Child Care and Development Fund
ACF-801 Case-Level Data Submission Guidelines

Technical Bulletin #5r-v4
April 2020

I. Introduction

This Bulletin was originally developed in 1998 to guide Lead Agencies as they began preparing for required data submission at the onset of the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) program. This revision of the Bulletin focuses on what a State/Territory must do if they make changes to their approved plan for data submission, or if they change from submitting sample data to full population data. Much of the information in the original document still applies and is retained in this revision.

CCDF Grantees may choose to report full population or sample data in the ACF-801 report. Any time a State/Territory wishes to change their approved data submission plan for the required ACF-801 monthly case-level data file, the Lead Agency must first inform the Regional Office (RO) Child Care Program Manager of the proposed change, submit a *Letter of Intent* explaining the new proposed submission process, and receive approval for the change. Once the process has been approved, the State/Territory should notify the Child Care Automated Reporting System (CARS) TA team of the impending change.

As part of the *Letter of Intent*, Grantees must also inform the RO whether or not they separate CCDF funds from non-CCDF funds. Grantees that submit full population data and pool CCDF funds with non-CCDF funds are required to report all CCDF and CCDF-eligible families served by all child care funding sources in the pool on their ACF-800 and ACF-801 reports. Grantees that submit sample data must ensure that both CCDF and CCDF-eligible families are included in the ACF-801 sampling frame before drawing the sample. Grantees must also report the percentage of dollars that each fund contributes to the total funds for child care. This is a requirement of all Grantees regardless of the type of data (population or sample) they choose to submit.

The following sections of this bulletin provide Lead Agencies with instructions on how to review or change the method they use to submit the required monthly ACF-801 case-level data, guidelines for preparing a representative data sample, sample documents in the Appendices, and additional information. In particular, Appendix III provides a Glossary of definitions for terminology that this Bulletin references.

II. Moving to Full Population Reporting

If a Grantee currently submits sample data and wishes to move to full population reporting, the Lead Agency must submit a *Letter of Intent* to the RO, which must include the following information (See Appendix I for an example):

- The Grantee's plan to submit monthly child care data for their entire CCDF population;

- The percentage of CCDF and non-CCDF funds used to serve the subsidized child care population during the previous federal fiscal year (applicable only to those Grantees who pool CCDF and non-CCDF funds);

- The Grantee's report submission cycle (one submission per month or three monthly submissions per annual quarter); and

- The name, telephone number, and e-mail address of at least one Grantee contact person.

III. Sample Submissions

The Office of Child Care (OCC) encourages all Grantees to submit monthly full population data for the ACF-801 report, in order to have the most complete childcare program data. Sample data submissions do not provide enough information to allow for statistical analysis and cannot be included in many national extrapolations and statistical reports. However, OCC understands that not all Grantees are able to comply with this standard of reporting, and therefore permits sample data submissions on a case-by-case basis. This section details data sampling and reporting standards for Grantees who submit monthly sample data (minimum of 200 cases).

Grantees that submit monthly sample data must follow standard sampling methodology to ensure the integrity of their samples. When submitting sample data, Grantees must report the (actual) total number of CCDF eligible families receiving assistance under the Grantee CCDF program for each report month. This number must be equal to the total number of cases included in each monthly sample frame and is required for weighting the sample results in order to calculate estimates for the entire caseload. The family count must be reported in the ACF-801 summary record (see Technical Bulletin #4 – ACF-801 Case-Level Data File Format at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/current-technical-bulletins).

1. Sample Methodology Overview

   The sampling methodology must conform to the following principles of probability sampling. Each family in the CCDF caseload must have an equal probability of being selected. A sample frame, which is an unduplicated list of all eligible families receiving subsidized child care, must be constructed for each month. The monthly sample may be submitted each month or three monthly samples may be submitted together on a quarterly basis. Approximately one-twelfth (n = 200 families) of the required minimum annual sample size (n = 2,400 families) must be selected from each monthly sample frame.

2. Systematic Random Sampling

   Systematic random sampling is the preferred method for CCDF purposes. This method provides a system for selection of an individual unit from a file or list, at equally spaced intervals (such as every 10th, 140th, 950th, etc.), to obtain the desired sample size. The starting point within the first interval is determined by random selection. A starting point can be selected with a random numbers table or automated procedure that can randomly select numbers. The sampling interval may be determined by dividing the estimated average monthly caseload or the lowest monthly caseload by the required average monthly sample size (n = 200). For example, if your estimated average monthly caseload is 22,232,

the sampling interval would be 111 (22,232 / 200 = 111). Every 111th case would be drawn from the sample frame to obtain the monthly (approximately n = 200) sample. This number is approximate since, as the monthly population fluctuates, so will the number of cases that are included in the systematic random sample. If you pull every 111th case from a population that is a little more or less than the average of 22,232, the actual monthly sample size increases or decreases slightly.

A worksheet is attached in Appendix IV to assist Grantees with the steps and procedures for determining their average monthly caseload or lowest monthly caseload and the sampling interval.

3. Sampling Frame

A sampling frame is an unduplicated list of eligible families served by CCDF funds during the reporting period. Each sampling frame must include families served by CCDF Federal and State funding streams, including Mandatory, Discretionary (including funds transferred from TANF), Federal and State Matching, and State MOE funds. If the Grantee pools funds, the sampling frame must also include families that meet CCDF eligibility requirements served by non-CCDF funding streams in the pool.

4. Annual Sample Size Requirement

The minimum required annual sample size for families receiving assistance is 2,400. This minimum sample size will provide reasonably accurate estimates, with a precision of about plus or minus 2 percentage points, for an attribute of .5 at a 95% confidence level. To assure proportional representation for the whole fiscal year, Grantees are required to report approximately 200 cases (one-twelfth of the annual sample size) each reporting month. The method detailed in Appendix IV will ensure that the samples are proportional, such that months with higher than average caseloads have proportionally more cases selected into the samples and months with smaller caseloads have proportionately fewer cases.

5. Sampling Plan

Each Grantee must submit a new sampling plan to the RO Child Care Program Manager for approval. The Plan should include changes to the currently approved sampling plan (if any) and be submitted at least sixty (60) calendar days before the start of the reporting period. If the Grantee's sampling plan is unchanged from the previous year, the Grantee is not required to resubmit a new one. The sampling plan must include the following components (see Appendix II for examples of a Grantee *Annual Sampling Plan*):

a. Documentation of methods for constructing and maintaining the sample frame(s), including an assessment of frame completeness and any potential problems associated with using the sample frame(s);

b. Documentation of methods for selecting the sample cases from the sample frame(s);

c. The estimated average monthly caseload or lowest monthly caseload for the annual sample period and the computed sample interval;

d. The percentage contribution of each funding stream of the total child care budget for Grantees that use a pooled method to construct their sampling frame (the pooled fund includes both CCDF funding streams and non-CCDF funding streams); and

e. Declaration of intent to submit one report each month, or three monthly reports quarterly.

IV. Resources for Additional Information

If you have other questions or need more information about the ACF-801 report, there are two primary resources for additional help – your Regional Office Child Care Program Manager and the CARS TA team.

The Office of Child Care (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:

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/regional-child-care-program-managers.

The CARS TA team works with the OCC to provide technical assistance to all of the Tribal, Territory, and State CCDF Grantees with matters related to the required CCDF data reporting. You can reach the CARS TA team by:

Phone (toll-free): 1-877-249-9117
E-mail: CARS@acf.hhs.gov

Appendix I

Letter of Intent
Example

DATE

Regional Office Child Care Program Manager
ACF Regional Office
2222 Main Street Suite 600
City A, State A 99999

Dear:

The State of A will submit entire monthly populations, instead of sample data, to fulfill the requirements of the CCDF Federal child care reporting guidelines. Our State uses a pooled universe comprised of both CCDF and non-CCDF funds. Our budget pool for the last full federal fiscal year consisted of the following: CCDF funds (80%), Title XX funds (9%), and private funds (11%). We will submit the monthly populations on a quarterly basis.

If you have any questions about the information contained in this letter, please contact NAME, TITLE at (599) 599-9999.

Sincerely,

Child Care Administrator

cc: CARS TA Team

Appendix II

Annual Sampling Plan
Example A

In accordance with federal subsidized child care reporting requirements, the State of A (the State) has prepared a *Sampling Plan* which describes 1) the methods used for constructing and maintaining the State's sampling frames and 2) documentation of the methods used for drawing monthly samples.

1. Methods Used for Constructing and Maintaining the Sampling Frames

The State currently does not maintain a single electronic file consisting of all unduplicated families served by CCDF funds. Because the State maintains 14 county-based systems, monthly sampling frames will be a compilation of the lists from all 14 systems.

In order to minimize duplication, the State will use a single compiled data file from the 14 systems and an automated search procedure which matches like-sounding character fields/names. Each month the 14 systems will email a data file to the Child Care Program Division. The files will be compiled and the procedure will automatically match like-sounding names, identical birth dates, and race categories within and among the 14 files. A match on all three variables (name, birth date, and race category) among at least two cases will be an indication that a duplicate case exists. The State's Child Care Program Director will investigate and delete duplicate cases from the list to create the monthly sampling frames. This procedure will be repeated each month so that a new (unduplicated) sampling frame is created for each monthly sample.

2. Methods for Drawing Monthly Samples

The State will use a systematic random sampling methodology in which every Kth case/family is selected from the sampling frame (N = 22,230) to draw the monthly samples (n = 200). The previous fiscal year's lowest monthly caseload was determined to be in the month of July (22,230 families). The lowest monthly caseload was used to estimate the sampling interval (22,230 / 200 = 111.15). An automated procedure, programmed in software packages similar to Access, SAS, or SPSS, was created to select every Kth case, depending on the sampling interval, from the sampling frame to construct the monthly samples. Each month, a random numbers table will be used to select a random starting point for case selection.

The State will submit monthly total caseload values and a monthly sample each month.

3. Method for Gathering Required ACF-801 Data

The State does not maintain a single system that includes all federally mandated data elements. Therefore, required CCDF data will be pulled from multiple systems. This process will be repeated each month for a monthly report submission.

4. CCDF Budget and Pooling of Funds

The State pools CCDF funds with Title XX and private funds. The proportionate contribution of funds from each funding stream is as follows: CCDF funds (80%), Title XX funds (9%), and private funds (11%).

Annual Sampling Plan
Example B

In accordance with federal subsidized child care reporting requirements, the State of A (the State) has prepared a *Sampling Plan* which describes: 1) the methods used for constructing and maintaining the State's sampling frames and 2) documentation of the methods used for drawing monthly samples.

1. Methods Used for Constructing and Maintaining the Sampling Frames

The monthly sampling frames (a list of all unduplicated families served by CCDF funds) will be provided by the State's Department of Human Resources, which maintains an unduplicated list of all of the families served by CCDF funds in the State. Each month, the Department of Human Resources will send an electronic data file to the Child Care Programs Division with the names of all families served by CCDF funds. This unduplicated list will serve as the sampling frame.

2. Methods for Drawing Monthly Samples

The State will use a simple random sampling methodology to report case-level information to the Office of Child Care. This procedure is equivalent to systematic sampling (i.e. each case/family record has an equal probability of selection). In simple random sampling, it is not necessary to select a sampling interval or starting point because the records are drawn from the sampling frame randomly. Each month, an unduplicated list of cases will be created and a sample of the appropriate size (n = 200) will be drawn. The estimated monthly caseload, based on a three-month average, is 22,230.

Actual monthly caseload values will be submitted along with the monthly submissions each quarter.

3. Method for Gathering Required ACF-801 Data

We will use an automated procedure to capture and map data elements that are currently collected by the existing automated system. The Department of Human Resources' system currently stores basic demographic information about families served by CCDF funds. These include: income of primary caregiver, sex, race and ages of children in the family, and type of child care. Other federally mandated data elements will be collected and mapped from the existing payments system.

We will include in our quarterly submissions monthly *total* caseload values and samples (n = 200) for each month to the Office of Child Care.

4. CCDF Budget and Pooling of Funds

The State does not pool CCDF with non-CCDF funds.

Appendix III

Glossary

Terms/Phrases	Definitions
Letter of Intent	A letter stating an agency's intent to submit full monthly population data or sample data. The *Letter of Intent* should include the proportional contribution of CCDF and non-CCDF resources included in the current total CCDF pool.
Pooled Method of Funding	Grantees that use the pooled method of funding combine CCDF resources with other non-CCDF resources. Grantees that use the pooled method of funding are required to include the proportional contributions of each funding source to total CCDF funds in their *Letter of Intent* or *Sampling Plan*.
Population	All families and children served by CCDF funds, or all families and children receiving child care services if the Grantee pools funds. All families and children must meet CCDF eligibility requirements.
Required Minimum Sample Size	Federal child care reporting guidelines require that Grantees submit at least 200 cases per month. When annualized, the 200 cases will equal a minimum sample of n = 2,400 cases. This sample size has a confidence interval of +/-2 percentage points.
Probability Sample	A statistically representative group of cases used to approximate population parameters.
Sampling Frame	The (unduplicated) list of cases composing a population.
Sampling Interval	The standard distance between cases selected from a population for a sample.
Sampling Plan	A brief document that describes the methods used for constructing and maintaining the monthly sampling frames and documentation of the methods for drawing monthly samples.
Systematic Sampling	A probability sample in which every *Kth* unit in a list is selected for inclusion in the sample.

Appendix IV

Drawing Monthly Samples Worksheet

Step 1: Determine Monthly Caseload

Option 1: Determine the lowest monthly caseload from the previous fiscal year and divide by the approximate average monthly sample (n = 200).Option 2: Add each month's estimated caseload together for a total and divide by 12 months. See example worksheet below:

EXAMPLE

Month	Estimated Monthly Caseloads
October	21,125
November	21,615
December	23,112
January	23,023
February	21,197
March	21,059
April	21,795
May	21,895
June	23,656
July	24,063
August	22,916
September	21,328
Total	266,784

$$\frac{\text{Total Estimated Caseload}}{\text{12 months}} = \frac{266{,}784}{12} = 22{,}232$$

STATE

Complete this table for your own State to assist in finding your estimated average monthly caseload.

STATE WORKSHEET

Month	Estimated Monthly Caseloads
October	
November	
December	
January	
February	
March	
April	
May	
June	
July	
August	
September	
Total	

STATE: $\frac{\text{Total Estimated Caseload}}{\text{12 months}}$ $\frac{\square}{12} = \square$

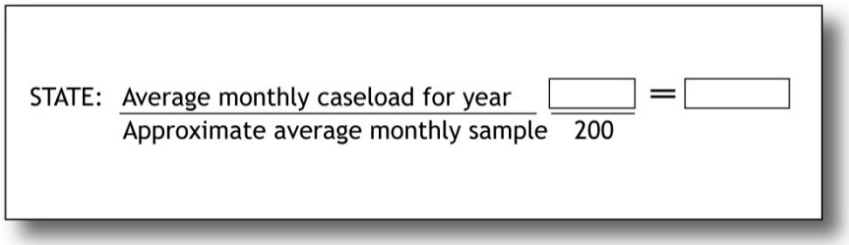
Step 2: Calculate Sample Interval

Option 1: Determine the lowest monthly caseload from the previous fiscal year and divide by the approximate average monthly sample (n = 200).

EXAMPLE: $\frac{\text{Lowest monthly caseload for year}}{\text{Approximate average monthly sample}}$ $\frac{}{200} = \square$

EXAMPLE: $\frac{\text{Lowest monthly caseload for year}}{\text{Approximate average monthly sample}}$ $\frac{21{,}059}{200} = 105$

Option 2: Divide the average monthly caseload by the approximate average monthly sample (n = 200).



EXAMPLE: $\frac{\text{Average monthly caseload for year}}{\text{Approximate average monthly sample}} \quad \frac{22{,}232}{200} = 111$

Step 3: Randomly Select Starting Point

Use SAS/SPSS or table of random numbers. You can ask SAS or SPSS to randomly pick a case to start your sampling process. A random number table is useful when these packages are not available. The "randomness" of selecting the starting point is very important for the reliability of the data which is supplied to OCC.

Step 4: Pull Cases Using the Sampling Interval

Beginning with the starting point selected in Step 3, pick that case and every Kth case following depending on your sampling interval selected in Step 2. Be sure to select every Kth case of the population without going back to the original starting point. You will have selected approximately 200 cases.