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User Guide for Post Adoption and Guardianship Instability Tracking Toolkit

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<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre>

Prepared by

Nancy Rolock, Case Western Reserve University;
Kevin White, East Carolina University;
Heather Ringeisen and Rose Domanico, RTI International
3040 E. Cornwallis Road
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709



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Nancy Rolock, Case Western Reserve University; Kevin White, East Carolina University; Heather Ringeisen, Rose Domanico, Leyla Stambaugh, RTI International

Submitted to:

Alysia Blandon, Project Officer
Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
330 C Street SW, 4th Floor
Washington, DC 20201
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre>

Contract Number: HHS P233201500039I

Project Director: Heather Ringeisen
RTI International
P.O. Box 12194
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709-2194
<https://www.rti.org/>

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UNIVERSITY





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User Guide and Toolkit Overview

This *User Guide* is designed to help Adoption Program Managers develop a systematic way to track instability for children who exit foster care through adoption or guardianship. The *User Guide* is designed to support agencies' use of the *Post Adoption and Guardianship Instability Tracking Toolkit* (referred to as "*Toolkit*" throughout this *User Guide*). To effectively understand post adoption and guardianship instability, agencies need to track child well being and instability for a long time—from the point of adoption or guardianship until the child reaches the age of majority. This *Toolkit* offers child welfare agencies many suggested tools for how to track post adoption and guardianship instability. Users may choose to implement one, several, or all these tools. You may select tools that best fit your agency's needs.

Toolkit Goals

- Provide tools that your agency can use to help track post adoption and guardianship instability in the short and long term.
- Provide a range of tool options that fit different levels of agency readiness.
- Spark ideas about how your agency might use data differently to help track post adoption and guardianship instability, even if one or more of the tools in this *Toolkit* are not yet feasible within your agency's context.

Tracking post adoption and guardianship instability is a big job! We want to acknowledge that upfront. Many Adoption Program Managers we have spoken to have mentioned how much they wish they had the time, resources, and staff to dedicate to tracking instability and to better understand the needs of families who have adopted or assumed guardianship of children in foster care.

We consulted Adoption Program Managers while developing this Toolkit. The project team would like to thank them for their helpful assistance.

Toolkit Structure

The *Post Adoption and Guardianship Instability Tracking Toolkit* includes three components. We use the term *Toolkit* to refer to all three components listed below:

- This **User Guide** that explains how to use the tools within the *Post Adoption and Guardianship Instability Tracking Toolkit*.
- **A Tracking Workbook** with seven spreadsheets, which each use a different source of data to help track post adoption and guardianship instability.
- **A Well Being Letter** in the [Appendix](#) of this *User Guide* that provides an example of a well being letter to send to families and sample questions to include with this letter that ask about the child's well being.



Toolkit Audience

This *Toolkit* is designed for Adoption Program Managers. If you are not an Adoption Program Manager, or in a similar role, we suggest you partner with the Adoption Program Manager in your agency to use this *Toolkit*. Adoption Program Managers may want to work with the data systems teams at their agencies when considering how to implement this *Toolkit*.

How to Use the Toolkit

Child welfare agencies are all different. Using a stand-alone data system, such as this full *Toolkit*, might not be a feasible option especially in agencies where there are thousands of children who exit foster care to adoption or guardianship each year. Therefore, you can use the *Toolkit* in different ways:

- **Use all the tools.** This provides a comprehensive stand-alone system for tracking post adoption and guardianship instability by compiling information across several sources in one place.
- **Use individual tools.** This option allows your agency to select the tools that reflect its needs and data collection capabilities. Even just using one tool within the *Tracking Workbook* may improve an agency's ability to track post adoption and guardianship instability. This *User Guide* provides guidance on how to do this and what information this provides about post adoption and guardian instability.
- **Update your existing data tracking system.** Use the spreadsheets in the *Tracking Workbook* as a guide or template to create or update your internal data systems.
- **Initiate conversations or actions within in your agency.** The *Toolkit* can provide a starting point for conversations within your agency about what data sources you may be able to use to collect information about post adoption and guardianship instability.

For agencies that are new to collecting and documenting data about post adoption and guardianship instability, we hope that this *Toolkit* will help you begin the process. For agencies with some experience tracking post adoption and guardianship instability, we hope these materials provide you with additional ideas about data sources that your agency might use. Your agency may be able to implement some of these tools right away. Other tools may take longer.

Data Sources

This *Toolkit* references several data sources for tracking post adoption and guardianship instability. These include data from your administrative systems that identify children who have reentered foster care after adoption or guardianship; adoption or guardianship subsidy change request records; agency records of services provided to adoptive and guardianship families; and responses to questions included within a well being letter sent by agencies to adoptive and guardianship families. Your agency may have access to some but not all of



these data sources. As a reminder, the tools within this *Toolkit* are designed to be flexible. You can use the tools that are feasible within your agency.

The topics discussed within this *User Guide* may spark ideas about what might be feasible within your agency. This may be a starting point for conversations about how your agency might use data differently to help track post adoption and guardianship instability. During agency conversations about data sources, questions to consider include:

- What data does your agency already use that could be helpful to tracking post adoption and guardianship instability?
- What resources are needed to expand your agency's ability to track instability?
- How can you access data about services received by adoptive or guardianship families?
- What (if any) are the barriers to tracking post adoption and guardianship instability?
- Which tools described within this *User Guide* would be most feasible for your agency to use?

Why Is It Important to Track Instability?

Between 5% and 20% of children who leave foster care through adoption or guardianship experience instability.¹ Some children are at higher risk for instability than others, including adolescents, those with behavior problems, and children with a history of abuse.¹ Many families struggle to adjust to children's emotions and behaviors long after adoptions and guardianships are finalized.²⁻⁴ These struggles are also associated with instability. One study looking at instability outcomes for 52,000 children from one large Midwestern state found that 2% reentered foster care after 2 years, but about 12% reentered foster care after 10 years.⁵ So, post adoption and guardianship instability can occur many years after the adoption or guardianship relationship is established.

Unfortunately, there is no systematic way to track and record how often post adoption and guardianship instability occurs. Tracking instability over time can help agencies better understand how many families struggle after adoption or guardianship. Better tracking may also help agencies identify and respond to challenges early and intervene before crises and instability occur.



Key Terms Used in this *Toolkit*

Post adoption and guardianship instability is when children who have exited foster care to adoption and guardianship no longer live with their adoptive parent or legal guardian.⁶ An example is when children reenter foster care, or when they experience homelessness after adoption or guardianship.

Tracking instability is a data-driven process that records data on instability in a systematic and consistent way, building on information already collected by the agency.

There are **four instability status categories**:

- **No recent contact:** The agency has had no contact with the family over the past year. You should not make assumptions about the child or youth's stability status.
- **Stability:** The child has not reentered foster care. You, or someone in your agency, has been in contact with the family, and you know that they are doing well.
- **Stability unclear:** You have received information that suggests the child may be experiencing some difficulties. For example, a youth or a caregiver could tell the agency that they are struggling with their familial relationships.
- **Instability:** You have information indicating that a child who exited foster care through adoption or guardianship no longer resides with their adoptive parent or legal guardian.



Tracking Workbook and Example Well Being Letter

The *Toolkit* includes a **Tracking Workbook** with several spreadsheets that use data sources your agency may already have about children who exited foster care through adoption or guardianship. One of the tools in this *User Guide* references an **Example Well Being Letter**, which is included as an Appendix to this *User Guide*.

Please note that in this *User Guide* each tool is **bolded** and has a unique text color to help you clearly identify which tool we are talking about (e.g., the **Tool 1 (Child IDs)** tab, the **Tool 2 (Data Flag)** tab). Specific column names from the *Tracking Workbook* are **bolded** and *italicized* (e.g., the **Comments** column, or the **Foster Care ID** column).

Tracking Workbook Organization

The *Tracking Workbook* spreadsheets are organized as separate tabs within the workbook. These tabs are as follows:

- **The Instructions tab.** This first tab in the *Tracking Workbook* includes an overview of the workbook and provides instructions on how to add data and make changes.



The Tool 1 (Child IDs) tab. The second tab in the *Tracking Workbook* is a tool that provides one location where all IDs (foster and adoptive) and other basic case information are compiled together. The information you will need to fill in this spreadsheet is generally available in your *Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System* (SACWIS) or other administrative data system on children who exit foster care to adoption or guardianship. Tool 1 is foundational; it is the list of all children whose stability or instability will be tracked. The columns in this spreadsheet are automatically carried over to the other tabs in the *Tracking Workbook*.



The Tool 2 (Data Flag) tab. The third tab in the *Tracking Workbook* is a tool that integrates information from an agency-specific data systems flag that identifies children who reenter foster care after adoption or guardianship. The data you need to fill out this spreadsheet may be available in your SACWIS or other administrative data system on children who reenter foster care after adoption or guardianship. If you do not have a data flag, this *User Guide* includes suggestions on what should be included if your agency would like to develop one.



The Tool 3 (Foster Care Reentry) tab. The fourth tab in the *Tracking Workbook* is a tool that helps you track foster care reentry for children who have exited foster care through adoption or guardianship. This tool is especially useful if your agency does not have a data system flag for foster care reentry. The data you need to fill out this spreadsheet are in your SACWIS or other administrative data system that tracks all children entering foster care. This tool walks you through how to use information from foster care entry data to track post adoption and guardianship instability. This will likely require close coordination with the data systems team at your agency.



For agencies with a data system flag, you may want to skip **Tool 3 (Foster Care Reentry)**.



The Tool 4 (Subsidy Changes) tab. The fifth tab in the *Tracking Workbook* is a tool that provides a way for agencies to organize information about when and why adoption and guardianship subsidy agreements are modified. The data you need to fill out this spreadsheet are subsidy change request records. These may be located within your SACWIS or other administrative data system that tracks the financial records related to adoption and guardianship subsidy agreements. Changes to subsidy agreements may indicate meaningful changes in the family that have implications for child stability and well being.



The Tool 5 (Family Services) tab. The sixth tab in the *Tracking Workbook* is a tool to help agencies develop an organized record of services provided to families after adoption or guardianship. The data you need to fill out this spreadsheet are records about the services provided to adoptive and guardianship families. The type of information collected includes service date, family needs, and the types of services provided. These may be captured informally or formally (e.g., caseworker notes or spreadsheets). These data may be collected outside your agency's administrative data system (e.g., from outside contractual agencies).



The Tool 6 (Well Being Letter) tab. The seventh tab in the *Tracking Workbook* is a tool to help agencies track responses to a well being letter sent to adoptive parents or guardians. An example well being letter is found in the [Appendix](#) of this *User Guide*. The example letter includes sample questions to ask families about the status of child and their child's well being. The tool encourages agencies to record responses to these letters in a spreadsheet.



The Tool 7 (Instability Summary) tab. The eighth tab includes a tool that automatically compiles information reported in the other tools to create an overall Instability Status for each child. You will not enter data into this tab. If you use any one of the other Tools, the columns in this spreadsheet will auto-populate with the information coming from the tool you used. This tool will help your agency understand which children experience post adoption and guardianship instability to help your agency target resources or outreach to those children. If you do not use the other tools, you can take the logic from the decision tree for **Tool 7 (Instability Summary)** to program your data system to determine the overall instability status.

- **The Drop-down Menus tab.** This is the final tab in the *Tracking Workbook*. You will not enter data into this tab. This final spreadsheet in the workbook is the source tab for the drop-down menus included in the seven tools.

Challenges to Using the Tracking Workbook

Collecting the information for each *Tracking Workbook* tool may be challenging. One of the challenges in tracking post adoption and guardianship instability is that there are many sources of data that agencies can use. The data needed to comprehensively track post adoption and guardianship instability may come from both within your agency (e.g.,



administrative data systems) and outside your agency (e.g., services information). Developing a system for tracking instability takes time and significant resources. It also requires that data coming from different sources be compiled in one place.

How to Edit the Tracking Workbook Spreadsheets

Do not delete *Tracking Workbook* tabs. Each *Tracking Workbook* tab has a unique spreadsheet associated with it. There are formulas included in the spreadsheets that allow certain cells (e.g., the child's name, IDs and birthdates) to auto-populate across all the workbook tabs. Because of this, it is important that you do not delete any of the workbook tabs. If you do not use one of the tools, leave the cells within that tool spreadsheet blank rather than deleting the tab.

The *Tracking Workbook* is protected from editing. If you want to make changes (e.g., add or change items in the drop-down menu items, add columns or rows), you need to unprotect each spreadsheet by doing the following:

- Navigate to the "Review" tab
- Click "Unprotect Sheet"
- Enter this password: PAGI

Please note that if you make changes, we cannot guarantee that the *Tracking Workbook* will function as designed.

Adding rows to the spreadsheets. The *Tracking Workbook* is set up with enough formulas to accommodate data for 2,000 children. You will need to unprotect the spreadsheet as described above before adding rows. If you have entered data for more than 2,000 children in the first spreadsheet in the **Tool 1 (Child IDs)** tab, then you will need to generate formulas corresponding to the records after the 2,000th child. Please use the following steps to add rows that will include the correct formulas in the spreadsheets for the tools your agency is going to use:

1. Identify the row in Tool 1 (Child IDs) that contains the data for the last child.
2. Select the cells starting with the cell in column A row 2,001 and ending with the cell in column J with the same row number as the row identified in Step 1.
3. Click 'Home' from the main menu.
4. click 'Fill' and from the drop-down menu click "Down."



How Often Should the Tracking Workbook be Updated?

We recommend that agencies update the tools within the *Tracking Workbook* at least once a year. However, to make sure you have accurate and timely information, you may want to collect and enter data into the *Tracking Workbook* more frequently. For example, agencies could request quarterly child-level reports on requests for subsidy changes to update the **Tool 4 (Subsidy Changes)** tab and on services provided to update the **Tool 5 (Family Services)** tab. Furthermore, we realize that some agencies send letters to families on the anniversary of their child's adoption or guardianship finalization. If this type of well being letter is mailed by your agency on a monthly basis, the responses to these letters could be entered on a monthly basis (in the **Tool 6 (Well Being Letter)** tab).

Considerations for Agencies Creating New Tracking Systems

If your agency currently does not collect information on post adoption and guardianship instability, please note the two points below from Adoption Program Managers that we consulted:

1. Agencies need to create system warnings so that sensitive information about the child is not inadvertently shared with the wrong person. For example, we want to make sure adoptive family members and birth family members are clearly delineated so that information is not inadvertently shared with someone who legally should not have it.
2. There may be legal barriers to linking foster and adoption records. Agencies should consult their legal teams in this process.

What to Expect from this User Guide

This *User Guide* contains a unique section describing how to use each of the seven tools. Each tool-specific section will:

- Walk you through what data you need and how to enter that information into each spreadsheet.
- Explain how the spreadsheets are linked and how to use the tools together or how to use individual tools.
- Describe how this information can be used to track post adoption and guardianship instability.



Child IDs

Spreadsheet to Compile Child IDs and Case Information in Preparation for Tracking Instability

Tool 1: Spreadsheet to Compile Child IDs and Case Information in Preparation for Tracking Instability



Purpose: This tool compiles the child-level information needed to track instability (i.e., a list of children who exited foster care to adoption or guardianship their child IDs and some demographic information). When children's IDs change after adoption and then they come back into foster care, their reentry may be associated with their Foster Care ID, their Adoption ID, or a new ID. The only way to capture reentry is if foster and adoption IDs are compiled in one location.

Source of information: The information you will need to fill in this spreadsheet is in your SACWIS or other administrative data system on children who exit foster care to adoption or guardianship.

Overview of Tool 1 (Child IDs)

Tool 1 (Child IDs) is the list of all children whose stability or instability will be tracked. It is foundational to the *Toolkit* and the *Tracking Workbook*. The information will be used in the other tools and automatically copies over to the other tabs in the *Tracking Workbook*.

- If you plan to use more than one of the **Tool 2 (Data Flag)** tab through the **Tool 6 (Well Being Letter)** tab, then you should use the **Tool 1 (Child IDs)** tab. If you skip the **Tool 1 (Child IDs)** tab, you will need to enter the child demographic information in each subsequent tab that you use manually.
- If you only plan to use one tool (for example, **Tool 3 (Foster Care Reentry)**), you can skip **Tool 1 (Child IDs)** and enter this information in the one tool you plan to use.

For agencies where the child's ID changes at the time of adoption or guardianship, the **Tool 1 (Child IDs)** tab is both the most important tool and possibly the most challenging. It will be especially challenging for agencies that do not maintain Foster Care IDs and Adoption IDs in one location. If this is true for your agency, you may need to work with data system experts within your agency to help you figure out how to compile all IDs for one child in one location. This can be quite burdensome. You may also want to consider engaging someone from outside of your agency, such as a university partner that is familiar with your data systems, to assist with this initial step. For agencies where a single ID is used for the child, gathering the information needed for this step will be straightforward.



Child IDs

Spreadsheet to Compile Child IDs and Case Information in Preparation for Tracking Instability

Step 1. Create a list of all children who exited foster care through adoption or guardianship

The first step to tracking post adoption and guardianship instability is to create a list of all children who exited foster care through adoption or guardianship during a specific time. Based on prior research, we suggest that you enter the information in this tab for all children who have exited foster care to adoption or guardianship over the past 5 years or more.

This tool asks for demographic information on the child. In our experience, it is helpful to have this information when compiling reports about children who have experienced instability. The information requested in the **Tool 1 (Child IDs)** tab include:

- Child's first and last name
- Foster Care ID and Adoption ID (see Step 2)
- Child's date of birth, sex, race, and ethnicity
- Date of adoption or guardianship
- Type of legal permanence (adoption or guardianship)

Please note: If you copy and paste a large list of child and caregiver information into the **Tool 1 (Child IDs)** tab, please make sure that this information is pasted in the same order as the column headers within the **Tool 1 (Child IDs)** tab. Some of the information is repeated in subsequent tools, and the order needs to be the same.

Step 2. Include all foster care and adoption child IDs

Include all known child IDs. The spreadsheet is set up to have two IDs (**Foster Care ID** and **Adoption ID**), but some systems could have more IDs. If this is your situation, you may insert additional columns after the **Comments** column.

- If your agency establishes an Adoption ID when children are adopted, please list these in the **Foster Care ID** and the **Adoption ID** columns.
- If your agency uses the same Child ID before and after adoption or guardianship:
 - Enter the ONE Child ID into the spreadsheet in the **Foster Care ID** column.
 - Leave the **Adoption ID** column blank.

Some child welfare agencies create an Adoption ID when a child is adopted and "retire" the child's Foster Care ID. Then, if a child reenters foster care after adoption, some agencies use their Foster Care ID while others use their Adoption ID. This is why it is important to include both IDs in this tab.



Data Flag

Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Your Data System Flag

Tool 2: Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Your Data System Flag



Purpose: This tool integrates information from an agency-specific data systems flag that identifies children who reenter foster care after adoption or guardianship. If your agency does not have a data flag, this *User Guide* includes suggestions on what should be included if your agency would like to develop one.

Source of information: The information you will need to fill in this spreadsheet may be in your SACWIS or other administrative data system on children who reentry foster care after adoption or guardianship.

Overview of the Tool 2 (Data Flag) tab

When a child enters foster care it can be challenging to know if they were previously in foster care. To address this issue, some agencies have developed a flag in their child welfare administrative data system that intake workers can use to indicate a child who is entering foster care was previously in foster care and had exited foster care through adoption or guardianship. The **Tool 2 (Data Flag)** tab uses this data system flag to track instability events.

For agencies that have a data system flag that indicates when a child reenters foster care after adoption or guardianship, **Tool 2 (Data Flag)** should be straightforward. You will need to pull information from about foster care reentries from your SACWIS or other administrative data system. For agencies that do not have a data system flag, we provide suggestions on what should be included if you want to develop a flag. You may also skip this tool if you do not have the resources to develop a data system flag.

Step 1. Preparing to track instability

The first step to tracking post adoption and guardianship instability is to create a list of all children who exited foster care through adoption or guardianship during a specific time period.

- If you already entered the child demographic information and child IDs into the **Tool 1 (Child IDs)** tab this information will auto-populate in this spreadsheet, go to Step 2.



Data Flag

Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Your Data System Flag

- If you did not enter the list of children in the **Tool 1 (Child IDs)** tab, you will need to enter the child demographic information and child IDs into the **Tool 2 (Data Flag)** tab in columns A–J.

Step 2. If your agency has a data flag

For the purposes of this tool, you need to make sure the data flag can be used to reliably identify children who reenter foster care after adoption or guardianship.

Does your agency use a data flag that you think reliably captures foster care reentry after adoption or guardianship?

- If **YES**, please go to Step 3.
- If **NO**, we recommend developing mandatory questions (questions that the data system requires a response to before continuing) that intake workers answer to establish if the child was previously adopted or exited to guardianship. We have included sample questions below.

Sample Question for Tracking Reentry from Adoption

Was this child previously adopted? Yes / No

If yes, adopted through (select one):

- 1. This child welfare agency*
- 2. A different public child welfare system*
- 3. Intercountry adoption*
- 4. Private domestic adoption*
- 5. An unsubsidized adoption*
- 6. Other: please describe*

Sample Question for Tracking Reentry from Guardianship

Did this child previously exit the child welfare system through guardianship? Yes / No

If yes, through (select one):

- 1. Federally subsidized guardianship program (e.g., Kin-GAP) or similar program at this child welfare agency*
 - 2. Federally subsidized guardianship program (e.g., Kin-GAP) or similar program at a different public child welfare system*
 - 3. State-subsidized guardianship program at this child welfare agency*
 - 4. State-subsidized guardianship program at a different public child welfare system*
 - 5. An unsubsidized guardianship*
 - 6. Guardianship relinquishment*
 - 7. Other: please describe*
-

Data Flag

Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Your Data System Flag

Step 3. Look for foster care reentry dates in child welfare administrative data

Examine your child welfare administrative data to see if any of the child IDs have been flagged by your data system as having reentered foster care after an adoption or guardianship. The specifics for how to do this will vary by state and county child welfare systems, but we recommend you look up all child IDs (e.g., Foster Care ID and Adoption ID).

Step 4. Enter the Foster Care Reentry Date

For all the children listed in the spreadsheet:

- If there is a data flag that any of these children have entered foster care after their adoption or guardianship date, enter the date in the **Foster Care Reentry Date** column.
- For children with no foster care reentry flags, leave **Foster Care Reentry Date** blank.

If there are multiple foster care reentries for the same child, we suggest noting the first time the child reentered care in the **Foster Care Reentry Date** column.

Step 5. Record Instability Status

The next step is to determine the instability status for each individual child based on information you entered in the **Tool 2 (Data Flag)** tab.

In the **Instability Status** column, please select one of these two options listed in the drop-down menu:

- **Instability:** Select this status from the drop-down menu for each child who has a date entered in the **Foster Care Reentry Date** column indicating that they have reentered foster care after adoption or guardianship.
- **No recent contact:** Select this status in the drop-down menu for children with no foster care reentry records.

Step 6. Comments

If you have additional information you want to record about an individual child, you can use the **Comments** column.



Foster Care Reentry

Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Foster Care Entry Records

Tool 3: Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Foster Care Entry Records



Purpose: This tool tracks foster care reentry for children who exited foster care to adoption or guardianship. Agencies with a data system flag may want to skip this tool.

Source of information: The information you will need to fill in this spreadsheet is in your SACWIS or other administrative data system on children who enter foster care after adoption or guardianship.

Overview of the Tool 3 (Foster Care Reentry) tab

This tool walks you through how to use information from foster care entry data to track post adoption and guardianship instability. For agencies that do not have a data system flag, the **Tool 3 (Foster Care Reentry)** tab will help you track foster care reentry for children who have exited foster care through adoption or guardianship. This will likely require close coordination with the data systems team at your agency. For agencies that have a data system flag, foster care reentries may be captured in the **Tool 2 (Data Flag)** tab, and you can skip the **Tool 3 (Foster Care Reentry)** tab.

Step 1. Preparing to track instability

The first step to tracking post adoption and guardianship instability is to create a list of all children who exited foster care through adoption or guardianship during a specific time period.

- If you already entered the child demographic information and child IDs into the **Tool 1 (Child IDs)** tab this information will auto-populate in this spreadsheet, go to Step 2.
- If you did not enter the list of children in the **Tool 1 (Child IDs)** tab, you will need to enter the child demographic information and child IDs into the **Tool 3 (Foster Care Reentry)** tab in columns A–J.



Foster Care Reentry

Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Foster Care Entry Records

Step 2. Look for foster care reentry dates in child welfare administrative data

Examine your child welfare administrative data to see if any of the child IDs (**Foster Care ID** or **Adoption ID**) appear in your foster care entry data. The specifics for how to do this will vary by state and county child welfare systems.

Step 3. Enter the Foster Care Reentry Date

For all the children listed in the spreadsheet:

- If there is a record showing that any of the children have entered foster care after their adoption or guardianship date, this is a foster care reentry and the date should be recorded in the **Foster Care Reentry Date** column.
- For children with no foster care reentry data, leave **Foster Care Reentry Date** column blank.

If there are multiple foster care reentries for the same child, we suggest noting the first time the child reentered care in the **Foster Care Reentry Date** column.

Step 4. Record Instability Status

The next step is to determine the instability status for each individual child based on the information you entered in the **Tool 3 (Foster Care Reentry)** tab.

In the **Instability Status** column, please select one of the two options listed in the drop-down menu:

- **Instability:** Select this status from the drop-down menu for each child where the **Foster Care Reentry Date** column has a date, indicating that they have reentered foster care after adoption or guardianship.
- **No recent contact:** Select this status in the drop-down menu for children with no foster care reentry records.

Step 5. Comments

If you have additional information you want to record about an individual child, please use the **Comments** column.



Subsidy Changes

Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Adoption or Guardianship Subsidy Records

Tool 4: Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Adoption or Guardianship Subsidy Records



Purpose: This tool provides a way for agencies to organize information related to when and why adoption and guardianship subsidy agreements are modified.

Source of information: The information you will need to fill in this spreadsheet may be found within adoption or guardianship subsidy change requests and records. This may be part of your SACWIS or other administrative data system that tracks the financial records related to adoption and guardianship subsidy agreements.

Overview of the Tool 4 (Subsidy Changes) tab

Changes to subsidy agreements may indicate meaningful changes in the family that have implications for child stability and well being. Administrative data systems track when subsidies are created and modified. Yet, these systems often lack information about why subsidy agreements are modified. Sometimes agencies make changes to subsidies even when a child does not reenter foster care (e.g., when subsidies agreements are modified to pay for a specific type of treatment). Keeping a record of when subsidy agreements are modified, and the reason for the change, helps agencies understand which events are related to instability.

The source of data from the **Tool 4 (Subsidy Changes)** tab is your agency's adoption and guardianship subsidy records. In the **Tool 4 (Subsidy Changes)** tab. This information may not be readily available and you may need additional resources to add this information into existing data systems. Here are two examples of how this information can be used:

- If a guardian requested a subsidy change to a different caregiver because they have a health issue that limits their capacity to care for their child, that information can help your agency understand whether the family is at risk for instability.
- If a parent has requested a subsidy change to meet the evolving needs of the child (e.g., specific therapies), your agency can track the types of services families are seeking.

In these examples, the reason for the subsidy change request provides information about the well being and stability of the child and family. This information can help your agency



Subsidy Changes

Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Adoption or Guardianship Subsidy Records

understand the challenges families are facing and the types of services families are seeking and document when instability has occurred.

Step 1. Preparing to track instability

The first step to tracking post adoption and guardianship instability is to create a list of all children who exited foster care through adoption or guardianship during a specific period.

- If you already entered the child demographic information and child IDs into the **Tool 1 (Child IDs)** tab this information will auto-populate in this spreadsheet, go to Step 2.
- If you did not enter the list of children in the **Tool 1 (Child IDs)** tab, you will need to enter the child demographic information and child IDs into the **Tool 4 (Subsidy Changes)** tab in columns A–J.

Step 2. Gather information about subsidy changes

Gather any available data from your administrative data system, or other agency records, on changes made to the adoption and guardianship subsidies for all children listed in the **Tool 4 (Subsidy Changes)** tab. Each data system will be different. It may be that some of the information you need to enter into the spreadsheet is embedded in case notes or in other records. There are columns in the **Tool 4 (Subsidy Changes)** tab to enter the following information about subsidy changes:

- The subsidy change request date
- The identity of the person making the request for subsidy change
- The reason for the requested change

Step 3. Enter the Subsidy Change Request Date

For all the children listed in this spreadsheet:

- If there was a subsidy change request for a child, enter the date of the request into the **Subsidy Change Request Date** column. If more than one subsidy change was requested for the same child, we suggest you report the most recent subsidy change request.
- If there has been no subsidy change request for a child, leave the **Subsidy Change Request Date** column blank and skip to Step 6.

Subsidy Changes

Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Adoption or Guardianship Subsidy Records

Step 4. Enter information about who requested the subsidy change

For each child where a subsidy change request date was entered, select one option from the drop-down menu for the column **Who Requested the Subsidy Change?** (the drop-down menu options are shown to the right). Please use the "other" field if the person is not included in this list. If you select "other" from the drop-down menu, please enter who requested the subsidy change into the **Comments** column.

Drop-down menu options, Tool 4

Who Requested the Subsidy Change?

Select an option ▼

Adoptive parent or guardian

Birth family member

Caseworker

Child or youth

Medicaid worker

Post adoption or guardianship staff

Other

Step 5. Enter information about the reasons for subsidy changes

For each child where a subsidy change request date was entered, select one option from the drop-down menu for the column **Reason the Subsidy Change**

was Requested to indicate the primary reason for the request (drop-down menu shown on next page). If you select "other" from the drop-down menu, please enter why the change was requested into the **Comments** column.

When multiple reasons apply, consider the most pressing issue for the family and record that issue only. If you want to track additional information on these requests, we recommend you add additional columns after the **Comments** column. Alternatively, you may add information in the **Comments** column.

Step 6. Enter Instability Status

In the **Instability Status** column, please select one of the options listed in the drop-down menu:

- No recent contact: Select this status in the drop-down menu if there is no information entered into columns K–M, suggesting that no subsidy change request has been made.
- Stability: Select this status in the drop-down menu if no subsidy request has been made (columns K–M are blank) and you have additional information (which may be

Subsidy Changes

Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Adoption or Guardianship Subsidy Records

in the **Comments** column or found in agency notes) showing that someone from your agency has been in contact with the child or family and they are doing well.

- **Stability unclear:** Select this status in the drop-down menu if there is information entered into columns K–M, suggesting that a subsidy change request has been made and the information received suggests the child may be experiencing some difficulties. For example, a subsidy change record shows that a youth or caregiver is having trouble accessing needed services.
- **Instability:** Select this status in the drop-down menu if there is information entered into columns K–M or in the **Comments** column suggesting that a subsidy change request has been made and there is information indicating that the child who exited foster care through adoption or guardianship no longer resides with their adoptive parent or legal guardian.

Drop-down menu options, Tool 4

Reason the Subsidy Change was Requested

Select an option ▼

- Adoptive parent or guardian died
- Adoptive parent or guardian is not using the subsidy for the child's needs or not supporting the child
- Adoptive parent or guardian made another custody agreement
- Adoptive parental rights terminated
- Child behavioral issues
- Child is homeless or has runaway
- Child is not living at home, temporarily
- Child is not living at home, permanently
- Child needs group home or residential care
- Child needs specialized medical care
- Child needs specialized mental health care
- Child removed from home or reentered foster care
- Families that are just requesting supportive services
- Guardianship has been vacated
- Maltreatment investigation
- Service needs changed; familial relationship does not remain intact
- Service needs changed; familial relationship remains intact
- Other

Step 7. Comments

If you have additional information you want to record about an individual child, you can use the **Comments** column.

Family Services

Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Post Adoption and Guardianship Services Records

Tool 5: Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Post Adoption and Guardianship Services Records



Purpose: This tool will help you develop an organized record of services provided to families after adoption or guardianship to better understand risks for instability.

Source of information: The data you need to fill out this spreadsheet may be collected outside the administrative data records (e.g., from outside contractual agencies). Data about the services provided to adoptive and guardianship families are needed to complete this tool. The type of information collected includes service date, family needs, and services provided. These may be captured informally or formally (e.g., caseworker notes or spreadsheets).

Overview of the Tool 5 (Family Services) tab

Most agencies are in contact with adoptive and guardianship families after finalization (see [Glossary](#)), and many agencies provide post adoption and guardianship services and support. When families receive services, information about the services could inform an agency's understanding of instability. The purpose of the **Tool 5 (Family Services)** tab is to develop an organized record of services provided that could identify additional cases of instability that are not recorded elsewhere. So, it may take some work for agencies to find a way to systematically track service records. Examples of the service-related information you might learn from tracking the services provided include:

- During service provision, your agency staff may become aware that a child has run away or is homeless (instability).
- A parent may contact an adoption caseworker for a program referral to help with their child's recent struggles with anxiety (suggests potential risk for instability).
- A guardian may ask for assistance addressing a child's frequent absence from school, or school truancy (suggests potential risk for instability).

These examples include the reason that the family contacted the agency and the subsequent services provided. The reasons for contact give you information about how the family is doing. This information can help your agency understand the challenges families are facing. This information can also be used to document when instability has occurred, or when concerns that may lead to instability have been raised.

The source of data for the **Tool 5 (Family Services)** tab is agency's records of services provided to adoptive or guardianship families, including contacts that agencies have with

Family Services

Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Post Adoption and Guardianship Services Records

families about services (e.g., through hotlines or phone calls to caseworkers at the agencies) and records from outside service providers (e.g., community service providers).

Step 1. Preparing to track instability

The first step to tracking post adoption and guardianship instability is to create a list of all children who exited foster care through adoption or guardianship during a specific time period.

- If you already entered the child demographic information and child IDs into the **Tool 1 (Child IDs)** tab this information will auto-populate in this spreadsheet, go to Step 2.
- If you did not enter the list of children in the **Tool 1 (Child IDs)** tab, you will need to enter the child demographic information and child IDs into the **Tool 5 (Family Services)** tab in columns A–J.

Step 2. Gather information about services provided

Gather any available data from your agency records, or those of an agency that you contract with, about the services provided to adoptive or guardianship families for all the children listed in the **Tool 5 (Family Services)** tab. Each data system will be different. It may be that some of the information you need to enter into the spreadsheet is embedded in case notes or in other records. There are columns in the **Tool 5 (Family Services)** tab to enter the following information about services provided:

- The date services began
- The most urgent needs of the child
- The most urgent needs of the parent or guardian
- The types of services provided

Step 3. Enter the date services began

For all the children listed in this spreadsheet:

- If there is a record of services being provided to a child, enter the date that services began into the **Dates Services Began** column. If services began at different times for the same child, we suggest you report the most recent service start.
- If there have been no services provided, leave the **Dates Services Began** column blank and skip to Step 7.

Family Services

Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Post Adoption and Guardianship Services Records

Step 4. Enter information about the most urgent child issue

For each child where a date was entered in the **Dates Services Began** column, select one option from the drop-down menu (shown to the right) for the column **What is the Most Urgent Issue Identified for the Child?**

If there is more than one urgent issue, select the most urgent issue for the child. The drop-down menu does not capture every type of issue.

If you select "other" from the drop-down menu, please enter the most urgent issue for the child into the **Comments** column.

If you want to track additional information on services for the child (e.g., all services provided), we recommend adding additional columns after the **Comments** column. Alternatively, you can add information in the **Comments** column.

Drop-down menu options, Tool 5

What is the Most Urgent Issue Identified for the Child?

Select an option ▼

- Attachment issues
- Child behavior issues
- Family conflict or issues
- International rehoming
- Involvement with juvenile justice system or probation
- Maltreatment
- Mental health of the child
- Parent or guardian death or incapacitation
- Physical health of the child
- Respite
- Runaway
- School-related issue
- Substance abuse/use
- Other

Family Services

Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Post Adoption and Guardianship Services Records

Step 5. Enter information about the most urgent parent or guardian issue

For each child where a date was entered in the **Dates Services Began** column, select an option from the drop-down menu for the column **What is the Most Urgent Issue Identified for the Parent or Guardian?** (the drop-down menu options are shown to the right). When multiple reasons apply, consider the most pressing issue for the parent or guardian and record that issue.

If you select "other" from the drop-down menu, please enter the most urgent issue identified for the parent or guardian into the **Comments** column.

If you want to track additional information, we recommend adding additional columns after the **Comments** column. You can also add information in the **Comments** column.

Drop-down menu options, Tool 5

What is the Most Urgent Issue Identified for the Parent or Guardian?

Select an option ▼

- Attachment issues
- Death or incapacitation parent or guardian
- Family conflict or issues
- Financial assistance
- Housing
- Information request
- International rehoming
- Maltreatment
- Mental health of the parent or guardian
- Respite
- Substance abuse/use
- Other

Family Services

Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Post Adoption and Guardianship Services Records

Step 6. Enter information about the types of services provided

For each child where a date was entered in the **Dates Services Began** column, select an option from the drop-down menu for the column **Services Provided** (drop-down options shown to the right). As with the other drop-down menus, please select the most recent or important service provided.

If you select "other" from the drop-down menu, please enter the "other" information into the **Comments** column.

If you want to track additional information, we recommend adding additional columns after the **Comments** column. You can also add information in the **Comments** column.

Step 7. Enter Instability Status

In the **Instability Status** column, please select one of the options listed in the drop-down menu:

- No recent contact: Select this status in the drop-down menu if columns K–N are blank, suggesting that the agency has no record of services provided to the child or family.
- Stability: Select this status in the drop-down menu there are no urgent issues identified for the child or parent or guardian if in columns L–N and the services provided are minimal (e.g., information and referral). You may also select this status in the drop-down menu if you have additional information (which may be in the **Comments** column or found in agency notes) showing that someone from your agency has been in contact with the child or family and they are doing well.
- Stability unclear: Select this status in the drop-down menu if there are urgent issues for the child or parent or guardian recorded in columns L and M or in the **Comments** column. For example, you may find that the child is experiencing some difficulties that could place them at risk for instability. The record may not specifically indicate that the child is no longer living with their adoptive parent or legal guardian.

Drop-down menu options, Tool 5

Services Provided

Select an option ▼

Financial assistance
Housing
In-home preservation services
Information provided (e.g., tax information)
Parent or guardian education/support
Post adoption/guardianship support or services
Referral for counseling or other mental health services
Referral for medical services
Referral to other community-based services
Referred for legal services
Referred to Child Protective Services for investigation
Residential placement or group home
School assistance (e.g., IEP, 504 plan)
Other



Family Services

Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Post Adoption and Guardianship Services Records

- **Instability:** Select this status in the drop-down menu if the information provided in columns L–N, or in the **Comments** column, indicates that the child who exited foster care through adoption or guardianship no longer resides with their adoptive parent or legal guardian.

Step 8. Comments

If you have additional information you want to record about an individual child, please use the **Comments** column.



Well-Being Letters

Well Being Letter Example and Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Information from Well Being Letters

Tool 6: Well Being Letter Example and Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Information from Well Being Letters



Purpose: This tool helps agencies gather information about child and family well being as a way to learn about instability or the potential risk for instability. This tool includes two components: (1) a well being letter example and (2) a spreadsheet to track responses to the well being letter.

Source of information: The data you need to fill out this spreadsheet come from questions included in well being letters that agencies send to families.

Overview of the Tool 6 (Well Being Letter) tab

Most agencies send letters annually to adoptive or guardianship families. These letters typically verify contact information and recertify that children who exited foster care to adoption or guardianship are still living in the adoptive parent or guardian's home.⁷ These well being letters provide an opportunity for agencies to have regular contact with parents and guardians after adoption or guardianship. Most agencies do not record the information received in response to these letters into an existing database, but responses to these letters can be a source of information about potential instability.

Some agencies include additional questions in these letters that ask the adoptive parent or guardian about their child's living situation, health, and well being. Responses to these letters can be used both to identify individual needs and as aggregate information to identify system needs. Previous research suggests that it can be helpful to ask adoptive parents and guardians about child or family well being, because problems related to well being (such as a caregiver reporting that they are struggling to meet their child's mental or physical health needs) can help agencies detect issues before instability occurs.^{1,8} If detected early, agencies can reach out to families to provide additional support or services that may prevent post adoption or guardianship instability.

The **Tool 6 (Well Being Letter)** is designed to collect information about instability from the responses to well being letters. These responses can augment the instability record.

This tool has two components: (1) an example well being letter (in the [Appendix](#)) and (2) a spreadsheet to track responses to the letter.



Well-Being Letters

Well Being Letter Example and Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Information from Well Being Letters

The example letter includes some sample questions about the child's living situation and family well being that your agency *could* add to your existing annual letters to adoptive and guardianship families. Questions within the example well being letter are designed to help your agency understand how families are doing and create a way to identify families who may want additional support or services.

If you want to use the example well being letter, your agency should revise it as needed and decide which questions you want to include. You can also revise the questions or revise how families respond to the questions (e.g., change the response options to yes/no rather than use the rating scale that is more complex).

Each question in the example letter is represented by a column in the spreadsheet. If your agency changes or does not use a question, you will need to adapt the spreadsheet to reflect this change.

Step 1. Preparing to track instability

The first step to tracking post adoption and guardianship instability is to create a list of all children who exited foster care through adoption or guardianship during a specific time period.

- If you already entered the child demographic information and child IDs into the **Tool 1 (Child IDs)** tab this information will auto-populate in this spreadsheet, go to Step 2.
- If you did not enter the list of children in the **Tool 1 (Child IDs)** tab, you will need to enter the child demographic information and child IDs into the **Tool 6 (Well Being Letter)** tab in columns A–J.

Step 2. Send Well Being Letters

We suggest that you send letters annually to adoptive parents and guardians. Many agencies already send a well being letter, often around the anniversary of the adoption or guardianship finalization.

Enter the date you sent the letter into the **Date Letter Sent** column.

Step 3. Record responses to the Well Being Letters

For all the children listed in the spreadsheet:

- If you received a response to the well being letter, enter the date in the **Date Responses Received** column.

Well-Being Letters

Well Being Letter Example and Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Information from Well Being Letters

For each question in the example well being letter there is a column in the spreadsheet (rows M–W), and the drop-down menus reflect the options provided in the example letter.

- If you change the questions or their response options, you will need to revise the spreadsheet.
- If you did not use a question, please skip (leave blank) those columns.

You may want to consider contacting families who do not respond to the letter, to understand if they are not responding because they are struggling and need some help or because everything is going well. Responses to these inquiries can be recorded in the **Comments** column. If you have responses from prior years, we suggest using the most recent responses.

For the following questions select the parent's response to the question (*yes/no*) from the drop-down menu:

- **Q1. Is this child still living at home?**
- **Q2. Are you still legally responsible for this child?**
- **Q3. Do you continue to provide financial support for this child?**
- **Q4. Is this child currently in school?**

For the following questions, select the parent's response to the question (*not true at all, mostly not true, somewhat true, mostly true, very true*) from the drop-down menu:

- **Q5. I feel confident in my ability to meet my child's mental health needs**
- **Q6. I feel confident in my ability to meet my child's physical needs**
- **Q7. I have a good understanding of my child's needs**
- **Q8. When I need help with problems in my family, I am able to ask for help from others**
- **Q9. I believe I can solve problems with my child when they happen**
- **Q10. I know where to go to get information to help me better understand my child**

For the final question select the parent's response to the question (*yes/no*) from the drop-down menu:

- **Q11. Are there any additional supports your family may need at this time?**

Well-Being Letters

Well Being Letter Example and Spreadsheet to Track Instability using Information from Well Being Letters

Step 4. Enter Instability Status

In the **Instability Status** column, if you used the questions in the example well being letter, use the criteria below to select one of the options listed in the drop-down menu:

- First, look at the responses to questions 1 through 4:
 - If any response is “no,” then selecting “Instability” from the drop-down menu is likely your best option. However, you may have additional information that you see in the responses that suggests a different selection is best.
 - If the respondent selected “yes” for any question, then use the responses from questions 5 through 10 to determine the **Instability Status**.
- Next look at the responses from questions 5 through 10:
 - If any response to these questions is *not at all true, mostly not true, or somewhat true*, select “Stability unclear” and follow up with the family.
 - If all of the responses are *mostly true, or very true* select “Stability.”
- If the response to question 11 indicates that the family wants the agency to contact them, select “Stability unclear” and follow up with the family.
 - If after you follow-up you find out that the family simply needed a referral and that the familial relationship remains, change the status to “Stability”. You can add a note in the **Comments** column.
 - If you find out after contacting the family that the child no longer resides with the adoptive parent or guardian, change the status to “Instability”.
- If the family does not respond to the well being letter, please select “No recent contact.”

If you revised the questions, you need to decide how the **Instability Status** will be determined based on the questions that you did use.

Step 5. Comments

If you have additional information you want to record about an individual child, please use the **Comments** column.



Instability Summary

Spreadsheet that Provides the Overall Instability Status Based on Information Collected in Tools 1 through 6

Tool 7: Spreadsheet that Provides the Overall Instability Status Based on Information Collected in Tools 1 through 6



Purpose: This tool automatically compiles information reported in the other tools to create an overall Instability Status for each child.

Source of information: If you use the other tools, the columns in this spreadsheet will auto-populate. You will not enter data into this tab.

Overview of the Tool 7 (Instability Summary) tab

This tool is a summary spreadsheet that will help your agency understand which children experience post adoption and guardianship instability and target resources or outreach to those children. The **Tool 7 (Instability Summary)** tab looks across **Tools 2 through 6** to determine an overall instability status.

- If you use the *Tracking Workbook* as designed, you should not enter any information in the **Tool 7 (Instability Summary)** tab. It has formulas embedded in the spreadsheet that will auto-populate the **Overall Instability Status** column if you use at least two of the tools.
- If you only use one tool out of **Tools 2 through 6**, you do not need this tool and you should use the **Instability Status** from the tool you used.
- If you do not use the *Tracking Workbook*, you can take the logic of the **Tool 7 (Instability Summary)** tab to create some other tool that works for your agency. We describe below how the **Overall Instability Status** column is calculated so that you can replicate this work on your own.

Step 1. Overall Instability Status

The **Overall Instability Status** for each child will auto-populate based on the following:

- If the instability status in **Tools 2 through 6** is "Instability," the **Overall Instability Status** for that child will also be "Instability."

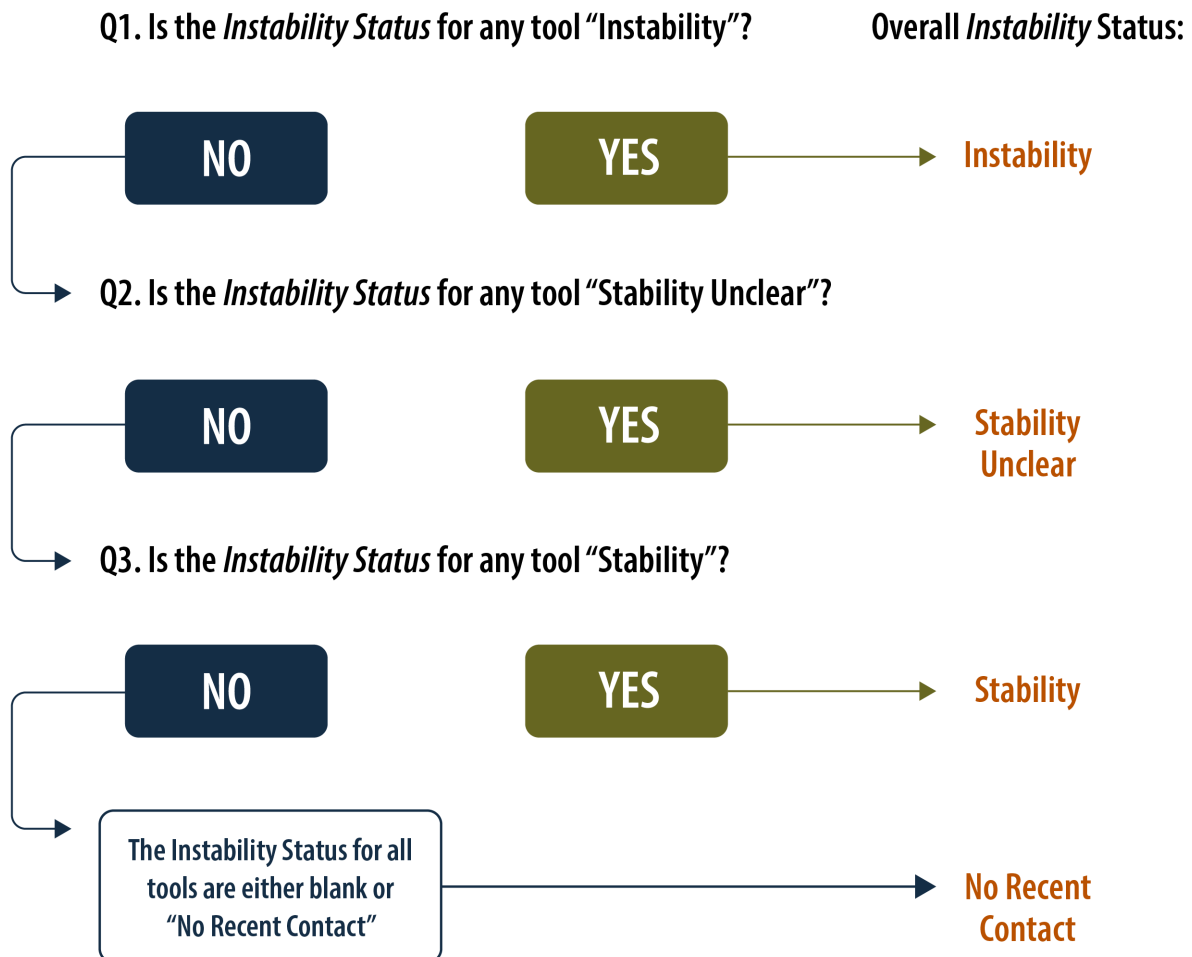


Instability Summary

Spreadsheet that Provides the Overall Instability Status Based on Information Collected in Tools 1 through 6

- If the instability status in **Tools 2 through 6** is not “Instability,” the **Overall Instability Status** will auto-populate using the logic illustrated in the decision tree below (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1. Instability Status Decision Tree



Ways to Use Tool 7 (Instability Summary) Information

You can use the **Tool 7 (Instability Summary)** tab to understand which children experience post adoption and guardianship instability and to target resources or outreach to those children. You may also want to create reports about the overall instability of children who have exited foster care through adoption or guardianship. This report can be used to better understand how often this occurs and which children are most likely to experience post adoption or guardianship instability. For example, you may want to explore post adoption or guardianship instability by the age of the child at the time of adoption or



Instability Summary

Spreadsheet that Provides the Overall Instability Status Based on Information Collected in Tools 1 through 6

guardianship. To do this, you will need to calculate the age the child was at the time of instability (using the **Child Date of Birth** and date associated with the instability event (this would need to be copied from the **Tool 2 (Data Flag)** through **Tool 6 (Well Being Letter)** tabs). You could then sort the data by age and create a count of the number of children who experienced instability at each age. You may also want to examine outcomes by race, ethnicity, or sex by sorting by the **Child Race**, **Child Ethnicity**, or **Child Sex** columns.



Glossary

Administrative Data Flag: This is a field in child welfare administrative data used to identify when a child enters foster care, if they previously exited foster care through adoption or guardianship, and when they are reentering care after their adoption or guardianship. Administrative data flags are most effective if they are a mandatory field that agency staff are required to complete before moving ahead with other data entry about the child.

Adoption: Adoption is the social, emotional, and legal process through which children who will not be raised by their birth parents become full and permanent legal members of another family while maintaining genetic and psychological connections to their birth family.⁹

Adoption and guardianship finalization: This finalization is the legal act that establishes a family connection between the adopting person and the adopted person, or the guardian and a child. Usually done in a courtroom setting, this act grants rights and responsibilities to the adoptive parent and child equal to the rights and responsibilities granted to families created by birth.¹⁰ For guardianship, some rights are transferred to the caretaker (see Guardianship).

Age of adulthood (or age of majority): The age of adulthood varies by state. Depending on your state's age of adulthood definition, youth who are in foster care when they turn 18 may be allowed to extend that placement and continue receiving services from the child welfare agency.¹¹

Guardianship: Guardianship is a judicially created relationship between a child and caretaker intended to be permanent and self-sustaining. The caretaker receives the following parental rights with respect to the child: protection, education, care and control of the person, custody of the person, and decision-making.¹²

Foster care: Foster care is a 24-hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents or guardians and for whom the state agency has placement and care responsibility. This includes placements in foster family homes, foster homes of relatives, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, childcare institutions, and pre-adoptive homes.¹³

Post Adoption and Guardianship Instability: This instability includes situations when children who exit foster care to adoptive and guardianship homes no longer reside with their adoptive parent or legal guardian. Children might reenter foster care or otherwise experience instability in their living arrangements.¹



Permanence: A child in foster care achieves legal permanence when (1) the child is discharged from foster care to reunification with their family, either to a parent or other relative; (2) the child is discharged from foster care to a legally finalized adoption; or (3) the child is discharged from foster care to the care of a legal guardian (see [Child Welfare Information Gateway glossary](#)).¹⁴

What is the PAGI project?

The Understanding Post Adoption and Guardianship Instability for Children and Youth Who Exit Foster Care (PAGI) project, funded by the Administration for Children and Families, is conducted by RTI International, Case Western Reserve University, and East Carolina University. The project studies the following:

- Risk and protective factors related to instability at the individual, family, and agency levels.
- Child welfare agency post-permanency family contacts and support services.

The PAGI [project webpage](#) has more information: [Understanding Post Adoption and Guardianship Instability for Children and Youth Who Exit Foster Care | The Administration for Children and Families \(hhs.gov\)](#)



Appendix: Example Wellbeing Letter

Child Name: [insert] **Child ID:** [insert] **Date of Birth:** [insert]

Hello parents and guardians,

We want to hear about how you and your child are doing. We would also like to know if we can better support you and your child. Please help us by answering some brief questions at the end of this letter.

We start by asking for your current contact information so that we can update our records. This information will help us make sure that your subsidy payments are sent to the correct mailing address.

We also ask some questions:

- The first set of questions asks about where your child is living and whether they are in school.
- The second set of questions asks about you and your child's health and well being.

Your responses to these questions will also help us plan for the types of services and supports that adoptive and guardianship families may need.

You can return this letter, with your responses, using the pre-addressed and pre-stamped envelope enclosed with this letter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call [INSERT agency hotline or phone number for post-permanency services here].

Thank you for your time. We value your perspective and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

_____ [YOUR AGENCY NAME]

Attachment



Child Name: [insert] **Child ID:** [insert] **Date of Birth:** [insert]

Please provide your current contact information:

Mailing address: _____

Email: _____

Phone number: _____

Please tell us about where your child is currently living, how they are supported, and whether they are in school.

Please mark **Yes** or **No** to each question and if **No**, please provide us with more information.

Q1. Is this child still living at home?	Yes	No	If no, please describe:
Q2. Are you still legally responsible for this child?	Yes	No	If no, please describe:
Q3. Do you continue to provide financial support for this child?	Yes	No	If no, please describe:
Q4. Is this child currently in school?	Yes	No	If no, please describe:



Child Name: [insert] **Child ID:** [insert] **Date of Birth:** [insert]

Please tell us how you and your child are doing. Your answers to these questions can help us understand your child's current health and well being. For each question, please circle your response.

Q5. I feel confident in my ability to meet my child's mental health needs.

Not true at all *Mostly not true* *Somewhat true* *Mostly true* *Very true*

Q6. I feel confident in my ability to meet my child's physical needs.

Not true at all *Mostly not true* *Somewhat true* *Mostly true* *Very true*

Q7. I have a good understanding of my child's needs.

Not true at all *Mostly not true* *Somewhat true* *Mostly true* *Very true*

Q8. When I need help with problems in my family, I am able to ask for help from others.

Not true at all *Mostly not true* *Somewhat true* *Mostly true* *Very true*

Q9. I believe I can solve problems with my child when they happen.

Not true at all *Mostly not true* *Somewhat true* *Mostly true* *Very true*

Q10. I know where to go to get information to help me better understand my child.

Not true at all *Mostly not true* *Somewhat true* *Mostly true* *Very true*

Q 11. **Please tell us how we can better support you.** Are there any additional supports your family may need at this time? Yes / No

If yes, tell us how we can help:



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