

National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS)

**OMB Information Collection Request
0970 - 0424**

Supporting Statement Part A - Justification

June` 2026

Type of Request: Extension with No Changes

Submitted By:
Children's Bureau
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) (42 U.S.C. 5101 et seq.) was amended in 1988 (P.L. 100–294) to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to establish a national data collection and analysis program, which would make available state child abuse and neglect reporting information. HHS responded by establishing the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) as a voluntary national reporting system.

During 1996, CAPTA was amended (42 U.S.C. 5106a(d)) to require all states that receive funds from the Basic State Grant program to work with the Secretary of HHS to provide specific data elements, to the maximum extent practicable, about children who had been maltreated. Most of the required data elements were added to the NCANDS data collection. Subsequent CAPTA reauthorizations and amendments added required data elements.

The Children’s Bureau (CB) proposes to extend approval to collect NCANDS data using two files of the Detailed Case Data Component (DCDC): (1) Child File, the case-level component of NCANDS and (2) Agency File, the aggregate data component. No changes are proposed to the requirements, but instructions have been revised to streamline and for clarity.

2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection

A major product of NCANDS is the annual Child Maltreatment report (available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/data-research/child-maltreatment>). These national reports have been published annually since 1992 and are the primary source of information about maltreated children who were known to child protective services agencies. The NCANDS data also are a critical source of information for many publications, reports, and activities of the federal government, child welfare personnel, members of Congress, and researchers. Examples of how NCANDS data are used are described below:

- *Child Welfare Outcomes: Report to Congress*—This annual report presents information on state and national performance in seven outcome categories. Data for the original Child Welfare Outcomes measures and the majority of the context data in this report come from NCANDS and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS¹). The reports and data site are available on CB’s website at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/data-research/child-welfare-outcomes>.
- Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs²)—CB conducts periodic reviews of state child welfare systems to ensure conformity with federal requirements, determine what is happening with children and families who are engaged in child welfare services, and assist states with helping children and families achieve positive outcomes. States develop Program Improvement Plans to address areas revealed by the CFSR as in need of improvement. For CFSR, NCANDS data the children’s bureau uses the basis for two of

¹ OMB #: 0970-0422

² OMB#: 0970-0214

the CFSR national data indicators: Recurrence of Maltreatment and Maltreatment in Foster Care. NCANDS data also are used for data quality checks.

The NCANDS data also are used for several performance measures published annually as part of the ACF Congressional Budget Justification. Specific measures on which ACF reports using NCANDS data include:

- Decrease the rate of first-time victims per 1,000 children in the population.
- Decrease the percentage of children with substantiated or indicated reports of maltreatment who have a repeated substantiated or indicated report of maltreatment within six months.
- Improve states' average response time between maltreatment report and investigation, based on the median of states' reported average response time in hours from screened-in reports to the initiation of the investigation

NCANDS data also have been included in publications by such organizations and agencies as the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics' America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, and the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion's Healthy People Initiative.

The National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN) houses the NCANDS's Child Files and Agency Files and licenses researchers to use the data sets.

3. Use of Improved Information Technology and Burden Reduction

CB makes efforts to reduce state burden through the use of electronic submission. States are provided with access to the NCANDS Website for uploading and validating data files online prior to submission. CB streamlined and removed more than four pages of instructions by removing duplicate information and clarifying the text.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication and Use of Similar Information

The NCANDS data collection effort is recognized as being the primary source of national child protective services statistics and trends on child maltreatment at the state level. There are no other comparable national efforts in the United States. Other studies, with the approval of the Children's Bureau and the states, have incorporated already submitted NCANDS data in their research to avoid duplication.

As discussed in the previous section, other federal agencies use NCANDS data thereby eliminating potential duplication of data collection efforts.

Section 103 of CAPTA, as amended, requires, "through a national data collection and analysis program and in consultation with appropriate state and local agencies and experts in the field, collect, compile, and make available state child abuse and neglect reporting information which, to the extent practical, shall be universal and case specific and integrated

with other case-based foster care and adoption data collected by the Secretary.” The foster care and adoption data reference are collected through the AFCARS, mandated by 42 U.S.C. § 679.

NCANDS and AFCARS are distinct in terms of the populations that they address, but there is some overlap. In support of the goal of integration, the data collection period for NCANDS was changed in 2003 from calendar year to federal fiscal year, the same as AFCARS. The AFCARS ID field also was added to NCANDS as a means of linking the two data sets as per the CAPTA requirement mentioned above.

One area of overlap between AFCARS and NCANDS relates to a child’s removal from the home. NCANDS requests information about whether a child was removed as an immediate consequence of a report related to abuse or neglect, and the foster care discharge date. This request is in conformity with the 1996 amendments to CAPTA. The removal data collected through NCANDS are likely to be a subset of the more detailed placement data required by AFCARS. The data are still important for researchers and policy makers to know how many children were removed as a result of the CPS investigation or alternative response.

5. Impact on Small Businesses or Other Small Entities

The proposed data collection does not involve small businesses or other small entities. Data will be submitted only by state child welfare agencies.

6. Consequences of Collecting the Information Less Frequently

Annual data collection is the minimal frequency that permits meaningful program and policy activities to be carried out. Administrative and legislative actions regarding the problem of child abuse and neglect require the annual collection of data. Several annual reports, including Child Welfare Outcomes: Report to Congress mandated by section 203 of the Adoption and Safe Families Act, depend upon NCANDS data. Furthermore, CAPTA requires an annual report of the listed data (42 U.S.C. 5106a(d)).

CB does make efforts to reduce state burden through the use of electronic submission. States are provided with access to the NCANDS Website for uploading and validating data files online prior to submission. CB streamlined and removed more than four pages of instructions by removing duplicate information and clarifying the text.

7. Special Circumstances Relating to the Guidelines of 5 CFR 1320.5

- *Report Information More Often than Quarterly.* There are no circumstances that could result in the data needing to be collected more frequently than quarterly. The proposed schedule of data submission is annually.
- *Requiring Response in Less than 30 Days.* There are no circumstances that could result in a state needing to respond in less than 30 days. An annual date of

submission has been established as January 31. States have approximately 120 days from the completion of the federal fiscal year to submit data.

- *Requiring Respondents to Submit More than One Original and Two Copies.* States are expected to submit only one Child File and one Agency File to NCANDS. Data are submitted electronically.
- *Requiring Respondents to Maintain Records for More than 3 Years.* Only data for a given data collection year are required. Because states extract data submissions from their administrative databases, their source data are maintained for state purposes. NCANDS archives each state's submission and can provide the state with a specific prior data submission, if needed. States do not need to retain their submissions.
- *In Connection with a Statistical Survey.* These data are not collected as part of a statistical survey.
- *Use of a Statistical Data Classification that Has Not Been Approved by OMB.* This data collection does not require the use of statistical data collection.
- *Pledge of Confidentiality.* To ensure the confidentiality of the Child File data, each state encrypts its identifiers. No actual case or individual identifiers are submitted. Each state ensures that its data meet a standard of encryption. Before the data are released for public use through the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect at Cornell University, funded by CB, the Child File identifiers are double-encrypted, adding another layer of confidentiality.
- *Requiring Respondents to Submit Trade Secrets or Other Confidential Information.* NCANDS does not collect any data related to trade secrets. No identifying data, such as name, address, or Social Security number, are collected. The only personally identifiable information collected are dates of birth, military status indicator, and military family member indicator. NCANDS does not collect information directly from individuals, all information is received from state child welfare agencies. NCANDS underwent the Authorization to Operate (ATO) security review process and received approval for its initial ATO on April 18, 2017. NCANDS received subsequent ATO renewals in April 2020, April 2023, and April 2026.

8. Comments in Response to the Federal Register Notice and Efforts to Consult Outside the Agency

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regulations at 5 CFR Part 1320 (60 FR 44978, August 29, 1995), ACF published a notice in the Federal Register announcing the agency's intention to request an OMB review of this information collection activity. This notice was published on March 30, 2026 (91 FR 15620) and provided a sixty-day period for public comment. During the notice and comment period, three people submitted comments about the NCANDS data collection.

- 1) One comment was about reducing the burden of frontline CPS providers. This would be in purview of the state agency and not within the authority of CB or NCANDS. The same

person said to increase transparency with voters, which would again be the state's responsibility.

- 2) One comment was about the level of evidence to substantiate a case. This would be in the purview of the state agency and not withing the authority of CB or NCANDS.
- 3) One comment was about changing the Child File format to comma-separated values (CSV) format. Fixed-width format was chosen deliberately as some state IDs or fields may contain commas. While switching to CSV is possible, it does introduce new risks such as commas in the data and will require updating downstream parsers. We will note this feedback for future consideration as we evaluate alternative formats.

CB engages up to nine states to provide updated estimates in hours for completing the annual data submission in preparation for requesting renewal from OMB every three years. This feedback informs updates and burden estimates.

9. Explanation of Any Payment or Gift to Respondents

No payment to respondents is proposed as part of this data collection.

10. Assurance of Confidentiality Provided to Respondents

Confidentiality and integrity of data are maintained and monitored based on ACF's system security authorization standards, procedures, and protocols. Before the data are released for public use through the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect, the Child File identifiers are double-encrypted, adding another layer of confidentiality.

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

NCANDS does not collect information directly from individuals, all information is received from state child welfare agencies. To ensure the confidentiality of the Child File data, each state encrypts its identifiers. No actual case or individual identifiers are submitted. Each state ensures that its data meet a standard of encryption. Before the data are released for public use, the Child File identifiers are double-encrypted, adding another layer of confidentiality.

12. Estimates of Annualized Burden Hours and Costs

Estimated Burden Hours

These estimates are based on the experience of states that have provided data to NCANDS. CB engages up to nine states to provide updated estimates in hours for completing the annual data submission in preparation for requesting renewal from OMB every three years. This feedback informed the average burden estimates. Burden estimates vary due to the size of the state and the availability of resources.

It is expected that all 52 states will annually submit the Detailed Case Data Component (Child File and the Agency File).

Information Collection Title	Total Number of Respondents	Annual Number of Responses Per Respondent	Average Burden Hours Per Response	Annual Burden Hours	Average Hourly Wage	Total Annual Cost
Detailed Case Data Component: (Child File and Agency File) IT Staff	52	1	42.6	2,215.2	\$185.00	\$409,812.00
Detailed Case Data Component: (Child File and Agency File) Programmatic Staff	52	1	65.4	3,400.8	\$125.00	\$425,100.00
Estimated Annual Burden and Cost Totals:				5,616	-	\$834,912.00

Estimated Cost to Respondents

The cost to respondents was calculated using the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) job code for Computer and Information Systems Managers [11-3021] <https://data.bls.gov/oesprofile/> and General and Operations Managers [11-1021] <https://data.bls.gov/oesprofile/> and wage data from May 2025 (accessed June 2026).

For the Computer and Information Systems Managers [11-3021], the wage data from May 2025 is \$92.39. To account for fringe benefits and overhead the rate was multiplied by two which is \$184.78 and rounded to \$185.00 for the purpose of the average hourly wage.

For the General Operations Managers [11-1021], the wage data from May 2025 is \$62.44. To account for fringe benefits and overhead the rate was multiplied by two which is \$124.88 and rounded to \$125.00 for the purpose of the average hourly wage.

13. Estimates of Other Total Annual Cost Burden to Respondents and Record Keepers

There is no other annual cost burden associated with these information collection instruments.

14. Annualized Cost to the Federal Government

	Annual Cost	Total Cost
Children's Bureau	\$230,986.27	\$692,958.80
Contractor Staff	\$2,111,592.82	\$6,334,778.45
TOTAL	\$2,342,579.08	\$7,027,737.25

The above costs are based upon the most recent contract of contractor staff to collect, validate, process, and analyze the Child File and Agency File data, as well as provide briefings and prepare the annual Child Maltreatment report. The total cost is for three contract years.

Contractor staff also provide technical assistance to states throughout the year with the objective of improving data quality. In addition, contractor staff provide support to such other federal data reporting initiatives as the Child and Family Services Reviews, Healthy People 2030 Initiative, and the *Child Welfare Outcomes: Report to Congress*. Federal staff direct and monitor all efforts.

15. Explanation for Program Changes or Adjustments

The NCANDS data collection did not add any new data elements or change any existing data elements, the burden for the data collection itself did not change and therefore, CB is reporting the same burden as the currently approved request. Instructions were edited to ensure they are clear and streamlined. The increase in costs are due to the wage increases as provided in the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

16. Plans for Tabulation and Publication and Project Time Schedule

The highlights of the annual data collection schedule are as follows:

- September 30—federal fiscal year closes
- December 1—data request letter sent to all states
- January 31—data submissions due from all states
- March 31—data validation cycle completed, including any data resubmissions
- January 15—annual Child Maltreatment report released.

17. Reason(s) Display of OMB Expiration Date is Inappropriate

The expiration dates will be displayed on the data collection instructions and instruments.

18. Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions

No exceptions are necessary for this information collection.