall, as well as the performance. We have already deployed an improvement to handle compliance checks on very large child records. This is a result of good feedback we received during the pilot where we were able to identify that some of these records can be quite large, so we were able to make that adjustment. In addition to that, we're looking at improvements to provide feedback for failures due to XML syntax errors. As I mentioned, the syntax will fail consistently, but just like the parser is able to catch that using the tool, we want to be able to do the same thing to provide users with that feedback if they haven't done that initial work themselves. We also are continually making improvements to the process and generate compliance reports on large files, as well as implementing the remaining batch of data quality checks, which we're a pretty good way along now. Additional change is to be able to navigate to the compliance report directly from transmission and submission screen displays. And then finally, we're gonna be working soon on requirements for the frequency report as well as printing reports. So with that, I will turn things back over to Ramnik and we'll entertain any of your questions.

Ramnik: Yeah. Thanks. Thanks, Nick. So yeah, as far as the questions, we've been following along on the chat, some of them I think we've answered, a couple of them we are working on going through right now and providing responses so we can go ahead and just kinda take it each one and see which ones still require responses here. So I think the first one I see that we haven't addressed yet is, or that I haven't addressed yet is from Eric Revling about the schema of this file does not match the expected schema for this program, is there any way we could get an error log so that we could determine what exactly does not match. Also, is there a way to know what the status of our NCWDMS help desk ticket is. For the first one, yes. As Nick indicated, we are working on adding some additional error specificity for situations where there could be an XML syntax issue or perhaps other issue. Some of these nuances we're looking at based on your usage during the pilot. As Christian demonstrated earlier, there is some degree of error handling there, some specificity, but other use cases that are coming up we're taking a look at and can make some adjustments to provide even more specific error messaging. As far as the help desk ticket? Yes, we should be able to talk to our help desk team members and get those status for that. Also, we can reach out, you can reach out via email at any point or calling them and just to check on what the status of the ticket is. Those are the, those are the approaches right now that can be used to check the status.

Rebecca Odor: And I'll jump in, too, Ramnik about the help desk. Some of that that might be slowing that down is there is an approval process to create a new account. And so you might send something into the help desk ticket and we're still working out a little bit of issues here with getting those accounts approved. So be flexible with us, but please follow up if you haven't heard back from the help desk about setting up an



account or any other issue.

Ramnik: Thanks, Rebecca. And then I think Cassie, I think Cassie addressed the one that I think H Yee had about element number three. I don't know if there was a follow-up to that, but I just saw that Cassie had responded to that. And then I think I see one from Godon DA, about sorry if I missed this, but how do we get access to the latest XML example? So just to confirm, I am assuming you're meaning like sample XML files or is this a different, are you meaning something different here?

Rebecca Odor: If you're looking to get the sample XML files for the pilot, then send an email to the AFCARS email address, [afcars@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:afcars@acf.hhs.gov) and just request those sample files and we will respond with those files for you.

Ramnik: Yes. Thanks, Rebecca. And also those are excellent references as well as you are testing the system to refer to and take a look at and use as, as, as an example. So yeah, definitely recommend that. Okay. I don't see any additional, are there any additional questions at this point that we haven't covered yet already?

Rebecca Odor: It looks like Alice was asking some questions looking for other state information. So those of you that have access to the chat. And you wanted to fill in about what your state is doing in producing the XML file, her first question is that. For Alice's second question, I don't see a question for number two, we have child records with missing birth dates, but the compliance utility reports element five, child's date of birth as being 100% compliant. Oh, I see. So we'll look into that, Ramnik, your team will look at that and see if that's a compliance error that is not correct. Have you actually submitted that file, Alice, because that will help us tremendously in trying to do our checks to see how the compliance reports are working. And then the third question that Alice had here was needing to create an AFCARS error report based on the results of the compliance tool. Is there a way to export all compliance errors from the NCWDMS website? And we had talked about this at the last AFCARS office hours. So we will, we're working on some way that you can download those errors for your own use. It's just something that takes more time than what we're ready to stand up right now, but that's something that's being ready. Right now, you can go in and you can see all those errors all in one place. But we're working on a way to download that for your use offline.

Ramnik: And then I think I see one from Christine Weaver about when will we be able to test a full-size run of the entire file, AFCARS system cannot handle that yet. So the system can handle uploads and submissions. However, there are some use cases where coming across for example that are, have very large size records or are very large files. We are working on augmenting the system to be able to handle those based on what we're seeing now as far as actual usage. And that's why this pilot is so valuable because it allows us to see the typical size records that can happen and then update our system to reflect that. Those are high priority items that we're working on right now, performance and additional error handling based on what we've seen in the pilot as Nick mentioned earlier. So should be, you should be able to handle, I would say, smaller size or normal size records but as they get large, very large, then there could be some issues that we need to take a look at and update to be able to, for the system to be able to handle them. I see one from Daryl

Perry about we do not have data for E44 prior guardianship. How do we get around to aggregate 90% type errors? I think this one might be for our program office Rebecca or Malcolm, you want to take that one?

Rebecca Odor: That's right, Daryl. Thanks for the question. And this is, there's nothing that we can get around as far as the errors go. The errors are if those values are missing, then it will be a compliance error. So that's how the file will work, that's what's written in the regulation around the missing data types. So that is what the compliance check is.

Ramnik: Okay. Alright. Thank you. Rebecca. I think Alice was, I think responding to a previous one, I think that is on the adoption assistance file. And then I see one from John. When you say large files, how large? Nick, do you want to kind of provide context into what we were talking about earlier as far as some of the handling that we do with it, we're looking into the larger file.

Nick Gompper: Sure. So we have two different issues right now. One is with individual records, and I think we've largely rectified that issue. The other is with the overall size of the file. So right now our tests, we can be successful to essentially 500 megabytes or thereabouts. But our goal is to get up to 2 gigabytes, which we think will be able to handle all the files from all the states.

Ramnik: Okay. Thanks. Thanks, Nick. Any other questions? I see some, yeah. I think that's the last one I have. Any other questions at this point?

Rebecca Odor: I'll jump in here while you guys are putting any questions or if you are just on the phone and you didn't watch, or aren't able to see this. You can press \*9 or #9. I'm not quite, one of those. And you can ask your question on the phone or you can raise your hand and you can talk to us with your questions. But I will take this opportunity to say some of you have current files that are not compliant with UTF-8. Oh gosh. And so we have this pilot program, pilot offering for you to be able to upload files so that we can be able to see if you are compliant with the UTF-8 encryption method. No, that's not called encryption method. So if you all who have been contacted by us, the eight or so states that are working with us on this UTF-8 issue, this is the time to participate in the pilot so you can see if your system has fixed the issue and that you'll be able to successfully upload 2023a file. Cora you just asked if you can still upload files after March 1st? Yes. You may still upload files. We encourage it. We also encourage you all to submit the files that will so that we can learn from your submitted files. They won't be officially submitted until after April 1 and then you can officially submit your files, but before March 1st, if you all could submit files that allows us to check what the compliance reports are saying and to see the data. Otherwise, we can't see your data if you've just uploaded it. After March 1st, the, you can continue to use it as a pilot. We won't have as much time to implement any changes that you all find from using the files. So we encourage you to do as much work in the NCWDMS before March 1st so that we can get the feedback from you all and help to make NCWDMS work the best way it can before it has to accept the files after April 1st.

Ramnik: I also see one from Samantha about as we test AFCARS, is it possible to modify

the email to only go to persons listed under AFCARS program and not Families First? I believe the way it's set up right now is to go to users for that STT, for certain emails. Like, for example once this file has been successfully processed, or if there's a failure, we could definitely take a look at an update to also further restrict it by program type. So only go to those users that are associated with that particular program file. So yes, the answer is yes.

Malcolm Hale: Ramnik? Yeah, I'd say Samantha, send us an email if there's people who are in one program but not the other, we can split the username so they're no longer listed under AFCARS or Family First. So they don't get emails for both.

Ramnik: Okay. And I see, okay. Thanks, Malcolm. I think I see another one from Cindy, do all elements need to be included if no data? I think that depends on the specific data elements. But Malcolm, would you want to provide, XSD related kind of question? You want to provide any context on that?

Malcolm Hale: I can answer in the general sense, but it might be better to give specific answers to specific elements that there's a particular question on that. Generally speaking, if an element, I'd say sort of what Nick was calling sort of the simple elements earlier or simple data types, if you don't have data for that, you should be able to just open and close it. Generally speaking, it's risky to not include elements that there are no data, particularly they're contained within a group, in which case you may trigger an error because one of the unexpected elements within the group is missing. So going back to the example of special health conditions, that's a list of different conditions. And if you respond, if once you include the special conditions tag and open it, you kinda have to include all the elements within it. Otherwise, you're probably generate an error. I don't know if anybody else wants to weigh in a little bit more than that.

Nick Gompper: Yeah, I think that's accurate because it's a sequence, not, I'm not looking at the XSD right now. But if there's a sequence within a container tag and it lists four elements, you can't leave one out because you don't have data for it. So it needs to be opened and closed, as you mentioned.

Malcolm Hale: Now, the other wrinkle in that is there are certain elements that, and I think of group elements. So there's an element that opens and within it you have an entry for each child. And within that, within each child is now going to open and then list each removal episode. And within each removal episode, you open that and list each caseworker visit, let's say. If there's no caseworker visits, you can just open and close the group caseworker visit tag. You don't need to open and close an individual caseworker visit element by itself, if that makes any sense. There's an element that exists just to contain the list. You don't have to put anything in that list, which is what the individual elements are. Sorry, that's confusing. So maybe we can get an example sent to you also.

Nick Gompper: Yeah -

Brendan Martin: Malcolm, you're right. It's generally, generally elements that are a series of instances like events, like caseworker visits and things like that. Those are where

you can generally open and close the outside container tag and you don't have to add other elements. But as Nick said, that there's a sequence of related elements, like 24, 23, 25, 26, 27, you're generally going to have to open and close all those individual elements in a group. Anyway. Sorry.

Ramnik: Okay, thanks. Brendan and Malcolm think I see another one from Gary Hassenstab about are we actually participating in the pilot just by doing an upload of our test file at the portal? Or do we need to officially tell you we are wanting to participate in the pilot? I think the first is fine, I think you're participating in the pilot just by just by using the system and doing uploads and submissions. I don't think there's any official notification needed after we've created the accounts, obviously for users who are participating.

Rebecca Odor: Right, and if you want to get feedback around what the experience has been like, then please send that email at [afcars@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:afcars@acf.hhs.gov) and we will use that to make NCWDMS better. There's also a question here from Cindy about the naming rules for XML file being submitted. And we don't we don't have any naming rules, so you call it what you need so that you can identify it. We give it a file processing number. So that's how we'll use it in the future.

Ramnik: Sounds good. Alright. And then I see one from Bethany about, is there a way to explain -

Malcolm Hale: Ramnik, can I just clarify for the last one, you just need an XML extension, correct?

Rebecca Odor: Yeah. Yes.

Ramnik: Okay. Sounds good. Bethany, I see a question about is there a way to expand the view on element errors to show all instead of just 25 which you have, it would at least allow us to more quickly pull the data into Excel to research until more permanent solution is found. I think you're talking about like the compliance report, in terms of being able to view the errors and perhaps export them into an Excel which we were talking about earlier. Yes, that is something we're looking into or it's on the plans to develop. We can take a look to see, I think there was some performance things we want to take a look at in terms of the 25 versus showing all that need to be looked at. If that's feasible or not. We can definitely take a look at that. So we'll, we'll follow up with you after doing some research on that. Any other questions? Okay. From Daryl Perry right now we just look at compliance and data quality feedback. We have not submitted anything. Is this a test system with respect to submit button or is it live? So it's a pilot system right now that's live, but it's not being used for official submissions right now, not until April for AFCARS. So anything that you are submitting right now is not an officially submitted file for, you know, for the next reporting period. It can be used in a testing capacity, if that makes sense.

Malcolm Hale: Hey, Ramnik, if I could just add. We strongly encourage you to go all the way through the submission process, even though essentially the submission itself is not an official submission, it won't count for anything, will probably get purged from the system. But it enables us to get the best feedback possible on sort of how it's

going, what the files are going to look like for us so that we can then improve the system better for everyone else trying to use it or realize that there's a problem now rather than later. I would encourage everyone to please submit their file once they get to the point where they think it looks pretty good.

Ramnik: Okay.

Rebecca Odor: And, I saw Daryl, you just said after you reduce your errors, we will submit. Believe me, we're not judging you on any errors, especially during this pilot. So feel free to submit at whatever point you want. It doesn't have to be a perfect submission. It doesn't have to have only two errors or something. We're not even looking at that, we just have to look at how the files are working within the system and we have data analysis purposes that we're going to need. So being able to look at your data just to see how this is going to work for an analytic viewpoint is, would be helpful for us. So don't worry about a perfect file. It's not possible at the moment, I'm sure. Just whatever you submit we're using to make it better. Doesn't seem anymore questions in the chat box and I don't see anyone's hand raise to talk to us about questions. So we will plan to, this was recorded. So this will again be put on the NCWDMS website and we're also trying to keep them on our website so that there'll be both places so you can refer to this. Or if you didn't have your technical people on this particular one, then send them to this recording so they can learn from this. Make sure you're reviewing the technical bulletins. We have another AFCARS office hours at the end of March. So be ready for that one and please participate in whatever way you can in the pilot, it's been very helpful for us to get the feedback from you all thus far. We've found errors in our data quality, quality advisories. We found that we couldn't handle certain size of files. These are all things that will make it smoother for everybody with your participation. So thank you thus far. And we are one minute until the hour, so it's a perfect timing. So thank you all for attending and we will see you again next month.

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