

# How better quality data can improve child welfare outcomes

High-quality data is a key asset to many industries; for the Health and Human Services sector, in particular, implementing data quality procedures reaches another level of importance. According to the [Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System \(AFCARS\)](#) 2017 report, more than 400,000 children are reported to be in the foster care system. With a community of parents, legal guardians, siblings, and case workers surrounding each person, welfare agencies acquire an overwhelming amount of data about everyone involved in each child's unique situation.

The Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) is designed to take advantage of modern systems to deal with this deluge of data, while also promoting data quality practices to ensure this information remains trustworthy. How does better data lead to improved outcomes? Here are four ways!

## 1. Data profiling helps to close the gaps

Does each child in your program have a case worker? Likewise, does each case worker have a child? What is the scenario surrounding the life of each child? Often, gaps in a child's record can leave these questions, and others, unanswered by the agencies designed to protect them. Missing data can occur for a number of reasons, and it can go unnoticed for an extended period of time.

By implementing data profiling techniques, agencies can examine the data they have for incomplete or missing fields. Data profiling can look at all of the records in your database to identify any null values or statistical outliers that might signify a gap in your records.

With a good sense of the data that is missing or incomplete, you can now close the gaps in your records. With a complete view of the families in your programs, you can understand the needs of those you service and provide better outcomes.



## 2. Data standardization helps streamline agency data

There is a lot of data surrounding each child in the U.S. welfare system. Many times that data is entered in ways that do not conform to a defined standard, and this can cause instances where information is duplicated or untrustworthy. For example, the person "John Smith, Jr." might have a second record under "John Smith II" in your database. If those records are updated by case workers independently, it could cause issues down the road.

Using a data quality technique known as standardization, you can harmonize all of the various formats you have for data into one consistent and ubiquitous format. That means all of your addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, and other contact information can be formatted according to the same standard. The next time a case worker needs to visit a household or call a family member, they'll have a much easier time getting in contact with the right person.

## 3. Data conversion helps modernize systems

It's no secret that old technology makes it difficult to solve today's challenges. That's why we're seeing many public sector agencies modernize their systems to take advantage of the latest technology. Having a modernized system to store your data allows information to be shared across the organization, creates ease for data governance programs, and improves your ability to generate reports.

In order to move legacy data into a new system, such as during a CCWIS conversion, many agencies are performing a data migration. While the process of migrating data can be complicated, expensive, and time-consuming, beginning with a focus on data quality can make the process much more seamless. By following the above steps to profile and standardize your data, you will be well on your way to laying the groundwork for a successful migration to the CCWIS.

## 4. CCWIS compliance brings a host of benefits

Complying with the CCWIS federal regulation can not only improve your ability to provide better services, reduce risk, and streamline operations, but also it can bring a number of other benefits. Chief among them is a Federal subsidy for agencies that comply with CCWIS. In addition, having a strong foundation of quality data can prepare your agency for more advanced technology applications, such as visualization tools, predictive analytics, artificial intelligence, and machine learning.

There are many positive outcomes to clean, standardized, and centralized data. When you comply with the CCWIS, you'll achieve data quality standards for the completeness, timeliness, accuracy, consistency, and confidentiality of your data. With this strong foundation of quality data, you can power the best results for the children and families in your jurisdiction.

We have the expertise and data quality tools to help you comply with CCWIS.  
Learn how we can help you.

Let's talk