



# Child Care and Development Fund ACF-801 Case-Level File Format

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## I. Introduction

This Technical Bulletin describes the formatting requirements for the ACF-801 data submission file. These formatting guidelines should be followed by all States and Territories when creating the file for electronic submission to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). All questions about the file format should be directed to the Child Care Automated Reporting System (CARS) Team. This Technical Bulletin provides guidance for implementing provisions of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act (Public Law 113-186) of 2014 and makes other revisions to strengthen administrative data reporting.

Recent changes to the ACF-801 include the new upper threshold of \$3,000 for Total Amount Paid to Provider (#27). Additionally, there is a new response category for the following elements: #18 - Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity, #19 - #23 - Race of the child, and #24 - Sex. For each of these elements, if the Lead Agency asked for ethnicity, race, and sex information for the child but the family did not provide the information, a “9.”

When submitting the required ACF-801 report, Lead Agencies have the option to submit either a sample or the complete population of children receiving federal child care subsidies. CCDF Lead Agencies also have the option to submit data monthly or quarterly (3 monthly files at once). Regardless of whether the Lead Agency submits sample or full population data or chooses to submit data on a monthly or quarterly basis, the Lead Agency must still adhere to the guidelines in this bulletin.

The remainder of this document contains four sections:

- Section II offers an overview of the ACF-801 report format;
- Section III gives detailed guidance for formatting the summary and case-level records;
- Section IV provides guidance for States/Territories that may be unable to submit data in a variable record length; and
- Section V provides resources for additional assistance.

***NOTE:** The data examples presented in the subsequent sections represent dummy data for illustration purposes only.*

## II. ACF-801 File Format Overview

### Contents of the ACF-801 Data Submission

The data submission is made up of four types of records:

1. The monthly summary record
2. Family, child, and child care setting records
3. Provider records
4. Footnotes

The data are submitted in a flat file with variable length records.

Order of Records in the ACF-801 Data Submission

Records should be ordered as listed below. For example, if the Lead Agency submits data on a monthly basis, the order of records in the file would be, using April as an example:

1. April's monthly summary record
2. Family, child, and setting records for families and children receiving subsidized child care during April
3. Provider records for all providers who received (or expect to receive) subsidy payments for services provided in April
4. Footnotes relevant to April's data elements
5. The "&" file delimiter indicating the end of the data submission

The record order is repeated if the Lead Agency submits data quarterly. For example, if the State/Territory submits data for April, May, and June at one time, the record order would be:

1. April's monthly summary record
2. Family, child, and setting records for families and children receiving subsidized child care during April
3. Provider records for all providers who received (or expect to receive) subsidy payments for services provided during April
4. Footnotes relevant to April's data elements
5. May's monthly summary record
6. Family, child, and setting records for families and children receiving subsidized child care during May
7. Provider records for all providers who received (or expect to receive) subsidy payments for services provided during May
8. Footnotes relevant to May's data elements
9. June's monthly summary record
10. Family, child, and setting records for families and children receiving subsidized child care during June
11. Provider records for all providers who received (or expect to receive) subsidy payments for services provided during the month of June
12. Footnotes relevant to June's data elements
13. The "&" file delimiter indicating the end of the data submission

States and Territories are required to submit footnotes each month to indicate the type of hours they are submitting. Additional footnotes are required to augment the data for quality elements. Lead Agencies should provide other footnotes at any time to clarify data for other elements. Footnotes should be reviewed and updated, as appropriate, for each file submission.

Also, note that only one "&" file delimiter is included. This indicates the end of the entire ACF-801 submission, regardless of whether it contains one monthly report or three monthly reports.

### III. Guidance for Formatting Records

This section provides general information about record and file delimiters, and includes detailed guidance for formatting the four types of records:

- Monthly summary (header) record
- Case-level family, child, and setting records
- Provider records
- Footnotes

#### Summary of Record and File Delimiters

The records in the ACF-801 data submission can be of varying lengths. The file delimiters are used to:

1. Identify related groups of data or individual data elements;
2. Mark the end of records; and
3. Determine the length of the file in order to verify that all data the Lead Agency intended to transmit were received.

The following table describes all the delimiters that are used in the ACF-801 data submission. Note that italicized characters (*M*, *F*, *C*, *S*, *P*, *N*, #, \$, %%, &) are literals – the character as it appears should be included in the file.

Delimiter	Use
<i>M</i>	This is the first character in the file. It signals that a monthly summary record follows.
#	Identifies a State contact data element in the monthly summary record.
<i>F</i>	Identifies the ACF-801 family data for one family.
<i>C</i>	Identifies the ACF-801 child data for one child.
<i>S</i>	Identifies the ACF-801 setting data for one setting.
<i>P</i>	Identifies the ACF-801 provider data for one provider.
\$	Marks the end of a monthly summary record or the complete family, child(ren) and setting(s) record for one family.  The \$ delimiter also must be placed at the end of each provider record to mark the end of each provider's information.
<i>N</i>	Marks the beginning of a footnote.
%%	Marks the end of a footnote.
&	Marks the end of the data submission file. Only one "&" is included with each submission, even if the submission includes three months of data.

Monthly Summary (Header) Record

Each month’s ACF-801 data report begins with a record identifying the report period and other general administrative information.

Data Element Description	Format	Length	Comment
Delimiter	<i>M</i>	1	This delimiter identifies the following record as a monthly summary record.
Report Period	YYYYMM	6	This data element identifies the month being reported. For example, if the report covers April 2018, this element would be “201804”.
Families Receiving Subsidized Child Care	Number	7	The number of families receiving subsidized child care in the State for the reported month. The number should be right-justified within the field and padded with leading zeros. For example, 25,387 would be formatted as “0025387”.
Number of Providers Delivering Subsidized Child Care	Number	7	The total number of providers who received (or expect to receive) subsidized child care payments for services provided during the reported month. The number should be right-justified within the field and padded with leading zeros. For example, 5,780 providers would be formatted as “0005780”.
Delimiter	#	1	Identifies the following data as contact information.
State/Territory Contact Name	Character	No limit	The name of the person who should be contacted regarding questions related to the report, and who is designated to receive the assessment reports. Do not include unnecessary descriptive prefixes or suffixes.  Note: Contact name needs to have a space separating first name/last name. See example below (p.g5).
Delimiter	#	1	Identifies the following data as contact information.
State/Territory Contact Telephone Number	Character	No limit	The telephone number of the State/Territory child care contact.
Delimiter	#	1	Identifies the following data as contact information.
State/Territory Contact Fax Number	Character	No limit	The fax number of the State/Territory child care contact.
Delimiter	#	1	Identifies the following data as contact information.
State/Territory Contact E-mail Address	Character	No limit	The e-mail address of the State/Territory child care contact.
Record Delimiter	§	1	This delimiter indicates the end of the summary record.

The delimiters, report period, subsidized family and provider counts, and contact information are required. However, if the Lead Agency does not have certain contact information, such as a fax number, the field may be skipped, although all delimiters should be included. For example, below is a monthly summary record containing the following data:

Report Period: July 2012  
Family Population: 72,384  
Providers: 53,000  
Contact name: Jane Smith  
Contact Telephone: (703) 555-1234 ext. 684  
Contact Fax: (703) 555-9876  
Contact E-mail: jsmith@dhr.anystate.us

The monthly summary record is formatted as follows (delimiters are in **bold**):

**M20120700723840053000#Jane Smith#(703) 555-1234 ext. 684#(703) 555-9876#jsmith@dhr.anystate.us\$**

However, if the State does not have an available fax number, the formatted record will look like this (note the two # delimiters together, indicating that no fax number is included):

**M20090700723840053000#Jane Smith#(703) 555-1234 ext. 684##jsmith@dhr.anystate.us\$**

#### Case-level Family, Child, and Setting Records

The monthly summary record is immediately followed by the records on families and children receiving subsidized child care, including information that identifies the provider that served the child in each setting. One record is included for each family. Each record contains:

1. Family data: information which applies to the family as a whole;
2. Child data: information which applies to each child in that family receiving child care assistance; and
3. Setting data: information on each child care setting for each child in that family. The setting record must also contain provider identifier information.

The format for family data will be the same for each record. An “F” delimiter is placed before each family’s data to identify the information. Positions 1 through 70 will always contain family data and associated delimiters, as detailed in the following table:

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
Delimiter identifying family data	<i>F</i>	1
01: Sample Month/Year of Report Period	YYYYMM	6
02: Unique State Identifier	Character	15
03: <del>Social Security Number</del> (Leave blank)	Blank Spaces	9
04: FIPS Code	Number	5
05: Single Parent?	Number	1
06: Reason For Receiving Subsidized Child Care	Number	1
07: Total Monthly Child Care Copayment by Family	Number	4
08: Month/Year Child Care Assistance Started	YYYYMM	6
09: Total Monthly Income for Determining Eligibility	Number	5
10: Employment Income, including Self-Employment?	Number	1
11: Title IV of the Social Security Act (TANF)?	Number	1
12: State Program for Which State Spending is Counted Towards TANF MOE?	Number	1
13: Housing Voucher or Cash Assistance?	Number	1
14: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Formerly Food Stamps)	Number	1
15: Other Federal Cash Income?	Number	1
16: Family Size	Number	2
16a: Family Homeless Status	Number	1
16b: Family Zip Code	Number	5
16c: Family Military Service	Number	1
16d: Primary Language Spoken at Home	Number	2

The format for dependent children receiving child care will differ from record to record, depending on the number of children receiving assistance per family, as well as the number of child care settings per child. These data always begin at record position 71 and continue until all of the information for each child receiving child care assistance is recorded.

Delimiters are used to identify children and settings. “C” precedes each child’s data and “S” precedes setting data. Additional settings for the same child follow the same format, each starting with an “S”. The child and setting format is repeated for each child receiving assistance in the family. Finally, a “\$” delimiter is placed after the last child’s final setting to mark the end of the family’s record. The following table gives the details of this format.

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
Delimiter identifying child data	C	1
17: Child #1 SSN (Leave Blank)	Blank Spaces	9
18: Is Child #1 Hispanic or Latino?	Number	1
19: Is Child #1 American Indian or Alaskan Native?	Number	1
20: Is Child #1 Asian?	Number	1
21: Is Child #1 Black or African American?	Number	1
22: Is Child #1 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander?	Number	1
23: Is Child #1 White?	Number	1
24: Sex of Child #1	Number	1
25: Month/Year of Birth of Child #1	YYYYMM	6
25a: Child Disability	Number	1

***Add first child care setting.***

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
Delimiter identifying setting data	S	1
26: Type of Child Care (Setting #1) for Child #1	Number	2
27: Total Monthly Amount Paid to Provider (Setting #1) for Child #1	Number	4
28: Total hours of Child Care Provided per Month (Setting #1) for Child #1	Number	3
29: Provider FEIN for (Setting #1) for Child #1	Number	9
30: Provider Unique State ID (Setting #1) for Child #1	Character	15

***If second child care setting exists for the first child, add information for second setting.***

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
Delimiter identifying setting data	S	1
26: Type of Child Care (Setting #2) for Child #1	Number	2
27: Total Monthly Amount Paid to Provider (Setting #2) for Child #1	Number	4
28: Total hours of Child Care Provided per Month (Setting #2) for Child #1	Number	3
29: Provider FEIN for (Setting #2) for Child #1	Number	9
30: Provider Unique State ID (Setting #2) for Child #1	Character	15

***If third child care setting exists for the first child, add information for third setting.***

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
Delimiter identifying setting data	S	1
26: Type of Child Care (Setting #3) for Child #1	Number	2
27: Total Monthly Amount Paid to Provider (Setting #3) for Child #1	Number	4
28: Total hours of Child Care Provided per Month (Setting #3) for Child #1	Number	3
29: Provider FEIN for (Setting #3) for Child #1	Number	9
30: Provider Unique State ID (Setting #3) for Child #1	Character	15

***If fourth child care setting exists for the first child, add information for fourth setting.***

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
Delimiter identifying setting data	S	1
26: Type of Child Care (Setting #4) for Child #1	Number	2
27: Total Monthly Amount Paid to Provider (Setting #4) for Child #1	Number	4
28: Total hours of Child Care Provided per Month (Setting #4) for Child #1	Number	3
29: Provider FEIN for (Setting #4) for Child #1	Number	9
30: Provider Unique State ID (Setting #4) for Child #1	Character	15

***Repeat for each additional child care setting for this child.***

***If second child is receiving child care assistance, add information for second child.***

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
Delimiter identifying child data	C	1
17: Child #2 SSN (Leave Blank)	Blank Spaces	9
18: Is Child #2 Hispanic or Latino?	Number	1
19: Is Child #2 American Indian or Alaskan Native?	Number	1
20: Is Child #2 Asian?	Number	1
21: Is Child #2 Black or African American?	Number	1
22: Is Child #2 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander?	Number	1
23: Is Child #2 White?	Number	1
24: Sex of Child #2	Number	1
25: Month/Year of Birth of Child #2	YYYYMM	6
25a: Child Disability	Number	1

***Add first child care setting information for the second child.***

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
Delimiter identifying setting data	S	1
26: Type of Child Care (Setting #1) for Child #2	Number	2
27: Total Monthly Amount Paid to Provider (Setting #1) for Child #2	Number	4
28: Total hours of Child Care Provided per Month (Setting #1) for Child #2	Number	3
29: Provider FEIN for (Setting #1) for Child #2	Number	9
30: Provider Unique State ID (Setting #1) for Child #2	Character	15

***If second child care setting exists for the second child, add information for second setting.***

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
Delimiter identifying setting data	S	1
26: Type of Child Care (Setting #2) for Child #2	Number	2
27: Total Monthly Amount Paid to Provider (Setting #2) for Child #2	Number	4
28: Total hours of Child Care Provided per Month (Setting #2) for Child #2	Number	3
29: Provider FEIN for (Setting #2) for Child #2	Number	9
30: Provider Unique State ID (Setting #2) for Child #2	Character	15



***If third child care setting exists for the second child, add information for third setting.***

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
Delimiter identifying setting data	S	1
26: Type of Child Care (Setting #3) for Child #2	Number	2
27: Total Monthly Amount Paid to Provider (Setting #3) for Child #2	Number	4
28: Total hours of Child Care Provided per Month (Setting #3) for Child #2	Number	3
29: Provider FEIN for (Setting #3) for Child #2	Number	9
30: Provider Unique State ID (Setting #3) for Child #2	Character	15

***If fourth child care setting exists for the second child, add information for fourth setting.***

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
Delimiter identifying setting data	S	1
26: Type of Child Care (Setting #4) for Child #2	Number	2
27: Total Monthly Amount Paid to Provider (Setting #4) for Child #2	Number	4
28: Total hours of Child Care Provided per Month (Setting #4) for Child #2	Number	3
29: Provider FEIN for (Setting #4) for Child #2	Number	9
30: Provider Unique State ID (Setting #4) for Child #2	Character	15

***Repeat for each additional child care setting for this child.***

***Repeat until all of the children (with all settings) in the family receiving assistance are included.***

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
Delimiter indicating the end of family's entire data record	\$	1

This format is repeated for each family included in the data submission.

**Provider Records:**

The records on families and children are followed by the records for all providers who received (or expect to receive) subsidized child care payments for services delivered during the report month. If the Lead Agency submits sample data, only those providers associated with the families/children/settings in the sample should be included. The example below includes the provider identifier and quality information.

The format for provider data will be the same for each provider record. A “P” delimiter is placed before each provider’s data to identify the information. Positions 1 through 47 will always contain provider data and associated delimiters, as detailed in the table below. A “\$” delimiter is placed in the last space of the provider record.

Data Element Number/Description	Data Format	Length
Delimiter identifying provider data	<i>P</i>	1
31: Provider FEIN	Number	9
32: Provider Unique State ID	Character	15
33: QRIS Participation	Number	1
34: QRIS Rating	Character	3
35: Accreditation Status	Number	1
36: Provider is Subject to State Pre-K Standards	Number	1
37: Other State-defined Quality Measure	Number	1
38: Provider subject to Head Start/Early Head Start standards	Number	1
39: Provider ZIP Code	Number	5
40: Date of Most Recent Health and Safety Inspection	MMDDYYYY	8
Delimiter indicating the end of the Provider	\$	1

***Repeat until all of the providers receiving/or expecting to receive payments are included.***

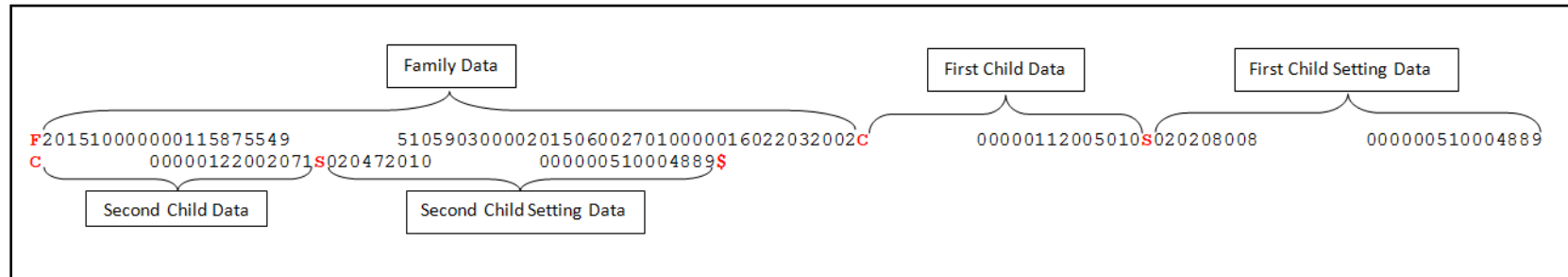
Examples 1 and 2 below, are examples of a family/children/setting data record and of a provider record. Example 3 displays the layout of the entire data file.

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## Examples of Case Records

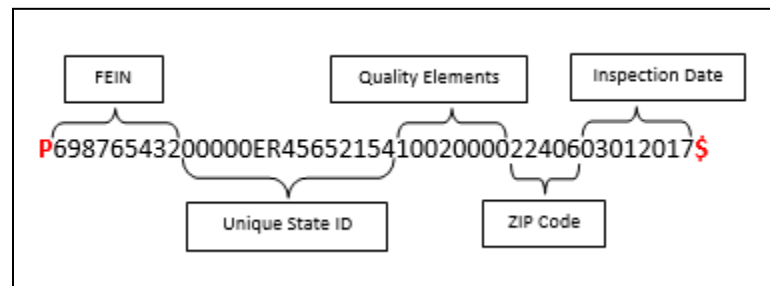
Example 1: In this example, the family has two children receiving child care assistance during the month. Each child is in one child care setting during the month (delimiters are in **bold red text**):

### Example of a Family/Child/Setting Record



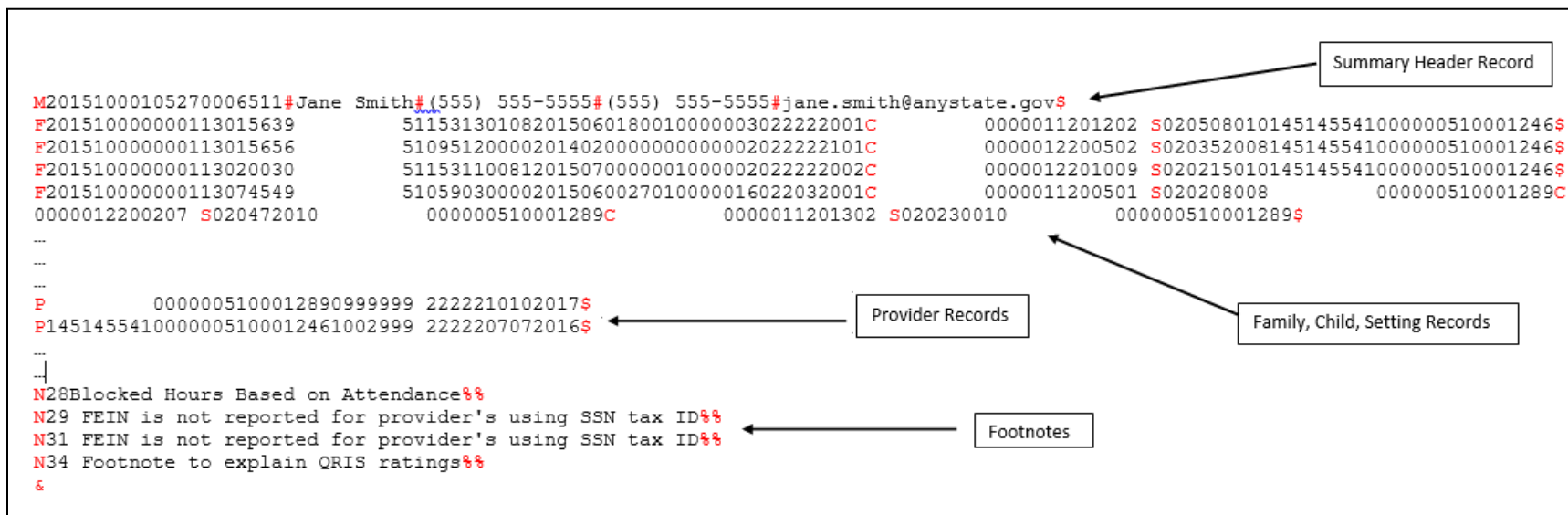
Example 2: The new provider record contains the provider identifiers, quality information, zip code, and inspection date for each provider.

### Example of a Provider Record



**Example 3:** Below is an example of the layout of the entire ACF-801 file that includes the provider quality-related information. The Lead Agency served 10,527 families through 6,511 providers during the month. The Summary Record should be followed by family, child, and setting records for the month. The format requires that the provider records should follow all of the family, child, and setting records. The footnotes should be listed last in the file. Note that certain footnotes are required as a part of the report.

### Example of ACF-801 File Layout



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The last submitted record for providers receiving subsidized payments is followed by footnotes for the month. Footnotes are required to indicate the type of hours reported for Element #28, and also to augment provider quality information (Elements #34 and #37). Lead Agencies should provide other footnotes at any time to explain anomalous data for other elements.

If the Lead Agency is submitting three months at once, the footnotes would be followed by the monthly summary file for the successive month. If submitting only one month of data, the footnotes would be followed by the "&" file delimiter indicating it is the end of the report.

General Instruction for Data Elements in Family, Child, and Provider Records:

Although the number of families, children, settings, and providers will vary in each submission, the space allocated to each group of elements (including delimiters) remains the same. The family information is always allotted 70 positions, each child is allotted 24 positions, and each setting is allotted 34 positions. One final position is allotted for the *end of record* delimiter. The provider quality information is reported in a separate provider record and is always allotted 47 positions. If the State is missing a data element for a record, blanks should be inserted in its place. For example, if the State is missing data Element #8: Month/Year Child Care Assistance Started for one family, 6 blank spaces should be included in the record in the location reserved for #8. Likewise, if Element #28: Total Hours of Care Provided in Month were unavailable for one setting, the State would insert three blanks. This rule also applies to provider records. For example, if a provider does not have an FEIN (data element #31), the State would insert nine blanks.

Numeric data such as counts or dollars should be right-justified in the space allocated for the element, and padded with leading zeros to fill the field. For example, Element #9: Total Monthly Family Income for Determining Eligibility is allocated 5 positions. If, for example, family monthly income was \$980, the amount would be formatted as '00980'. This standard is also used for other elements, such as Element #2: Unique State Identifier, for which the characters should be right justified and padded with zeros to fill out the 15 spaces allocated for the element. In summary, this formatting standard applies to the following elements:

- 02: Unique State Identifier
- 07: Total Monthly Child Care Copayment by Family
- 09: Total Monthly Family Income for Determining Eligibility
- 16: Family Size
- 27: Total Monthly Amount Paid to Provider
- 28: Total Hours of Care Provided in Month
- 30/32: Provider Unique State ID
- 34: QRIS Rating

Footnotes:

Footnotes are required to explain the type of hours being reported (Element #28) and to augment the quality information being reported in Elements #34 and #37. States are also encouraged to submit footnotes at any time to clarify the data reported for other elements. Each footnote has the following format:

Data Element Description	Format	Length	Comment
Delimiter identifying footnote	<i>N</i>	1	This delimiter identifies the following record as a footnote.
Footnote Reference	Number	2	<p>This references the data element for which the State is submitting an explanation. It can range from '01' for the first data element in the ACF-801 (the report period) to '40' for the last data element (Provider Zip Code).</p> <p>States can also submit footnotes that refer to the whole file. In this case, the reference is '00'.</p> <p><b><u>Required Footnotes:</u></b></p> <p>Element #28 – Lead Agencies must provide a footnote to explain the type of hours they are reporting.</p> <p>Element #34 – Lead Agencies must provide a footnote to explain the code for the quality levels they are reporting.</p> <p>Element #37 – Lead Agencies must provide a footnote to explain the other State-defined quality measure, if applicable.</p>
Footnote Body	Character	1000 characters	The text of the State remarks.
Record Delimiter	%%	2	These characters indicate the end of a footnote record.

Following is an example of a correctly formatted footnote (delimiters are in **bold**):

*N07* Copay is null when parents/caretakers are in an unpaid activity or when copayment waiver is in place. %%



#### IV. Formatting Guidance for States/Territories Unable To Submit Data in a Variable Record Length Format

Some States/Territories employ software tools that will not allow child care data to be formatted in the variable length format described above. ACF gives these Lead Agencies the option to allocate fixed fields for every submitted record and submit ACF-801 data in the alternative format described below:

1. Data for each family, child, setting, and provider must follow the formatting rules described previously in this document. Data elements must be in the same order, with the same delimiters (F, C, S, P, and \$) used. See Section III for additional information about the standard delimiters.
2. The Lead Agency should define each family/child/setting record so that it includes:
  - allocation for one family;
  - allocation for a maximum of 15 children per family. The Lead Agency may allocate space for fewer than 15 children if desired; and
  - allocation for a maximum of 5 settings per child. The Lead Agency may allocate space for fewer than 5 settings per child if desired.
3. Each record should begin with the family information, followed by the first child and the five associated settings, followed by the second child and the five associated settings. This allocation continues up to the 15th child (if the Lead Agency chooses to allocate that much space per family). This space is allocated even if not used for a specific family.
4. Provider information is reported as a separate record for each provider.
5. **A new delimiter, an asterisk “\*”, is used instead of the usual “C” or “S” delimiter to mark all allocated but unused space for children and settings. Unused space should be filled with blanks or zeros and be the correct length for a child (23) or setting (33). Note that these record lengths do not include the delimiter counts.**

Following is an example of a State’s or Territory’s family record in a fixed record length. The maximum allowable record space is allocated. The first child has three settings and the second child has two settings:

**F** (69)**C**(23 characters of data for child 1)**S**(33 characters of data for setting 1)**S**(33 characters of data for setting 2)**S**(33 characters of data for setting 3)\*(33 blanks for setting 4)\*(33 blanks for setting 5)**C** (23 characters of data for child 2)**S**(33 characters of data for setting 1)**S**(33 characters of data for setting 2)\*(33 blanks for setting 3)\*(33 blanks for setting 4)\*(33 blanks for setting 5)\*(23 blanks for child 3)\*(33 blanks for setting 1)\*(33 blanks for setting 2)\*(33 blanks for setting 3)\*(33 blanks for setting 4)\*(33 blanks for setting 5)..... \*(23 blanks for child 15)\*(33 blanks for setting 1)\*(33 blanks for setting 2)\*(33 blanks for setting 3)\*(33 blanks for setting 4)\*(33 blanks for setting 5)**\$**

Following the initial delimiter (*P*), each provider record has 45 spaces allocated for the data followed by the “\$”. The remaining record should be filled in with blanks.

Each footnote record should be ended with “%%” characters. The remaining record should be filled in with blanks.

## **V. Resources for Additional Assistance**

If you have other questions or need more information about the ACF-801 report, there are two primary resources for additional help:

- **The Regional Office of Child Care (OCC) Program Staff:** The OCC is represented by staff in each of the ten administrative regions across the country. You should contact your Regional Office if you have questions regarding your Child Care program policy or operations. Contact information for the Regional Offices can be found on the OCC website at: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/contact-information/office-child-care-regional-program-managers>
- **The Child Care Automated Reporting System (CARS) TA Team:** The CARS TA Team works with the OCC to provide technical assistance to all the State, Territory, and Tribal CCDF Lead Agencies with matters related to the required CCDF data reporting. You can reach CARS TA Team Monday through Friday from 9:00 am – 6:00 pm, prevailing Eastern Time.  
Phone (toll-free): 1-877-249-9117  
E-mail: [CARS@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:CARS@acf.hhs.gov)