Federal AFCARS staff clarify placement entry classifications

Some sites previously classified as locations have now changed to placements, a clarification from the federal AFCARS staff. These changes have created confusion and concern among county staff entering placement information. Identifying which children, what sites, and under which circumstances a child’s out-of-home care should be entered into SSIS can be complicated. The following are general rules. Contact the SSIS Help Line with questions about specific cases.

Out-of-home Placement means 24-hour substitute care for all children placed away from their parents or guardians for more than 24 hours, and for whom the local social service agency has supervision and care responsibility.

To be in out-of-home placement, the child must be placed outside the home as the result of a protective hold, court order or voluntary placement agreement.

When the county social service agency does not have care and control of a child, either:

- The placement should not be entered into SSIS
- The courtesy supervision question should be answered Yes or
- Placements of children in the care and control of another agency must be entered when there is a IV-E agreement with the custodial agency.

Hospitals

SSIS added hospitals in 2005, to allow county tracking of a child whose acute condition required hospitalization and caused an absence from the foster home or other placement. Federal AFCARS Review staff recently clarified that a temporary absence in a hospital must be counted as an additional placement when it lasts more than 15 days. SSIS will continue to display a hospital setting as a location. However, for AFCARS, a hospital stay of 16 days or more will be counted and reported as an additional placement.

SSIS investigated specific situations recorded as hospital for the AFCARS improvement plan. Most hospital settings in SSIS were longer than 15 days and need to be reported to AFCARS as additional placements. Many of the vendor names are residential treatment centers (RTC), and should have been entered as such. For example, Fountain Centers offers substance abuse treatment as outpatient services, partial hospitalization/day treatment, or non-hospital residential (24 hours). This facility should be entered as an RTC when the treatment is the 24-hour residential option.

Children in regional treatment centers or other psychiatric treatment facilities, whether public or private, must be entered in SSIS with a placement setting of residential treatment center. OHPP and periodic review requirements apply.

Juvenile Correctional Facility-Locked

Federal AFCARS staff determined that locked juvenile correctional facilities are to be reported as placements for children in the care and control of the agency when they occur within a continuous placement. If the reason chosen for the locked facility is behavioral consequences – less than 30 days, this choice will display as a location to the user. SSIS will, however, report the locked facility as a placement for AFCARS.
If a youth goes from a foster home or a group home into a locked facility and becomes the responsibility of the Commissioner of Corrections, the child is discharged with a discharge reason of Transfer to another agency.

ICFs-MR Facilities
These facilities have been classified as placements since SSIS Version 4.0 per the AFCARS Review. OHPP and periodic review requirements apply.

Placement Authority: Protective Hold, Court Order, Voluntary Placement Agreement
There are fewer questions about placements occurring under a protective hold or court order than under a voluntary placement agreement. When a family arranges with an insurance company for a child’s RTC placement, and the agency has no involvement in the placement decision, should a voluntary be taken and a placement entered into SSIS? If the social service agency was not involved in determining the need for the RTC, and will not monitor the placement or provide case management services, then the agency does not have care and control and does not enter the placement into SSIS.

However, if the family insurance benefits run out, the family may ask the agency to continue the placement and make payments. If the county social service agency agrees to provide this service, the RTC placement is entered into SSIS at the time the agency takes responsibility for supervising the placement. Obtaining a voluntary placement agreement at this point is appropriate. OHPP and periodic review requirements apply when the agency takes responsibility for supervising a placement.

Enter CMH assessments for 2007
Counties are now able to enter Children’s Mental Health (CMH) assessment data into SSIS on various assessment scales.

The first year for this requirement is 2007. Counties are not required to enter assessments for 2006. Assessment scores beginning in 2007 are required in CMH workgroups.

County staff must enter CMH assessment scores for the prior year in time for the February upload in the following year (by February 28th).

Call Patricia Nygaard at 651-431-2332 if you have a question about this policy requirement.

Upload Update_______________
The January upload is due on January 31, 2007. This upload is for the NCANDS reporting period (last federal fiscal year: October 1 - September 30).
**IV-E Abstract fix information updated**

In the last Project Update, we shared several fixes that were made shortly after the release of SSIS version 4.2. Some additional problems have been discovered.

There are three defects with the Child Count Ratio report and corresponding Child Count Verification List. For reference, these are the lines:

A. IV-E Reimbursable child
B. IV-E Eligible, non-reimbursable child
C. Total children in placement
D. IV-E Eligible unknown and placement < 30 days
E. IV-E Eligible American Indian child
F. Total American Indian children in placement
G. IV-E Eligible Indian unknown and placement < 30 days

### #1 Line A:
Clients in facilities, including Rule 4, Rule 5, Rule 8, etc., that should be counted in Line A are erroneously being counted in Line B.

### #2 Lines D and G:
The number of days in placement was being calculated as the total days in placement rather than as the days in placement as of the end of the given month for child counts. This led to possible undercounts for lines D and G.

### #3 All Lines:
Clients are counted based on the month of the payment’s Warrant/Effective Date. If there are multiple payments in a month for payments with service dates in different months with different eligibility and reimbursability in those months, the client may be counted on the wrong line.

DHS Financial Operations Division (FOD) is aware of these defects. SSIS will correct the programming and the corrections will be sent to FOD as adjusted counts for the 2007 Q1 report, due April 20, 2007.

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**To buy or not to buy….Vista**

Counties are asking about the new Microsoft Vista operating system which is available for new computers. For the near term, SSIS does **not** support Vista.

The version of Delphi that SSIS is written in is incompatible with Vista, so our developers cannot yet use Vista as their operating system until our Delphi version is upgraded. That upgrade is scheduled for early 2008, meaning that bugs appearing to Vista users cannot be properly diagnosed and fixed.

While the current version of SSIS might run on Vista, we cannot guarantee that it will; we have not tested SSIS on Vista. In the next few months we hope to procure a test workstation with Vista installed so we can test SSIS on the new operating system.

We recommend that counties ordering new computers buy them with Windows XP Professional installed rather than Vista.

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**CountyLink Additions**

These documents have been added or updated on CountyLink since the last Project Update.

- TCM-CR Spec
- Partnership Group minutes, 1/24/07
- Ref. 141: County Ad Hoc Query User Install
Job Posting: SSIS Training Team Leader

The Training Unit of the Child Safety and Permanency Division at DHS has a vacancy for the team leader for the SSIS training team. This position was open to internal candidates and is now open to external applicants. Please submit hard copies of resumes by FEBRUARY 28 to Richard Dean, Training Unit Supervisor, Child Safety and Permanency Division, P.O. Box 64943, St. Paul MN 55164-0943. If you have questions about the position, contact him by phone at (651) 431-4669 or by email at richard.f.dean@state.mn.us.

The following information was developed for DHS internal candidates. The position is in the MAPE Bargaining Unit. The FLSA status is: Non-Exempt. Travel is required.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
VACANCIES IN THE MAPE BARGAINING UNIT

In compliance with Article 16 of the Agreement between the State and MAPE, the following position is vacant and, if filled, will be filled in accordance with Article 16. FLSA STATUS: NON-EXEMPT.

State Programs Administrator Principle, Child Safety & Permanency Division Training Unit
$20.80 to $30.66 per hour ($43,430 to $64,018 per year).

Serve as the lead worker for the Social Services Information System (SSIS) training team.
- Develop and coordinate training schedules and assign curriculum responsibilities to team members
- Assign, adjust, oversee, and assist in evaluating work of training team members
- Act as the principal technical liaison between the SSIS Training Team and the SSIS Project for development, design and testing of the SSIS application
- Review all written training and related materials for appropriateness, technical accuracy, and format consistency
- Consult with the SSIS Project team to provide the county child welfare user perspective
- Provide support to county mentors and coordinators
- Perform training duties as an SSIS trainer

Key background and qualifications sought include the following:
- Extensive professional or supervisory experience in county child welfare work in Minnesota
- Advanced experience with SSIS, including serving as county SSIS mentor
- Demonstrated experience as a project manager, lead worker or supervisor
- Professional-level experience in the development and delivery of formal training, especially computer application training
- Advanced written and verbal communication skills with a focus on technical information communication
- Excellent conceptual, analytical and problem-solving skills
- Ability to prioritize multiple demands under rapidly changing time constraints
- Ability to present complex information to audiences with varying skill and knowledge levels
- Understanding and demonstrated use of multiple computer applications and software

Desired Skills:
- BA in social work or a related field; OR adult education
- Working knowledge of Microsoft Office Suite, Snag-It, Paintshop Pro
- Ability to understand and address adult learner needs
- Excellent negotiating and other team leader skills
- General knowledge of DHS and the relationship between county and state human service programs