

Utilization of AFCARS Data With Fostering Court Improvement

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FCI Mission

Fostering Court Improvement is committed to provide every state in the nation a platform of shared data from which the Dependency Court and the Child Welfare Agency can manage systems jointly to improve outcomes for children and families.



Overview FCI

FCI combines expertise developed at the Barton Child Law and Policy Clinic at Emory University and the Children and Family Research Center in the School of Social Work at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to convert existing data from the AFCARS and NCANDS into reports that inform the core work of both dependency courts and child welfare agencies.



Overview of FCI

FCI provides an efficient mechanism to share data that already exist within the states through reports specifically designed for facilitated discussions among local decision makers.

As local stakeholders begin to view and use the data more, FCI anticipates that there will be increased attention to the need for standardization of data elements within the state.

Overview of FCI



- FCI utilizes a software program that stitches together the AFCARS submissions into a longitudinal view of the children in foster care.
- The same software also stitches together NCANDS child-level data into reports on the safety of children at risk of foster care placement.
- All calculations and definitions are validated against external sources in the many FCI-participating states, and all source code files are freely available.

Overview of FCI

- Data is placed on a website that is password protected.
- Website provides the latest available data as well as trends over time.
- The website organizes reports by judicial district, county, and child welfare region.
- The reports are further organized by removals, foster care (in care) population, and discharges.
- There is no fee for the standard FCI website to be developed and maintained for a state.
- FCI has the capability to show the new CFSR measures (fee required).

Where FCI is Being Utilized



FCI was piloted in four states: Georgia, Missouri, Arizona, and Arkansas.

In addition to the pilot states, FCI is currently being utilized in: Tennessee, Nebraska, Florida, Indiana

States in the process of getting FCI: Texas, Ohio, and Alabama.

A collage of images showing children and families in various settings, overlaid with a blue and teal color scheme. The images include a child on a parent's back, a young girl, two boys smiling, and a woman's face.

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Fostering Court Improvement Website



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FCI Website

County:

Removals:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

Foster Care Population:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

Discharges:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

Child and Family Services

Review:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

CW Region:

Removals:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

Foster Care Population:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

Discharges:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

Child and Family Services

Review:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

Judicial Circuit:

Removals:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

Foster Care Population:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

Discharges:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

Child and Family Services

Review:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

County

[County A](#)

[County B](#)

[County C](#)

CW Region

[North](#)

[West](#)

[South](#)

Judicial Circuit

[Circuit 1](#)

[Circuit 2](#)

[Circuit 31](#)



Statistics for DHRRegion 11

Charts:

- ◆ [Removals](#)
- ◆ [Foster Care Population](#)
- ◆ [Discharges](#)

Statistics for Individual Counties: [Atkinson](#), [Bacon](#), [Ben Hill](#), [Berrien](#), [Brantley](#), [Brooks](#), [Charlton](#), [Clinch](#), [Coffee](#), [Cook](#), [Echols](#), [Irwin](#), [Lanier](#), [Lowndes](#), [Pierce](#), [Tift](#), [Turner](#), [Ware](#).



Tables:

Region 11 Children Removed During October 2005 through September 2006	Count	Rate	State Rate	Rank
Total Removals	593	na	na	
Average Monthly Removals	49.4	4.8 per 10K	3.2 per 10K	
Reentries to Foster Care	53	9%	14%	
Reentries to Foster Care within 12 months of Previous Discharge	16	3%	7%	
Removals for Neglect	416	70%	63%	
Removals for Caretaker Drug or Alcohol Use	225	38%	30%	
Removals for Physical Abuse	89	15%	14%	
Removals for Caretaker Inability to Cope	76	13%	12%	
Removals for Inadequate Housing	96	16%	12%	
Removals for Incarceration	53	9%	8%	
Removals for Child Behavior	27	5%	8%	
Removals for Abandonment	27	5%	6%	
Removals for Sexual Abuse	26	4%	5%	

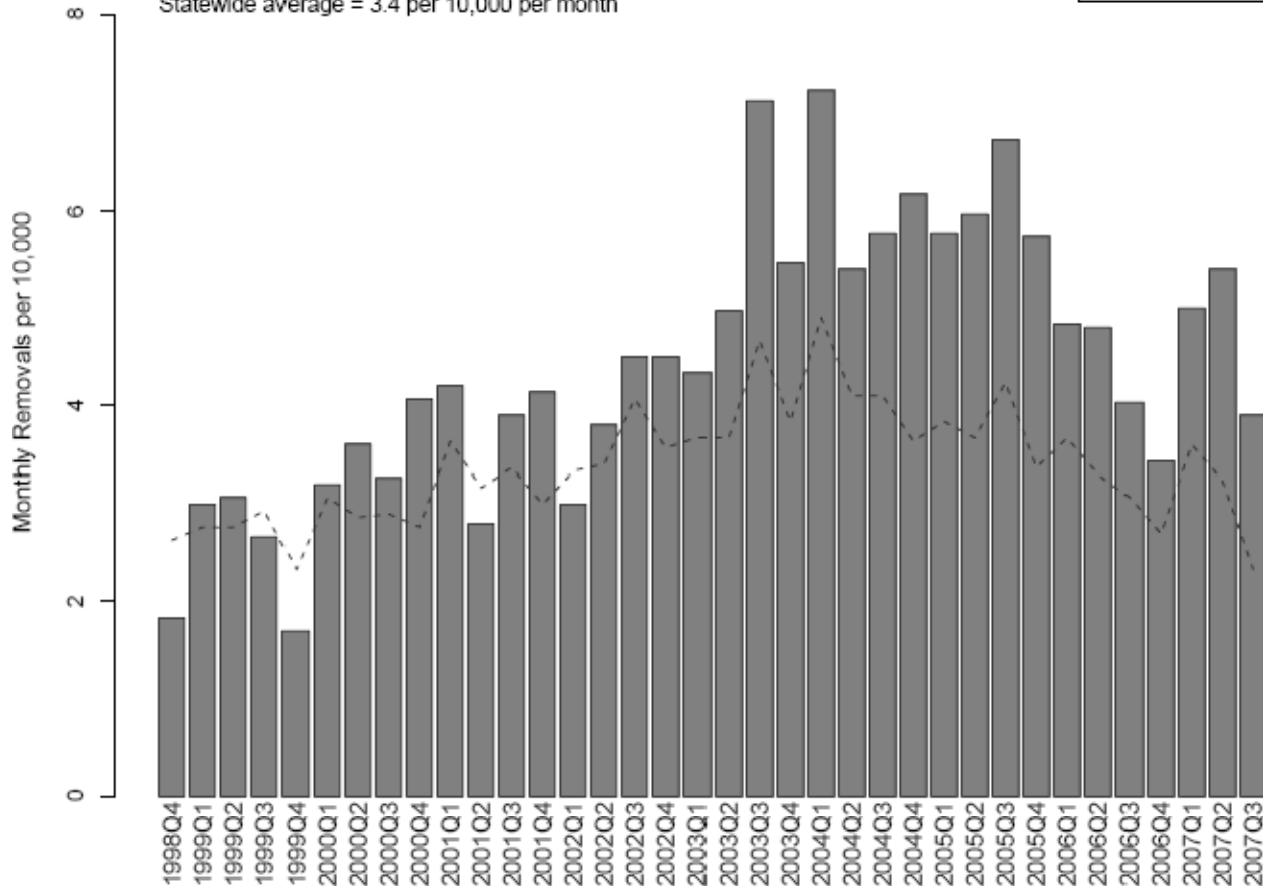
Data Example: Monthly Removals



Region 3: Average Monthly Removals per 10,000 Children
in the Population by Quarter, October 1998 through September 2007

Region 3 average = 4.4 per 10,000 per month
Statewide average = 3.4 per 10,000 per month

--- Statewide



Removals per
10,000 children

-easy to
compare

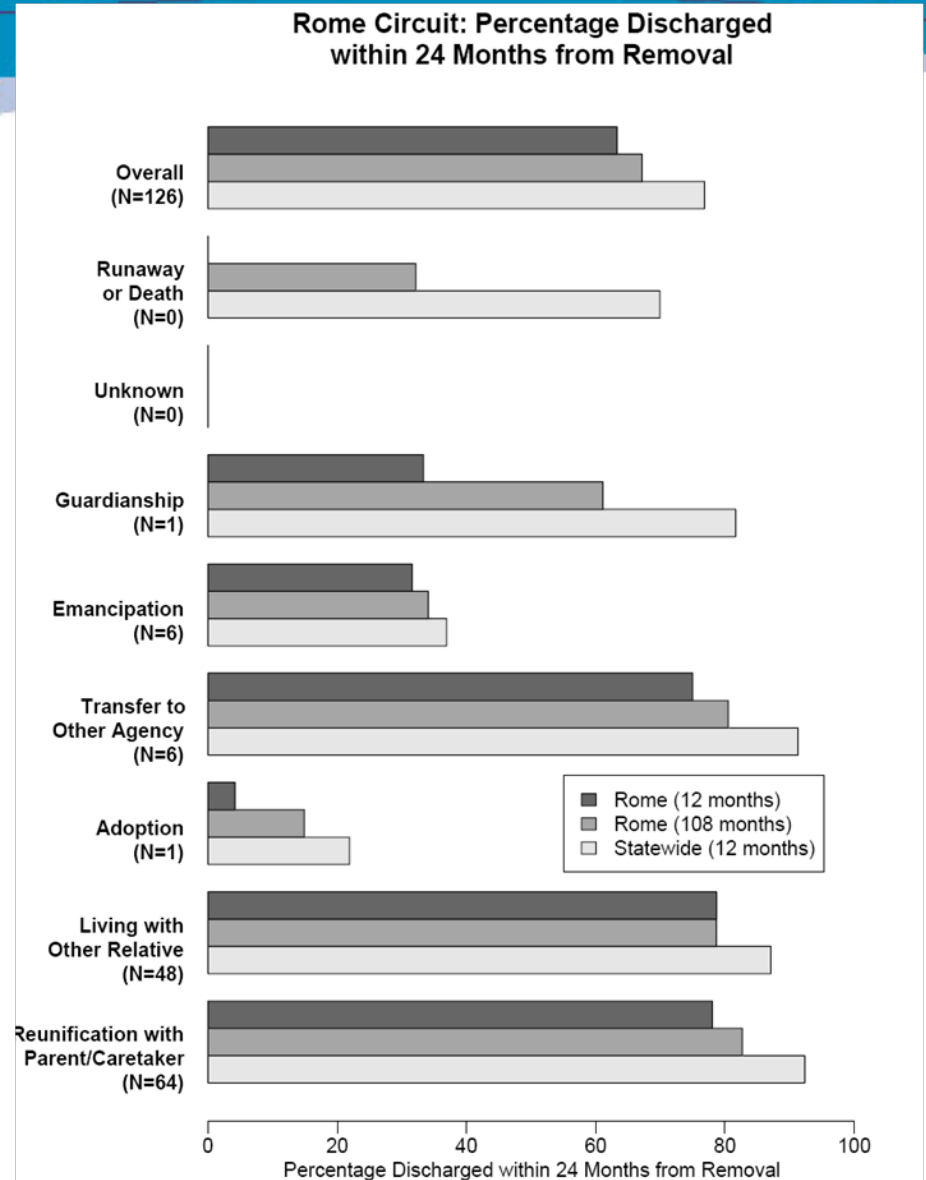
-trend line

-statewide
comparison

Data Example: Discharge Reason



Discharge Reason is shown for the previous 12 months, since AFCARS began, and Statewide



FCI Website

County:

Removals:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

Foster Care Population:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

Discharges:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

Child and Family Services

Review:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

CW Region:

Removals:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

Foster Care Population:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

Discharges:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

Child and Family Services

Review:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

Judicial Circuit:

Removals:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

Foster Care Population:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

Discharges:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

Child and Family Services

Review:

[Tables](#), [Charts](#), [CSV File](#)

County

[County A](#)

[County B](#)

[County C](#)

CW Region

[North](#)

[West](#)

[South](#)

Judicial Circuit

[Circuit 1](#)

[Circuit 2](#)

[Circuit 31](#)

Tables: CFSR Safety Measures

Safety Components	Count	Rate	State Rate	Rank
S1.1: Non-Recurrence of Substantiated Maltreatment within 6 Months	3,309	92%	92.7%	3
S1.2: Not Maltreated by Foster Parent or Facility Staff	5,574	99.1%	99.5%	4



Tables: CFSR Permanency Measures

Permanency Components	Count	Rate	State Rate	Rank
C1.1: Discharged to Reunification or Relative within 12 Months	280	48%	43%	2
C1.2: Discharged to Reunification or Relative Median Length of Stay	580	12.7 months	14.9 months	3
C1.3: Removed During 6-Months before October 01 2005, Discharged to Reunification or Relative	151	21%	19%	2
C1.4: Discharged During 12-Months before October 01 2005, Reentering within 12 Months	93	10.7%	11.7%	3

A collage of images showing children and families. In the top left, a child is being carried on a parent's back. In the center, a young girl looks thoughtfully to the side. To her right, two boys smile broadly. In the top right, a close-up of a young girl's face is visible. In the bottom right, a woman and a child are shown in a close embrace.

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State Responses to Using AFCARS Data on FCI



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Concerns Expressed

Some of the courts were leery of using this data since it was viewed as ‘child welfare’ data.

Across the board there were child welfare staff who expressed concerns about the accuracy of AFCARS. Issues brought up include:

- There is no standardization of how data is entered within the state.
- AFCARS fields don’t always allow for a case to be correctly depicted.
- Workers are not reporting certain information.
- AFCARS is not updated at the field level as new information is identified about a case.
- AFCARS data does not match other data systems used within the State.
- Longitudinal data is perceived to be out of date.

FCI Response

When concerns about FCI came up, states were reminded that AFCARS is considered the official record and is used in many ways:

- Awarding of Adoption Incentive Bonuses
- Allotting of Chafee Independence Funds
- Produce annual reports to Congress on child welfare outcomes
- Conduct IV-E Eligibility Review
- Assess States' compliance with federal Child and Family Services Review performance standards



FCI Response

- States were encouraged to discuss internal discrepancies and work toward standardization.
- States were also encouraged to view the data and see if it matched their perceptions of what was taking place at the field. Initial response was often to consider the data invalid.
- In some states, action plans were made about how they were going to try and standardize certain data elements or write up procedures for field level staff in regards to how something is entered.



FCI Response

- CWLA and the Children and Family Research Center are working to promote the standardization of AFCARS data (Field Guide).
- Through our work in the pilot sites we are hoping that comparing AFCARS submissions to outcomes on the website will assist in highlighting issues with data quality.



State Examples

FCI has been in use the longest in Georgia. Since rolling out FCI, they have seen changes in regards to the quality of data. The area that they have seen the most improvement is re-entry. Due to the fact that somebody was not entering a field correctly, the re-entry rate was not correct. The field noticed this after viewing the FCI data which prompted them to change how the data was entered.

State Examples

- In one of the states we work with, our staff noticed:
 - the ‘reason for removal’ elements (AFCARS fields 26-40) did not add up to 100% (in most states it is over 100%)
 - there were removal dates (field 21) that precede their previous discharge date (field 20).
- We gave this information to the state, and they are able to correct the data submission.
- Another state saw that FCI numbers looked different than the Federal numbers – small counties were excluded from Federal measures, not from FCI.



State Examples

Often data people and program people look at the data differently. Putting data up on the website facilitates both groups looking at the data, finding discrepancies and correcting submissions.



Children *and* Family Research Center

For additional information on the Center:

<http://cfrcwww.social.uiuc.edu>

For additional information on this national project:

<http://www.fosteringcourtimprovement.org/>



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