



AFCARS Office Hours

AFCARS Updates

Children's Bureau Data Analytics and Reporting Team

June 24, 2024

Agenda



- I. NCWDMS Reports
- II. Penalties Updates
- III. New Technical Bulletins
- IV. Questions
- V. Resources

NCWDMS Reports

Review your AFCARS data

How do I know if there were issues with my agency's data?

There are multiple places to look for issues with your data

- Compliance detail report
- Data quality report
- Frequency report

File 5656 Detail

Agency: **Report Period:** 2024A **Program Type:** AFCARS - Out of Home Care **File Name:** AFCARS_OUT_OF_HOME_XML_PROD_20240514132337.xml **Transmitted Date:** 5/14/2024
Transmitted By: c **Submission Date:** 5/14/2024 **Record Count:** 7321

FILE CHECK

COMPLIANCE DETAILS

COMPLIANCE SUMMARY

QUALITY

FREQUENCY

COMMENTS

File Check Information



Compliance Detail Report

FILE CHECK

COMPLIANCE DETAILS

COMPLIANCE SUMMARY

QUALITY

FREQUENCY

COMMENTS

Compliance Details Report

File Name: AFCARS_FC202405150325.xml

Program Type: AFCARS - Out of Home Care

Agency: '

CSV Export

CSV Reports are limited to 1,000 occurrences of each error type.

This report may contain additional errors.

File Status: Submitted

[Exempted Records](#): 397

[View all rules for this program type](#)

Filter by Element Status

Show All Elements With Errors

Show All Noncompliant Elements

Show All Elements With Errors

Show All Elements

Element Number: E6 Element Name: E6_sex Compliance Status: **Noncompliant**

Element Description: Child's sex

- Record(s) error-free: **8813 of 8826** total record(s) (99.85%)
- Compliance checks on this element detected 13 error(s) in 13 record(s).

100% threshold **not met**

Comment



Children's Bureau

An Office of the Administration for Children & Families

Compliance Detail Report

[FILE CHECK](#)[COMPLIANCE DETAILS](#)[COMPLIANCE SUMMARY](#)[QUALITY](#)[FREQUENCY](#)[COMMENTS](#)

Element Number: E69 Element Name: E69_removal_date Compliance Status: **Compliant**

Element Description: Date of Child's Removal

- Record(s) error-free: **22638 of 22668** total record(s) (99.87%)
- Compliance checks on this element detected 46 error(s) in 30 record(s).

90% threshold **met**

Comment

No comment

Hide Rules Checked

Rule(s) Checked	Rule Error(s)	Records with Rule Errors
E69_child_same_value_inconsistency Rule Description	16	8
E69_E153_inconsistency Rule Description	26	26
E69_E5_inconsistency Rule Description	4	4
All Rules	46	30

Show All Errors

Rule Description

E69_E5_inconsistency

E69_removal_date must be on or after E5_date_of_birth.

Close

Data Quality Report

FILE CHECK

COMPLIANCE DETAILS

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Error: E68_E155_inconsistency

If E155_exit_reason = 3 (Adoption) for the most recent removal, E68_tpr_date_parent2 should not be missing or empty and should be a valid YYYYMMDD.

- Record(s) error-free: **12772 of 13399 (95.32%)**
- **627 errors** detected in 627 records

95% threshold **met**

Frequency Report

FILE CHECK

COMPLIANCE DETAILS

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COMMENTS

Summary Statistics of Periodic Reviews per Removal (E149_periodic_reviews)

Min	Max	Mean	Median	Total
0	1	0.70	1.00	3,110

Date of Periodic Review (E149_periodic_review_date)

Value	Frequency	Percent
2023	804	25.9%
2024	2,306	74.1%
Missing/Empty	0	0.0%
Total	3,110	100.0%

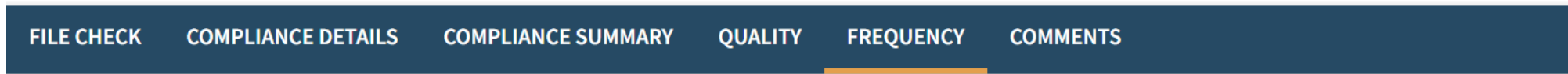
Health Conditions (E23_health_conditions)

Value	Frequency	Percent
No exam or assessment conducted	9,210	99.9%
Child has a diagnosed condition	11	0.1%
Exam or assessment conducted and none of the conditions apply	2	0.0%
Exam or assessment conducted but results not received	0	0.0%
Missing/Empty	0	0.0%
Total	9,223	100.0%

How do I find answers to specific questions about children reported to AFCARS?

Such as

- how many children were Native American?
- how many parents had an involuntary TPR started?
- how many removals reported domestic violence being a circumstance at the time of removal?
- how many children were a victim of sex trafficking during their current removal?



How do I find answers to specific questions about children reported to AFCARS?

[FILE CHECK](#)[COMPLIANCE DETAILS](#)[COMPLIANCE SUMMARY](#)[QUALITY](#)[FREQUENCY](#)[COMMENTS](#)

American Indian or Alaska Native (E13_child_race_american_indian_alaska_native)

Value	Frequency	Percent
No	4,071	90.6%
Yes	423	9.4%
Missing/Empty	0	0.0%
Total	4,494	100.0%

Termination/Modification of Parental Rights for First Parent (E63_tpr_parent1)

Value	Frequency	Percent
Not applicable if there is no TPR	5,148	85.1%
Voluntary	111	1.8%
Involuntary	792	13.1%
Missing/Empty	0	0.0%
Total	6,051	100.0%

Domestic Violence (E79_domestic_violence)

Value	Frequency	Percent
Does not apply	9,473	92.5%
Applies	730	7.1%
Missing/Empty	39	0.4%
Total	10,242	100.0%

Victim of Sex Trafficking while in Foster Care (E109_victim_sex_trafficking)

Value	Frequency	Percent
No	147	100.0%
Yes	0	0.0%
Missing/Empty	0	0.0%
Total	147	100.0%

Penalties Update

Revision to penalties process in Technical Bulletin #23

Revised Penalty Process

- CB revised the penalty process (which was developed in 2021) **prior to assessing the first penalties**. This revised process is being implemented for the 23A reporting period.

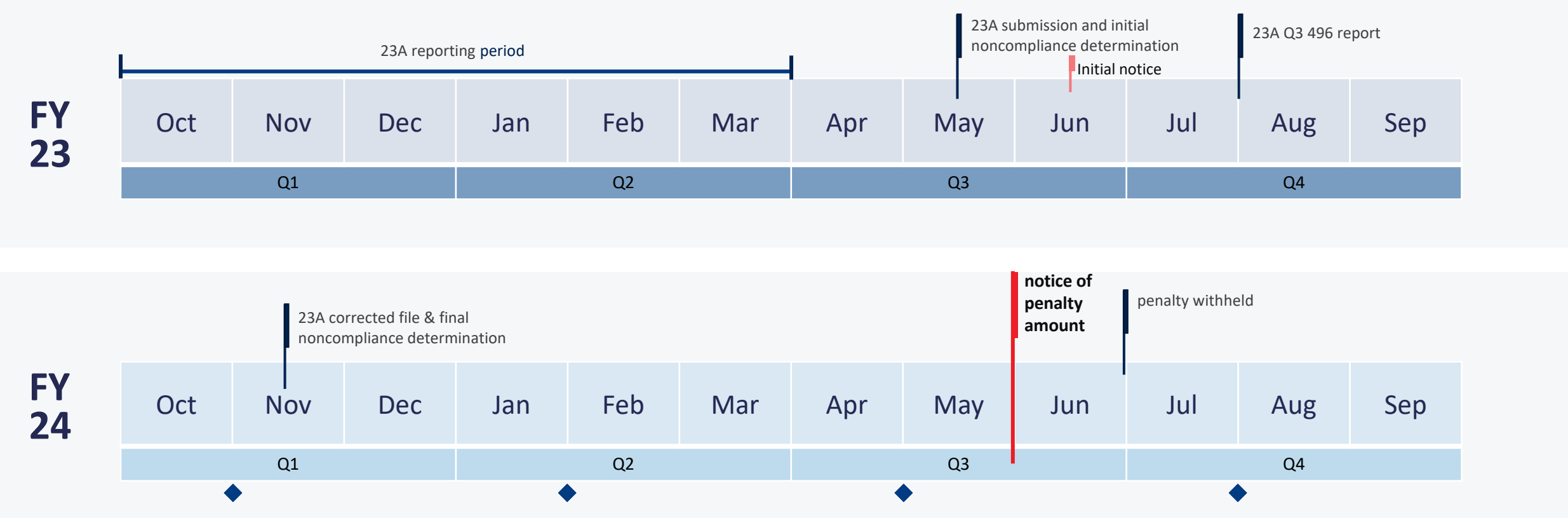
Old Process	New Process
Penalty based on 1 quarter and 2 PQAs submitted on the CB-496 for that penalty quarter	Penalty based on 1 quarter and <u>3</u> PQAs
Additional second updated penalty notice after 9 total quarters	Removed the second penalty notice
Noncompliant agency submitted revised CB-496 with decreasing adjustment to pay penalty	CB withholds the penalty amount, and the agency doesn't have to take any action

Example for 23A Noncompliant AFCARS File

KEY

◆

CB-496 FY 23 Q3
prior quarter adjustment



- This graphic shows the timeline of an agency’s noncompliant file submission for the 23A reporting period, which covers October 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023.
- The agency submits the 23A file by May 15, 2023 and an initial noncompliance determination is made. The agency receives an initial notice of noncompliance within 30 days.
 - The agency submits its Q3 CB-496 report by July 30, 2023.
 - The agency submits any prior quarter adjustments to its CB-496 for FY23 Q3 by October 30, 2023.
 - The agency has the opportunity to submit a correct file for 23A by November 14, 2024. If the file is noncompliant on that date, the agency will receive its final noncompliance determination.
 - The agency submits any prior quarter adjustments to its CB-496 for FY23 Q3 by January 30, 2024.
 - The agency receives its notice of penalty amount by March 31, 2024. The agency pays its penalty by April 30, 2024.
 - The agency continues to submit any prior quarter adjustments to its CB-496 for FY23 Q3 on April 30, 2024, July 30, 2024, October 30, 2024, January 30, 2025, April 30, 2025, and July 30, 2025. The agency receives an updated penalty amount by September 30, 2025.

Penalty Examples for 23A, 23B, 24A, & Partial for 24B Noncompliant AFCARS Files

The graphic on the next slide shows the full timeline of an agency's noncompliant file submission for the 23A reporting period, which covers October 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023, all the way through to the updated penalty amount in September of 2025. It also includes partial examples for reporting periods 23B, 24A, and 24B, up to each notice of penalty amount.

- Within fiscal year 2023:
 - The agency submits the 23A file by May 15, 2023 and an initial noncompliance determination is made. The agency receives an initial notice of noncompliance within 30 days. The penalty quarter for 23A is FY23 Q3 which is from April 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023. The agency submits its Q3 CB-496 report by July 30, 2023. The reporting period for 23B is from April 1, 2023 – September 30, 2023.
- Within fiscal year 2024:
 - The agency submits any prior quarter adjustments to its CB-496 for the 23A penalty quarter by October 30, 2023. By November 14, 2023, the agency submits its 23A corrected file and a final noncompliance determination is made. By the same date of November 14, 2023, the agency submits its 23B file and an initial noncompliance determination is made. The penalty quarter for 23B is FY24 Q1 which is from October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023. The agency submits its Q1 CB-496 report by January 30, 2024, which may include prior quarter adjustments to the 23A penalty quarter. By March 31, 2024, the agency receives its 23A notice of penalty amount calculated at 1/6th of 1%. The reporting period for 24A is from October 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024.
 - The agency submits any prior quarter adjustments to its CB-496 for the 23A and 23B penalty quarters by April 30, 2024. By May 15, 2024, the agency submits its 23B corrected file and a final noncompliance determination is made. By the same date of May 15, 2024, the agency submits its 24A file and an initial noncompliance determination is made. The penalty quarter for 24A is FY24 Q3 which is from April 1, 2024 – June 30, 2024. The agency submits its Q3 CB-496 report by July 30, 2024, which may include prior quarter adjustments to the penalty quarters for 23A and 23B. By September 30, 2024, the agency receives its 23B notice of penalty amount calculated at 1/4th of 1%. The reporting period for 24B is from April 1, 2024 – September 30, 2024.
- Within fiscal year 2025:
 - The agency submits any prior quarter adjustments to its CB-496 for the 23A, 23B, and 24A penalty quarters by October 30, 2024. By November 14, 2024, the agency submits its 24A corrected file and a final noncompliance determination is made. By the same date of November 14, 2024, the agency submits its 24B file and an initial noncompliance determination is made. The penalty quarter for 24B is FY25 Q1 which is from October 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024. The agency submits its Q1 CB-496 report by January 30, 2025, which may include prior quarter adjustments to the penalty quarters for 23A, 23B, and 24A. By March 31, 2025, the agency receives its 24A notice of penalty amount calculated at 1/4th of 1%.
 - The agency submits any prior quarter adjustments to its CB-496 for the 23A, 23B, 24A, and 24B penalty quarters by April 30, 2025. By May 15, 2025, the agency submits its 24B corrected file and a final noncompliance determination is made. The agency submits any prior quarter adjustments to its CB-496 for the 23A, 23B, 24A, and 24B penalty quarters by July 30, 2025. By September 30, 2025, the agency receives its 24B notice of penalty amount calculated at 1/4th of 1%. Also by September 30, 2025, the agency receives its 23A updated penalty amount calculated at 1/6th of 1%.

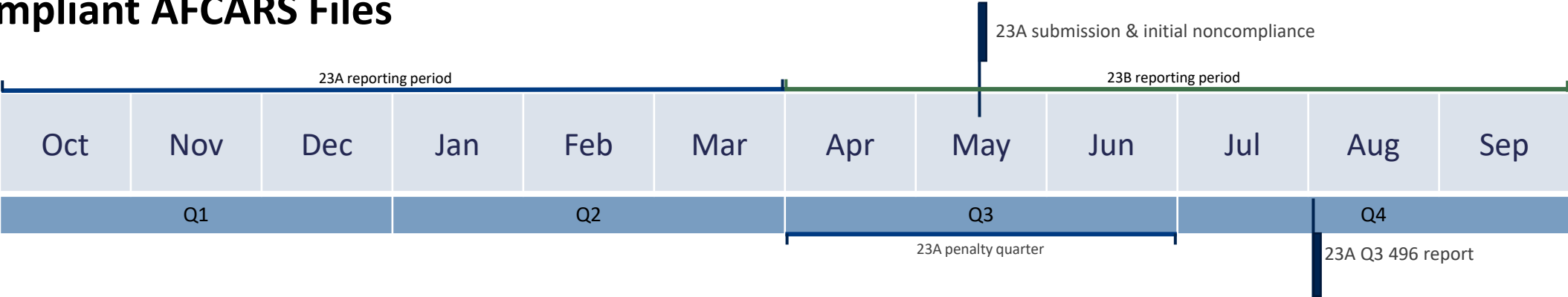
Penalty Examples for 23A, 23B, 24A, & Partial for 24B

Noncompliant AFCARS Files

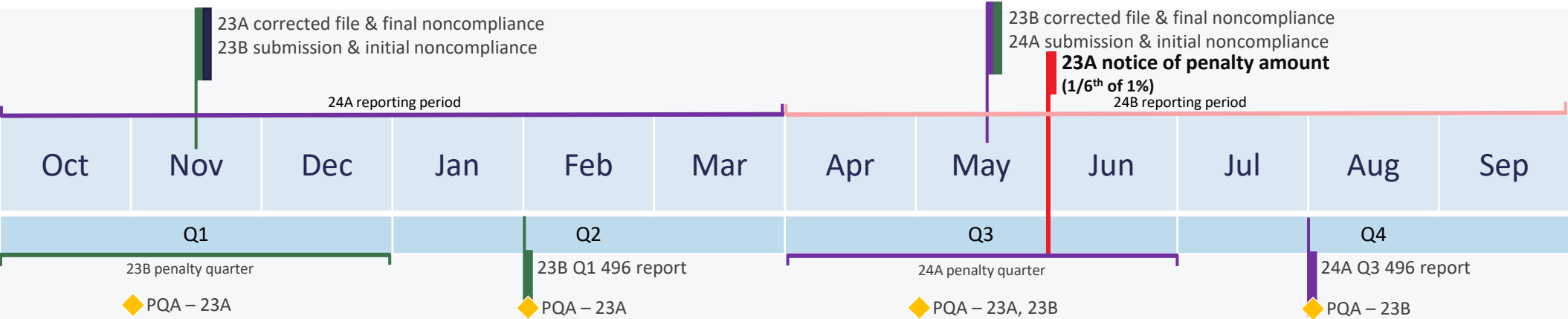
KEY

PQA = Prior Quarter Adjustment on CB-496

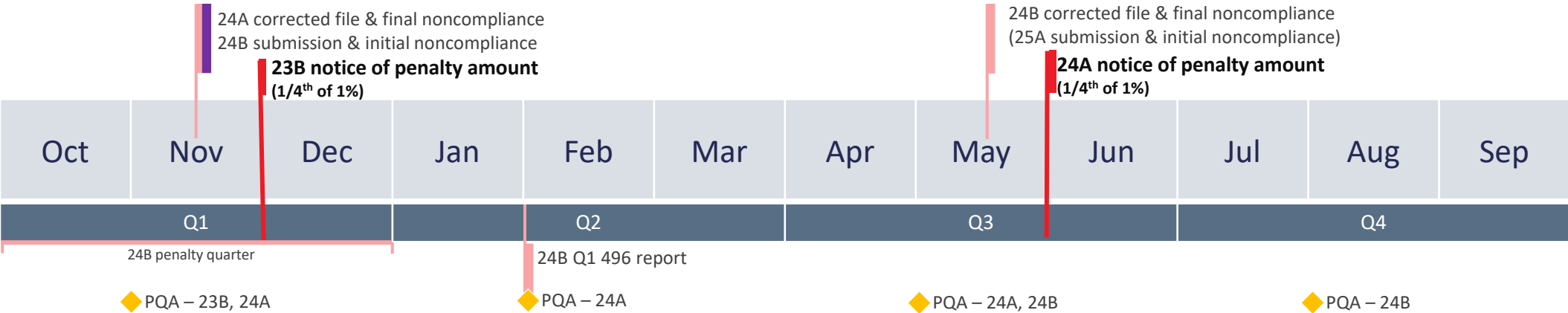
FY 23



FY 24



FY 25



Revised Technical Bulletins

Technical Bulletin #20 ver 2.2: Data Elements

Technical Bulletin #22 ver 2.2: Reporting Population & Data Extraction

Technical Bulletin #23 ver 2.2: Compliance & Penalties

Look at the last appendix for list of changes

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

TB#20: E112: Date of Living Arrangement

- For children who are in a short-term or interim location not designed for youth in out-of-home care
 - hotel room
 - office space
 - short-term rental property
- Enter each location as a separate living arrangement
- It would be reported as one placement for however many days the child stays at that location.
- *For example, if an agency removes a child, does not yet have a foster home available, and puts the child in a hotel room for two nights, the agency would report one living arrangement.*

TB#20: E112: Date of Living Arrangement

- However, if the child has to pack up their belongings after the night's stay and then go back to the location for the next night, the agency would report that as two separate living arrangements.
- *If the same child spent the first night in a room on the third floor of the hotel and the second night had to move to a room on the first floor of the hotel, the agency would report two separate living arrangements for the child.*

TB#20: E120: Other Living Arrangement - Placed at Home & OOH Reporting Population

- To be initially included in the reporting population, a child must be
 1. in a foster care placement per §1355.20 and
 2. in the placement and care responsibility of the agency.
- If an agency has placement and care responsibility where a child is under 'protective supervision' or another term, yet the child remained with the parent at home, the **child would not be included in the reporting population for AFCARS.**
- The agency may have placement and care responsibility for the child and the agency may even consider the child to be 'removed' per agency policy. However, since the child is with the parent, there was no removal and foster care placement per §1355.20, so the child is not part of the AFCARS reporting population.
- Because the child isn't in the reporting population, there should not be any children in your file where the only living arrangement is E120: Placed at Home.

TB#20: E120: Other Living Arrangement - Placed at Home & OOH Reporting Population (con't)

- There shouldn't be any children in the file whose first living arrangement is placed at home either.
- *For example, an agency receives placement and care responsibility for a child on October 1 and the child remains at home with the parent until November 15 when the child enters a foster family home. The removal date would be November 15.*
- Additionally, there should be **no initial** living arrangement as a
 - Juvenile justice facility
 - Medical or rehabilitative facility
 - Psychiatric hospital

TB#20 & TB#22: AGA Reporting Population

- Added the ability to allow 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.
- This is different than how the out-of-home-care file is structured.
- If there are assistance agreements for a child, report the child in the file separately for each agreement. A child may appear multiple times in this file for each agreement. However, there can only be one active agreement at the end of the reporting period.

TB#20 & TB#22: AGA Reporting Population

Guardianship Example

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

A3: Child Record Number	A17: Guardianship Legalization Date	A18: Agreement Termination Date
012345678910	October 5, 2024	December 14, 2024
012345678910	December 14, 2024	Null

TB#20 & TB#22: AGA Reporting Population

Adoption Example

For example, a child is legally adopted on May 1, 2022 and on November 15, 2024 they return to the care of the agency. The agreement ends and payments stop. The adoption is not legally ended, only the agreement. After assessments are performed, the child receives mental health services and is placed back in the adoptive home on December 14, 2024. The agreement starts again, but the adoption legalization date never changed. The agency would report the same child twice in the file for 25A:

A3: Child Record Number	A17: Adoption Finalization Date	A18: Agreement Termination Date
109876543210	May 1, 2022	November 15, 2024
109876543210	May 1, 2022	Null

TB#22: Dropped records

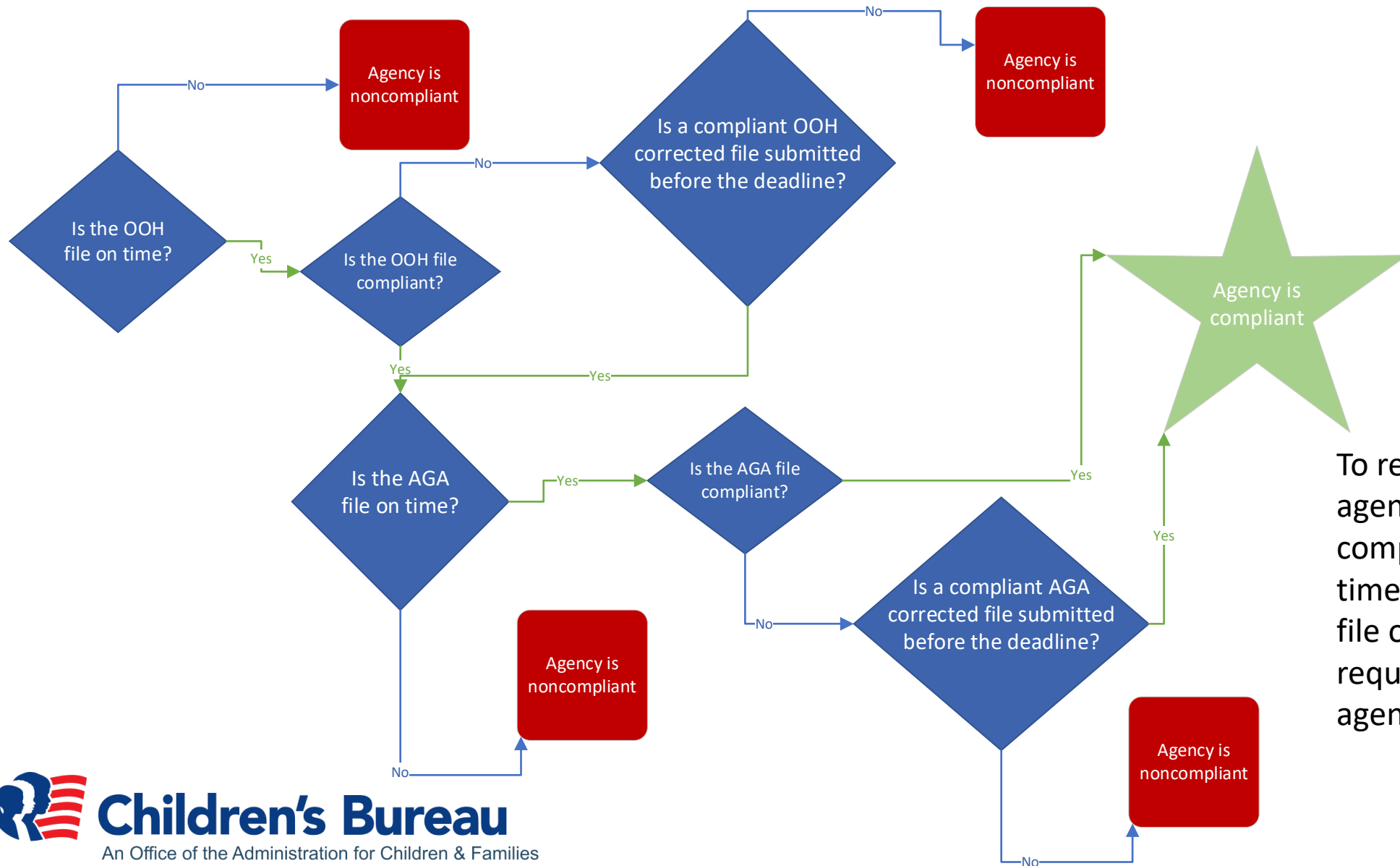
- Clarified that a dropped record can happen in both the out-of-home-care and the adoption and guardianship assistance files.
- A dropped record occurs when the child record is included in one submission as currently in care, but the record is not included in the next submission at all, thus no record 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.

Revised Penalty Process

- CB revised the penalty process (which was developed in 2021) **prior to assessing the first penalties**. This revised process is being implemented for the 23A reporting period.

Old Process	New Process
Penalty based on 1 quarter and 2 PQAs submitted on the CB-496 for that penalty quarter	Penalty based on 1 quarter and 3 PQAs
Additional second updated penalty notice after 9 total quarters	Removed the second penalty notice
Noncompliant agency submitted revised CB-496 with decreasing adjustment to pay penalty	CB withholds the penalty amount, and the agency doesn't have to take any action

How an agency can reach compliance



To reach compliance, an agency must submit a compliant OOH file on time, and a compliant AGA file on time. Once these requirements are met, the agency is compliant.

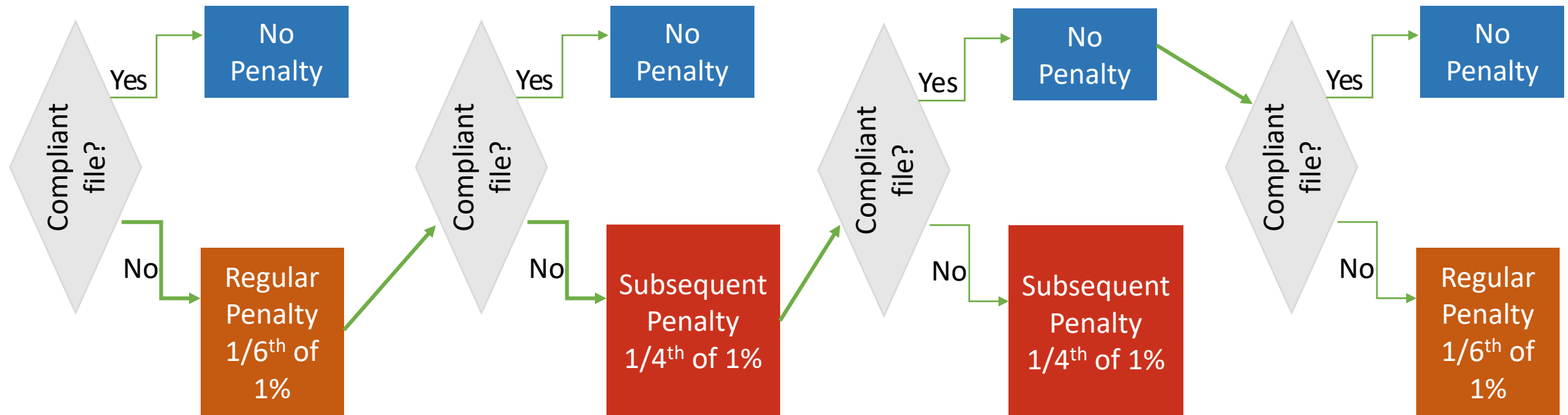
Regular or Subsequent Penalty Amount?

23A

23B

24A

24B





Questions?

How do I report a living arrangement if the QRTP status changes?

- Agencies should use qualified residential treatment program (QRTP) only if all of the requirements are met for the child and for the facility.
- A living arrangement is no longer able to be claimed as a QRTP if:
 - the child eligibility requirements are not met while the child is in that placement, or
 - the QRTP facility loses accreditation.
- Thus, agencies must choose a different living arrangement option for E120 that fits the child's placement without adding another date of living arrangement (E112).

How do I report a short hospital stay?

- Agencies should be guided by their own policies and data system constraints on the number of events, such as runaways and short-term medical stays, that are counted as living arrangements for the child's record.
- Children in a brief and temporary time away from their placement, such as an acute hospital stay, do not have to report the time as a new living arrangement. However, if the child is away for more than a brief period of time, the child should be reported with a new living arrangement.
- The definition of brief or acute should be a part of the agency's policies.
- *For example, if a child is in a family foster home and has to be hospitalized for 5 days for an infectious disease, the brief hospital stay does not need to be recorded as a new living arrangement.*
- *If the above child is then hospitalized for three weeks for stabilization and treatment after a mental health crisis, the agency should report the hospitalization as a new living arrangement.*



Resources

Access most up-to-date versions of the Technical Bulletins



- Always look at the version number or the date on the cover to make sure you are accessing the most current version.
- If you had downloaded an earlier version to your own computer, make sure to download the 2.2 version and replace your older version.
- If you always just click on the online link to access it, be sure to clear your cache so your computer doesn't just pull up the version that you had looked at the last time.
 - Browsers use caches to store previously opened web pages and documents in order to shorten the time needed to load the documents for the next time.
 - This cache results in opening the stored [older] pdf, yet the cache has no way to know that the stored file is no longer up-to-date.

Technical Bulletins

Technical Bulletin #20 ver 2.2: Regulations, Data Elements, and Examples

This includes detailed information on what and how to report each element.

Technical Bulletin #21 ver 2.1: File Structure & Encryption

This includes the XML tags and the data groups. It also contains the encryption requirement for child record number.

Technical Bulletin #22 ver 2.2: Reporting Population and Data Extraction


Contains how to extract the correct reporting population and data extraction examples.

Technical Bulletin #23 ver 2.2: Compliance and Penalties

This includes the policy and rules that will be validated at the time you upload the AFCARS file and how to calculate the penalties.



AFCARS 2020 Technical Bulletins



 AFCARS Technical Assistance | 1 x +

→ ↺ 🏠 🔍 acf.hhs.gov/cb/data-research/afcars-technical-assistance

AFCARS Technical Assistance

 Listen 

Current as of: June 10, 2024

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 ended October 17, 2023.

AFCARS 2020

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

- Publication Date: October 29, 2020, Revised: June 10, 2024.
- 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: October 10, 2023.
- 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, Revised: June 10, 2024.
- 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: Compliance and Penalties

- Publication Date: June 23, 2021, Revised: June 10, 2024.
- This TB provides title IV-E agencies with information on how compliance is determined and how penalties are assessed for noncompliant file submissions.

AFCARS 2020 Trainings

www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/data-research/afcars-technical-assistance

AFCARS Support



For technical issues with NCWDMS

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

For any programmatic issues

- AFCARS Resource Mailbox: AFCARS@acf.hhs.gov