

# The 13th National Child Welfare Data and Technology Conference Wrap-up

Posted At : July 23, 2010 2:15 PM | Posted By : Kristina Mulholland

Related Categories: Social Services, Federal, State & Local, Contract Opportunities, Procurement

The 13th National Child Welfare Data and Technology Conference took place July 19-21, 2010 in Bethesda, Maryland. The conference was hosted by the National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data and Technology ([NRC-CWDT](#)) and sponsored by the Children's Bureau's (CB) Administration for Children and Families (ACF). The NRC-CWDT, via a contract with the CB, provides technical assistance to state and tribal child welfare agencies, along with courts on data and systems used to administer program services and improve outcomes for children and families. Westat subcontracts to NRC-CWDT, providing additional technical assistance and support. Speakers included ACF Commissioner Bryan Samuels, NRC-CWDT Director Lynda Arnold, along with Westat staff and state program managers.

In the keynote address, Samuels energized the audience of court employees, tribal organizations, state welfare agencies, nonprofit officials and vendors by declaring "data and technology are cool." Conference sessions focused on improving data quality in the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and optimizing utilization of Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (SACWIS). Major takeaways included the importance of advanced planning documents (APD), information exchange return, and shared IT opportunities for health care and child welfare.

Kelli Stone and Division of State Systems Director Terry Watt stressed the importance of sufficient planning and resources when looking to implement a child welfare system. APD regulations and requirement put forth ACF's expectations, seeking to help entities get the best value and best bang-for-your buck system. When a state or tribal agency estimates system planning, design, implementation and maintenance to reach the \$5 million threshold, the formal APD approval process is required to secure the federal financial participation (FFP) match. Even if a state or tribal organization is not going to hit the \$5 million threshold, ACF encourages informal communication with federal analysts to ensure a smooth process for technical support.

Modification to APD regulations are currently being developed due to a notice of proposed rulemaking released several years back; however, ACF was unable to provide any additional intel on the nature of the edits. In addition to the APD process, there was a discussion about commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) products within child welfare. A multi-agency memo issued indicates when a COTS solution developer is selected, the purchasing agency still has to be able to fairly and competitively bid for implementation services. Essentially, there needs to be two competitive requests for proposals (RFPs) to ensure the possibility of two different vendors.

## GovWin SACWIS Pre-RFP Opportunities:

- Michigan Opportunity #[52548](#) - SACWIS Design and Development
- Mississippi Opportunity #[62656](#) - Analysis and Alternatives Study for the Mississippi SACWIS
- Louisiana Opportunity #[60238](#) - Implementation and Operation of a SACWIS
- New York Opportunity #[49904](#) - Development and Implementation of a SACWIS

## GovWin's Take:

The conference shed light on the realities of the social services environment in today's economic climate. Child welfare agencies are having to do more with less, but continue to meet the rising needs of the families and children they serve. Therefore, child welfare agencies are increasingly turning to cost-effective technology and automated solutions to streamline program processes. This trend encourages stakeholders to realize the value of good data and a solid system to improve program administration and effectiveness. In return, child welfare employees need to be able to count on the systems and data they are entering. It is important to bring both IT and program folks to the table when planning and developing a system to ensure it meets the needs of the end-users and beneficiaries.