



## Pathways to IV-E: Data Management~ Numbers Count!

Cheryl Montoya  
May, 2012  
Minneapolis, MN & Albuquerque, NM



National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology  
A Service of the Children's Bureau & Member of the TTA Network

For Information Visit us at  
[www.nrccwdt.org](http://www.nrccwdt.org)



# Why are we here?



National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology  
A Service of the Children's Bureau & Member of the TTA Network

For Information Visit us at  
[www.nrccwdt.org](http://www.nrccwdt.org)

## TRIBAL DATA COLLECTION



- The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-351), was signed into law by the President on October 7, 2008.
- The law provides federally-recognized Indian Tribes with the option to apply to operate a title IV-E program and seek Federal reimbursement of a share of allowable Tribal expenditures made pursuant to an approved title IV-E plan.



National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology  
A Service of the Children's Bureau & Member of the TTA Network

For Information Visit us at  
[www.nrccwdt.org](http://www.nrccwdt.org)

## TRIBAL DATA COLLECTION



- As specified by the law, the IV-E requirements apply to Indian Tribes in the same manner as they apply to States.... an Indian Tribe wishing to operate its own title IV-E program must adhere to the following requirements....
- Mandatory Title IV-E Requirements (8)
- Section 479 of the Act and regulations at 45 CFR 1355.40 and 1356.20(b) require title IV-E agencies to report data to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).



National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology  
A Service of the Children's Bureau & Member of the TTA Network

For Information Visit us at  
[www.nrccwdt.org](http://www.nrccwdt.org)

## AGENDA

- Why Data Collection is important
- Prioritizing data collection needs and selecting the most realistic method to document data
- Discussion of AFCARS
- Discussion of a Tribe's collection of data, implementing a system (electronic or paper) and/or selecting a vendor



## Important Data to Know...



- How Many Children are in Care Today? Last Year?
- Number of Licensed Foster Homes?
- Total Number of CA/N Reports Last Month?
- How Many Were Substantiated Last Year?
- Children with Multiple CA/N Reports?
- How Many Tribal Children are in State Custody? – ICWA Compliance?
- How Many Children were Returned Home?

## In collecting data, you would know...

- How Many Children in Care, Today? - 17
- How Many Children in Care, Last Year? - 46
- Number of Licensed Foster Homes? - 31
- Number of CA/N Reports Last Month? - 8
- How Many Were Substantiated, Last Year? - 22
- Children with Multiple CA/N Reports? - 17
- How Many Tribal Children are in State Custody? – ICWA Compliance? – 47%, No
- How Many Children were Returned Home? - 9



## SELF ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY

## WHY IS DATA COLLECTION IMPORTANT?

INFORMS PRACTICE

Reports  
to Funders

Manages Work

FILLS IN GAPS



National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology  
A Service of the Children's Bureau & Member of the TTA Network

For Information Visit us at  
[www.nrccwdt.org](http://www.nrccwdt.org)

## WHY IS DATA COLLECTION IMPORTANT?

- We can validate that change is needed in policy and/or practice.

Example:

The number of open child abuse/neglect reports is increasing to the point where each worker has 35 open cases.

What change is needed?



National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology  
A Service of the Children's Bureau & Member of the TTA Network

For Information Visit us at  
[www.nrccwdt.org](http://www.nrccwdt.org)

## To make your case... what data would be needed?

The number of open child abuse/neglect reports is increasing to the point where each worker has 35 open cases.

- Abuse/neglect reports over a specified period of time (count)
- How many workers are getting assigned to those reports?
- Average time it takes to close out investigation (date investigation opens and closes)
- What is a manageable number of investigations per month?



National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology  
A Service of the Children's Bureau & Member of the TTA Network

For Information Visit us at  
[www.nrccwdt.org](http://www.nrccwdt.org)

## WHY IS DATA COLLECTION IMPORTANT?

### Tracks and Monitors



- Where are the children in foster care placed?
- What types of services are being provided to their parents through the treatment plan?
- Of the currently licensed foster homes, how many are new this year? How many didn't renew their licenses? Why?
- What percentage of the children are in State custody? When is the next Permanency Hearing? Is the ICWA worker scheduled to attend?



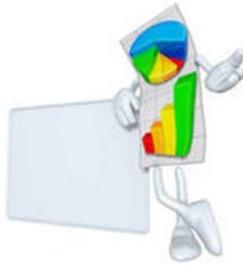
National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology  
A Service of the Children's Bureau & Member of the TTA Network

For Information Visit us at  
[www.nrccwdt.org](http://www.nrccwdt.org)

## WHY IS DATA COLLECTION IMPORTANT?

### Ability to Create Reports

Manager: “How many children in foster care need a higher level of care? Do we need to give foster parents additional training?”



Data can help answer:



### TRAINING

## A Discussion about AFCARS...



AFCARS stands for:

- American Foster Care and Adoption Research and Statistics
- Annual Foster Care Automated Reporting System
- Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System
- Annual Federal Cost and Activity Response System



## The Acronym...

# Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System AFCARS



National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology  
A Service of the Children's Bureau & Member of the T/TA Network

For Information Visit us at  
[www.nrccwdt.org](http://www.nrccwdt.org)

## WHAT IS AFCARS?

- Don't Worry, it isn't a system, it's just a report!
- Case Level Data
  - 66 data elements on every child in foster care, and 37 data elements for every child adopted.
- Two Report Periods
  - Based on Federal Fiscal Year
    - October 1 - March 31
    - April 1 - September 30
- Submission Dates
  - No Later Than May 15
  - No Later Than November 14



National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology  
A Service of the Children's Bureau & Member of the T/TA Network

For Information Visit us at  
[www.nrccwdt.org](http://www.nrccwdt.org)

## Benefits of AFCARS Data

- Builds a foundation of data that represents case management
- Child Welfare Outcomes Report
- Requests for data from outside entities
- Trend analyses

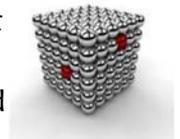


National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology  
A Service of the Children's Bureau & Member of the T/TA Network

For Information Visit us at  
[www.nrccwdt.org](http://www.nrccwdt.org)

## A GROUPING OF THE ELEMENTS

- Possible groups for the foster care elements
  - Demographics Child/Caretakers (DOB, Gender, Race)
  - Removal from home information (Date of first and latest removal, manner of removal)
  - Current Placement information (placement setting, placement date)
  - Sources of support (foster care, TANF, child support)



National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology  
A Service of the Children's Bureau & Member of the T/TA Network

For Information Visit us at  
[www.nrccwdt.org](http://www.nrccwdt.org)

## AFCARS Data Collection Logistics

- Data Collection
  - Does not have to be from an automated system
- Submission to ACF
  - Must be electronic
  - Must be in ASCII
  - Secure Data Transfer Protocols
  - From the IFR published in 2012, there is flexibility for the Tribes on the method of data transfer



## What data collection system is best for you?



## What is your data set?

- Reports
  - IV-B
  - BIA
  - Quarterly reports for executive branch.
- Justification of current staffing/resources or the need for more
- Specific area of data needed (e.g. kinship care)
- Notice a particular issue (like domestic violence) and need data to support other programs or monies

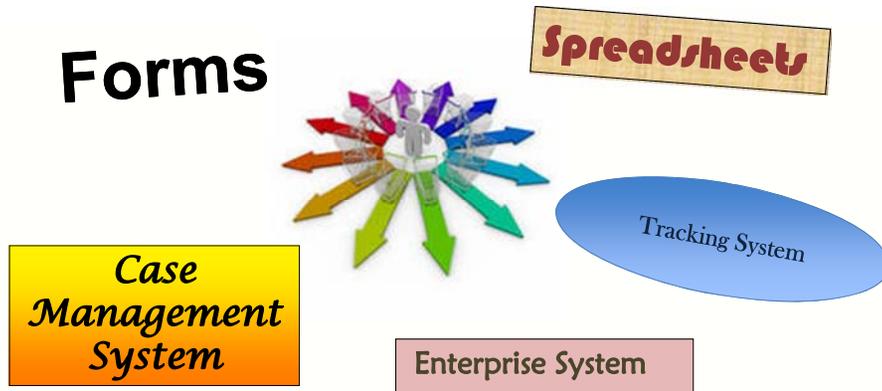


You know what data you need/want to collect, what system should you use?



## Options to Document/Collect Data

### Forms



## Points to Consider



- Benefits
- Costs
- Political Climate
- Change Management
- Training
- Policy Development and Consistent Application of Policy
- System of Record
- Sustainability

## Benefits

- Information possibilities!!
  - More, new, better, timely, and consistent.
  - Readily available to those who need it.
  - Can actually be more secure (than paper), and limited to those with a need to know.
- New Abilities!!
  - To measure/improve outcomes for children and families.
  - Ability to manage effectively by using all the information.
  - Ability to meet Federal, State, BIA, or Tribal reporting requirements.



## Costs

- Initial equipment purchase
- Initial software purchase
- Software customization
- Software license and maintenance
- Training, training, and more training
- Data conversion from old system (automated or paper)
- Requirements development
- Policy development



## Political Climate



- Is funding available for initial purchase, and all future maintenance needs?
- Do you have, or are you willing to develop policy that supports the business rules in the system?
- Are you willing to make decisions based on what the information in your system tells you?
- How willing are your staff to conform to using a system?



National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology  
A Service of the Children's Bureau & Member of the T/TA Network

For Information Visit us at  
[www.nrccwdt.org](http://www.nrccwdt.org)

## Change Management



- “It's easiest to ride a horse in the direction it is going.” In other words, don't struggle against change; learn to use it to your advantage.
- Change management, or the lack of, is always the most overlooked aspect of system implementation.
- “Managing change” refers to *making changes in a planned and managed or systematic fashion.*



National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology  
A Service of the Children's Bureau & Member of the T/TA Network

For Information Visit us at  
[www.nrccwdt.org](http://www.nrccwdt.org)

## Change Management—What's important?

- Strong team w/ support of top management
- Start small.
- Internal communication to staff and other stakeholders critical.
- Understand how new systems will affect the end users.
- Focus on business process (not the underlying technology)
- Get users involved early in the process.
- Train, train, and then retrain.
- Be realistic!!!



National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology  
A Service of the Children's Bureau & Member of the T/TA Network

For Information Visit us at  
[www.nrccwdt.org](http://www.nrccwdt.org)

## Policy Development/Consistent Application

- Every system has built in “rules.” These rules generally monitor, prompt, or require a user to perform a function, enter information, or prohibit the same.
- Likewise, Agencies generally have written policy that dictates a certain “practice model.”
- In order for a “system” to work there must be developed policy (standards), and the system rules must be consistent with policy.



National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology  
A Service of the Children's Bureau & Member of the T/TA Network

For Information Visit us at  
[www.nrccwdt.org](http://www.nrccwdt.org)

## System of Record

- A continuation of policy and its consistent application.
- If it isn't in the system, it didn't happen.
- Opportunity to guide, monitor, require, and enforce certain actions that reflect written policy.



## Sustainability



Keeping all the Pieces Together...

## Readiness vs Capacity



## Does Readiness = Capacity?



- To get “ready”, the agency should:
  - Be open to change and willing to question itself
  - Be able to clearly describe the mission
  - Have key members brought in to the process
  - Have an understanding of how capacity building will further the mission
  - Commit the necessary time and resources
  - Be stable internally. An agency in crisis is generally not ready.

## Is your Tribe ready?

- Is there Tribal code that will support adding a system of documentation?
- Is there policy in place?
- Does your agency have a practice model in place?
- Do you want to change?

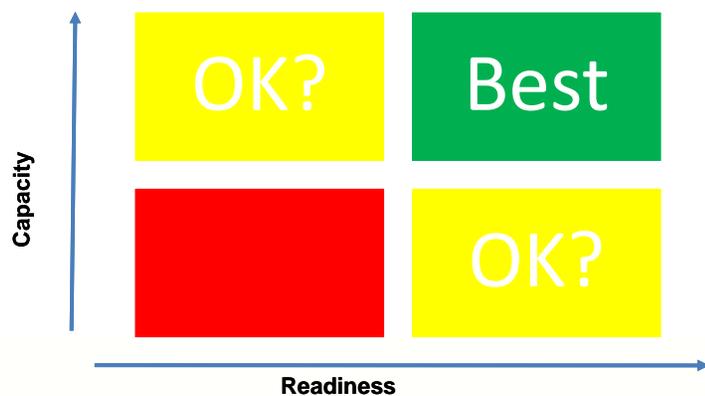


## Does your Tribe have the capacity to implement a new system?

- Appropriate staffing
- Other resources that you can pull from if needed
- Monies available to put into a new system (not just for purchase and implementation but also for maintenance costs)
- Are you ready for change?



## Readiness and Capacity



## NRC-CWDT can help you...

- Assist in building capacity of a tribal agency looking to develop a case management system
- Enhance the use of a current case management system
- Use data for program improvement
- Adapt the Reconnect Families database tool to meet basic data reporting requirements
- Review procurement plans for an IT system



## NRC-CWDT can also...



- In collaboration with NRCOI, facilitate Tribal/State partnerships
- Make presentations tailored towards regional meetings or tribal association meetings about topics to consider when building a data system.
- Provide information and networking opportunities at the Children's Bureau annual data conference



National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology  
A Service of the Children's Bureau & Member of the T/TA Network

For Information Visit us at  
[www.nrcowdt.org](http://www.nrcowdt.org)

Little children are still the symbol of the eternal marriage between love and duty. - George Eliot



National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology  
A Service of the Children's Bureau & Member of the T/TA Network

For Information Visit us at  
[www.nrcowdt.org](http://www.nrcowdt.org)

## Contact Information:

[www.nrcowdt.org](http://www.nrcowdt.org)

- Cheryl Montoya  
[montoya.cheryl@gmail.com](mailto:montoya.cheryl@gmail.com)  
– 575-649-2295



National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology  
A Service of the Children's Bureau & Member of the T/TA Network

For Information Visit us at  
[www.nrcowdt.org](http://www.nrcowdt.org)



# Questions?



National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology  
A Service of the Children's Bureau & Member of the T/TA Network

For Information Visit us at  
[www.nrcowdt.org](http://www.nrcowdt.org)



---

## Self Assessment for Tribes

### A Quick Look at the Numbers

Number of children in care right now: In-home \_\_\_\_\_ Out-of-home \_\_\_\_\_

Number of CPS reports over last month \_\_\_\_\_

Number of full-time Child Welfare staff: \_\_\_\_\_

### My Tribe's Readiness to Meet Data Needs

Is there support from my Tribal/community leaders? \_\_\_\_\_

Among staff, is there a sense of purpose/understanding of a plan to move forward?

\_\_\_\_\_

If not, what change management needs to occur? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Has your Tribal code been updated? When? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have documented Policy/Procedures about the way you do business? \_\_\_\_\_

### My Tribe's Capacity to meet Data Needs

Is there enough staff to manage with adding an electronic system of record?

\_\_\_\_\_

Are there monies dedicated/available to add an electronic system of record?

\_\_\_\_\_

Are there additional resources to pull from if needed (monies, staff, time)? \_\_\_\_\_

**Technology needs/experience**

Do you have computers in your office? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, how many? \_\_\_\_\_ Is there a computer for each staff person? \_\_\_\_\_

What kind of technology is used right now? (e-mail, database, excel, word)  
\_\_\_\_\_

With the technology you do have, are staff comfortable using it? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the use of technology mirror workplace realities? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you know what your tribal data set would need to be? (Based on data required for BIA Reports, Reports to Tribal Counsel, or other reports to investors, stakeholders, grants)  
\_\_\_\_\_

What strengths do you see in your agency to be able to meet your data needs in the future?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What hindrances do you foresee in not being able to meet your data needs?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Conclusion:**

Using the answers above, what do you see as your three biggest challenges in meeting data needs as a direct IV-E Agency?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



## *Quality Data: Not Just for QA Managers Anymore*

As child welfare agencies become more sophisticated in their practice, there is a growing dependence on the data that live in their information systems. These data, and especially the quality of the data, exert powerful influences on many aspects of agency business, stakeholder views of the agency, and client outcomes. In this edition of *Tips, Tools, and Trends*, we explore how the quality of data affects agency business, why agencies must invest time and effort to assure that its data quality remains high, and steps to consider to fully use, and improve, its data.

### **Effects of Poor Quality Data**

**Programmatic:** The most serious effect of poor quality data is that programs suffer and families get less than optimal service. Good quality data are a pre-condition for being evidence-informed. Good data can help an agency to make good decisions; bad data can lead an agency down a wrong path. Promoting better outcomes for children and families starts by knowing, with confidence, what is really happening. Lack of confidence in your data, or worse, making a decision based on incomplete or untimely data, wastes time, money, and effort. Bad data can lead to duplication of services, mismatching needs and services, or working at cross-purposes with each other. This can have dire consequences for families and can certainly increase liability for agencies.

**Financial:** Though often invisible to frontline workers, bad or incomplete data can cause real financial problems for an agency. Incomplete counts can lead to fewer dollars than an agency might have legitimately earned (e.g., Adoption Incentives Payments). Bad or untimely data can also disrupt agency budgets and program plans when it shows up as after-the-fact disallowances (IV-E Eligibility Reviews) or sanctions (CFSR and NYTD). Inaccurate or incorrect coding can translate directly into decreased reimbursement for expenditures that could have earned Federal Financial Participation (IV-E claims). These budget mistakes can lead to error reports and reviews, often requiring caseworker and supervisor time away from working with children and families.

**Political:** Credibility with funders, consumers, and stakeholders depends on their confidence in your agency. Having and using high quality data is a tool that not only increases this confidence, but also allows an agency to accurately pinpoint resource needs, successes, and opportunities. Inaccurate data create uncertainty and mistrust. When you lose credibility, you often lose the ability to set your own agenda. When testifying before your legislative committees, would you rather argue over which data are correct, or make a strong case for lawmakers to trust your agency with precious resources?

### **Ways to Use, and IMPROVE, Data Quality**

Given the many costs that accrue due to bad data, but the important question is, what can a cash-strapped, overworked child welfare system do to enhance data quality? Here are a few simple tips for doing exactly that:

- **Collect it (with care)!** Data coming out of your system can only be as good as what goes in. Is there clear guidance about how data get into your systems? Who enters the data? When and how often? Is the guidance written down and easy accessible? Remember that ambiguity often leads to inconsistent and inaccurate data, so clear and well defined guidance is critical.
- **Use it!** Whether in the form of reports, charts, maps, dashboards or white papers, the frequency and the seriousness with which the agency uses the data to drive decision-making will have a direct relationship to the quality of the data. Often, new efforts to use data will meet with resistance. Staff will point to how wrong the data are, but if staff understand that you're going to use those data to make important decisions that could improve their work and the lives of the clients they serve, it is remarkable how quickly word spreads through the agency and how both the quality and timeliness of those data improve as a result.
- **Integrate it!** If you treat data clean up as a process that gets added to a worker's routine, it competes with everything else and may fall to the bottom of their priority list. By elevating the importance of high quality data at every level of the agency, it becomes a part of the agency culture. Workers, supervisors AND managers must think about data quality, and they will, but only if they think it's important. This isn't just an IT concern; everyone has a part of making, and using, high quality data.
- **Model it!** Data runs throughout the modern child welfare organization. Don't limit data use to your IT or Research Department. It is Executive Leadership's job to set the tone and be the example. If you make a point to use data in every meeting you attend and ask staff to support their positions with data, you send a clear message that data are important.
- **Own it!** In the end, agencies that rely on data exhibit all the characteristics noted here, but in addition, they have an identified person (or people) whose job it is to pursue data quality. You cannot let that responsibility reside only in a technical position. A dedicated quality function returns dividends throughout the organization.

Once you use data routinely, your data quality will improve and your organization will have taken the most important step towards becoming a learning organization. Organizations that can learn and self-correct are the ones that demonstrate improved outcomes, better serve their clients, and gain the trust of sponsors and stakeholders. These agencies are also more likely to thrive, even in harsh fiscal environments.

## *Technical Assistance*

*This document is part of the Tips, Tools, & Trends series provided by the National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data and Technology (NRC-CWDT). State and Tribal child welfare agencies and Courts may obtain technical assistance from this Children's Bureau's Resource Center by emailing [nrccwdt@cwla.org](mailto:nrccwdt@cwla.org). More information can be found on [www.nrccwdt.org](http://www.nrccwdt.org). If you wish to request onsite technical assistance from the NRC-CWDT, contact your ACF Regional Office or NRC-CWDT.*