

*NATIONAL YOUTH IN  
TRANSITION DATABASE*

*Instructional Guidebook  
and Architectural Blueprint*

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American Public Human Services Association  
Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago  
Center for State Foster Care and Adoption Data

## Executive Summary

APHSA/Chapin Hall National Youth in Transition Database: Instructional Guidebook and Architectural Blueprint

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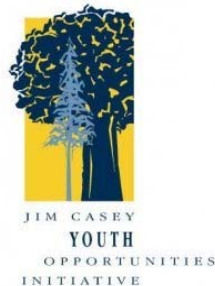
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## INTRODUCTION

The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-169), which established the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, provides states with greater funding and flexibility to prepare foster youth for the transition to adulthood than they previously had under the Title IV-E Independent Living Program. The act also requires the Administration for Children and Families to create a National Youth in Transition Database that will be used to track the Chafee-funded independent living services that states provide to young people in foster care as well as the characteristics of the youth who receive those services and to assess each state's performance as measured by foster youth outcomes, including educational attainment, employment, welfare dependency, homelessness, non-marital childbirth, incarceration and high-risk behaviors.

Despite a consensus among advocates, child welfare professionals and researchers about the need for data that could be used to assess the impact of the Chafee Program on outcomes of youth aging out of foster care, if each state develops its own tracking and data collection system, there will be 50 different systems, each state will have to bear all of the costs, and the data that are collected may not be consistent across states. However, if states were given an opportunity to work together, they could reduce the costs that each individual state must bear and develop a uniform tracking and data collection system and their data would be comparable.

Moreover, although the NYTD will provide much-needed information about the outcomes of young people aging out of foster care, the data that states will be required to collect is fairly minimal. If they really want to know how their young people in foster care are faring and how their provision of Chafee-funded services might be improved, states need to go beyond the data the federal government is requiring them to collect and measure outcomes in greater breadth and depth.

With these ideas in mind, the American Public Human Services Association, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago and the Center for State Foster Care and Adoption Data proposed working with interested states to: (1) assess states' willingness and capacity to develop a collective approach for tracking youth and collecting data; (2) document the "state of states" in terms of current tracking and data collection strategies; (3) develop an architectural blueprint that would assist states in their efforts to comply with the National Youth in Transition Database requirements and (4) design a survey instrument that all states could use that would not only meet, but also exceed, those requirements with respect to outcome measures. The proposal was funded by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative and the Eckerd Foundation.

A National Advisory Committee was established to oversee and provide guidance to the APHSA/Chapin Hall NYTD Initiative. The committee's members included national experts in the field of child welfare and representatives from state child welfare agencies. The committee's role has been to:

- Review results from the "state of the states" survey that was conducted as part of the initiative
- Identify priority concerns among the states
- Make recommendations regarding regional or other cross-state collaborations
- Review the instructional guidebook and architectural blueprint
- Identify next steps for assisting states in their efforts to comply with the NYTD requirements

The guidebook/blueprint is a by-product of the APHSA/Chapin Hall NYTD Initiative and the work of the National Advisory Committee. This Executive Summary highlights some of the guidebook's major features. A complete version of the guidebook is available at [www.aphsa.org](http://www.aphsa.org), [www.napcwa.org](http://www.napcwa.org), or [www.chapinhall.org](http://www.chapinhall.org).

### ***NYTD Overview***

**The guidebook begins with a brief overview of NYTD that addresses the following questions:**

- What do the NYTD regulations require states to do?
- For what three populations are states required to report this information?
- What information are states required to collect and report for youth in all three reporting populations?
- What information are states required to collect and report for the served population?
- When are states required to collect data for the served population?
- What information are states required to collect and report for the baseline and follow-up populations?
- When are states required to collect outcome data for the baseline and follow-up populations?
- What are the reporting periods?
- Are states required to collect outcome data from the entire follow up population at ages 19 and 21?
- What is the relationship between the NYTD outcome data and AFCARS data?
- What are the file submission standards with which states must comply?
- What are the data standards with which states must comply?
- What is the error rate standard with which states must comply?
- What are the outcomes universe standards for the follow-up population with which states must comply?
- What are the outcome participation rate requirements with which states must comply?
- What happens once a state submits its NYTD data file to ACF?
- What are the NYTD penalties for non-compliance?

### ***Planning and Preparing to Implement NYTD***

Implementing the NYTD will require a significant amount of planning and preparation on the part of state and local child welfare agencies. To assist states with this process, the APHSA/Chapin Hall NYTD Initiative has developed a checklist of critical questions that must be answered and key decisions that must be made as states move forward with the NYTD implementation. Specific questions are indicated for these broad categories:

- Project Planning
- Relationship between NYTD and SACWIS
- Survey Data Collection
- Sampling
- Tracking Procedures

- Achieving Participation Rate Standards
- Funding for NYTD
- Role of Youth Advisory Board
- Use of NYTD Data
- IT Considerations
- Impact of Fostering Connections

### ***Regional / Coordinated Approach***

One approach that states have taken to maximize resources while increasing efficiency is to work together toward a common goal. They have done so through informal networks, more formalized partnerships and formal governance structures, and in areas as diverse as tax policy, vehicle registration and emergency preparedness. The implementation of the NYTD presents another opportunity for this type of collaboration.

The APHSA/Chapin Hall NYTD Initiative proposes that states enter into voluntary regional consortia or other collaborative approaches to implement the federal NYTD requirements. The guidebook briefly describes how states stand to benefit from taking a more collaborative approach and what this would involve. However, we also recognize that no single model will be effective for all states, and take the position that regardless of the model, any collaboration should be tailored to the unique needs of the states involved. A sample template to govern this approach is also included in the complete guide.

### ***Outsourcing of Tracking and Data Collection***

There are several factors states might want to consider as they decide whether to outsource some or all of their tracking and data collection. The guidebook provides a list of pros and cons to understand when deciding on this approach as well as a sample request for information form.

### ***Tools for Locating and Tracking Youth***

Included in the guidebook are additional tools and templates states can use to keep in touch with youth that have aged out or to make a third party contact with the youth. These include:

- Sample Consent Form to Access Administrative Data
- Sample Contact Information Questions
- Sample Protocol for Tracking and Locating
- On-Line Resources for Tracking and Location

### ***NYTD Plus***

Although the NYTD outcome measures will provide much needed information about young people aging out of foster care, they are fairly limited in terms of breadth and depth. Of particular concern is the lack of attention paid to relationships with family members and other supportive adults (only 1 of the federal required questions addresses this issue). If states really want to know how their young people in foster care are faring and how their provision of Chafee-funded services might be

improved, they will need to go beyond the data that the federal government is requiring them to collect.

Given this need, we have developed an enhanced survey instrument that states can use not only meet the federal requirements but also to collect additional information about the experiences of young people across a variety of domains that will help them improve the services and supports they currently provide. We refer to this as the NYTD Plus.

There are two versions of NYTD Plus, both of which include all of the 22 required questions listed in the Final Rule. The abbreviated version includes approximately 40 additional “must ask” questions that members of the NYTD Plus NAC workgroup identified as essential. The comprehensive version includes the 40 “must ask” questions plus another 30 questions that provide important but less essential information.

### ***The Center for State Foster Care and Adoption Data***

The guidebook provides a summary of how the Center for State Foster Care and Adoption Data can serve as an additional resource to states in meeting the federal NYTD requirements.

### ***Additional Resources***

The complete guidebook also includes an Executive Summary of the State of the State report conducted in June 2008, a complete list of the NYTD National Advisory Committee, and information about prospective contractors.

## **American Public Human Services Association**

The American Public Human Services Association, founded in 1930, is a nonprofit, bipartisan organization of state and local human service agencies and individuals who work in or are interested in public human service programs whose mission is to develop and promote policies and practices that improve the health and well-being of families, children, and adults. APHSA educates Congress, the media, and the general public on social policies and practices and help state and local public human service agencies achieve their desired outcomes in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, child care, child support, Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, child welfare, and other program areas and issues that affect families, the elderly and people who are economically disadvantaged.

Association staff, led by an Executive Director, is grouped into departments—Children and Family Services; Communications, Marketing and Membership; Health Services; Legislative Affairs and Organizational Effectiveness. The Office of the Executive Director oversees office management, including budget, finances and human resources

APHSA is respected for leadership in policy development in child welfare, foster care, youth aging out, disability, workforce development, TANF, and Medicaid.

APHSA is a recognized leader in information dissemination and hosts a variety of web sites, including a web site for the Center for Workers with Disabilities. APHSA will provide updates, published materials and general correspondence for the NYTD Initiative.

## **Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago**

Established in 1985, Chapin Hall is an independent, multidisciplinary policy research center whose mission is to build knowledge that improves policies and programs for children and youth, families, and their communities. Its research focuses particularly on the most vulnerable children and youth so that policymakers and practitioners can create programs and institutions that will help them develop into productive adults.

Chapin Hall's research agenda evolves through long-term engagement with public agency directors, government officials, philanthropic and community leaders, and others who turn to Chapin Hall for evidence to help shape their policies and programs. It also develops analytic tools to monitor child and youth outcomes and provide technical assistance to help agencies use their data to improve performance.

Chapin Hall is widely known for its pioneering work linking and analyzing data across human service systems to learn about the children, youth and families they serve and to understand how programs and institutions interact with one another. It also documents and evaluates community-building efforts, including the role of philanthropy in community-building.

Chapin Hall has connections to public policy and child-family research communities, both nationally and internationally. It puts its policy research into the hands of those who can use it in their agencies or communities through frequent online distribution of information as well as a robust publications program and events schedule, including several ongoing conference series.

### **Center for State Foster Care and Adoption Data**

The Center for State Foster Care and Adoption Data, a partnership between the American Public Human Services Association and Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, was established in 2004 to provide child welfare administrators from member states with cutting-edge information technology, data management tools and access to a unique longitudinal database. Together, these can be used to analyze key child welfare outcomes, compare outcomes across jurisdictions, project future service patterns based on historical trends, test the impact of service and policy innovations, monitor progress toward the achievement of performance goals and link financial decision-making to outcome measures.

Guided by an advisory board of state public child welfare administrators, the center is dedicated to bringing the unique perspective of its members to the continually changing needs of state child welfare agencies, and to building their long-term capacity for evidence-based decisions about program investments.

Core funding for the center comes from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The center operates in collaboration with the Jordan Institute for Families at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Center for Social Services Research of the University of California at Berkeley. Technical assistance for subscribers is provided in coordination with APHSA and its affiliate, the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators.



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