



National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators



June 13, 2018

Kathleen McHugh  
Division of Policy, Children's Bureau  
Administration for Children and Families  
330 C St., SW  
Washington, D.C. 20024

Re: Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System -  
RIN 0970-AC72

Dear Ms. McHugh,

The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) and its affinity group, the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA), on behalf of the state child welfare administrators, respectfully submit these comments in response to the notice regarding the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System by the Children's Bureau within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) on March 15, 2018 (83 FR 114560). The comments submitted reflect the perspective of state administrators, representing all ACF regions, charged with administering child welfare programs. The following comments were gathered through written and verbal feedback and compiled by NAPCWA's Executive Committee and APHSA staff.

NAPCWA strongly supports collection of data elements that inform child welfare practice, policy development, and resources utilization. This data offers critical context in developing individualized and population-level programming to meet unique needs of youth and families involved in the child welfare system. Specifically, NAPCWA supports inclusion of data elements associated with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). The ICWA provides critical protection for Indian children and families. If properly implemented, it can keep more children with their parents and connected with their extended families, communities, and cultures which is in their best interests. The new data requirements pertaining to ICWA are vitally important to understand how ICWA is being implemented and to identify more effective ways for tribes, states, and the federal government to work together to advance the well-being of Indian children and families.

Furthermore, it is the authority and responsibility of the Department of Health and Human Services to collect this data as State IV-B plans are required by 42 U.S.C. 622(b)(9) to include a description of how states will comply with ICWA, developed in consultation with tribes, and Program Instructions require states to identify sources of data to help them meet their obligations under ICWA and Title IV-B. If the Children's Bureau is considering reducing the number of ICWA elements, this should only occur if it is

the result of a collaborative process between tribes and states which results in an agreement about how data elements might be streamlined without losing essential information.

In fact, as many states have made substantial efforts to implement the ICWA data elements through their information systems, most notably all who are transitioning to a Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS), the cost to scope and develop new data collection and reporting based upon newly revised requirements that would result from a new federal rule would be unnecessary and burdensome.

Lastly, NAPCWA believes that all interested parties were provided with sufficient notice and ample opportunity to comment on the final rule. We are confident that the Children's Bureau thoroughly reviewed and considered prior comments. Determining the exact time and costs associated with the changes is difficult to forecast and quantify. What we do know, however, is that improved data collection can produce opportunities for child welfare practice improvement, enhance partnerships between tribal and state child welfare agencies, and enhance interoperability and innovation opportunities.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important rule and will continue to work with you as the final rules are being developed and released.

For further information, please contact APHSA's staff liaison to NAPCWA, Ann Flagg, at [aflagg@aphsa.org](mailto:aflagg@aphsa.org) or 443-386-8759.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JAIME SORENSON", with a large, sweeping flourish above the name.

Jaime Sorenson  
Chair  
National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators