

# Integrating Data into the Curriculum: Innovations in Child Welfare Research

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# Purpose of Session

- To provide an overview of how to use administrative data in two MSW level advanced child welfare research courses
  - A 15 week intensive research practice course
  - A 3 week module in a classroom based child welfare research course

# Why is this an innovation

- Students gain applied experience using data to answer research questions.
- Bridge the gap between concepts, theories and actions.

## How do you Integrate Data into the Classroom Setting?

- You have to have computer space available for all students – AT THE SAME TIME!
- You have to be available to students outside of class time.
- Most importantly – you need to have a source of MEANINGFUL data to utilize.

# Introduction to the Data Tool

Fred Wulczyn



# Chapin Hall Multi-State Foster Care Data Archive

- Administrative data on children in out-of-home care over time:
  - Demographic characteristics of children in care
  - New admissions
  - Re-admissions (re-entries)
  - Changes in placement
  - Exits from care
- 20 states, 1,000+ counties, and 1.8 million foster children

## Data Tool - Promoting Access to information

- Access to and use of data to support decision making are interrelated skills
- Access is limited and so are the skills
- The data tool provides ready access to real placement histories through a query based interface.

# Building Skills

- Experience suggests that the social workers are unfamiliar with the structured use of information - forming hypotheses and defending their assertions with empirical data
- To advance, the field needs to give students practical exposure to data connected to rigorous analysis.
- Accomplished by focusing students on a few basic constructs.

# Where does it start?

## *Organization of FCDA Information*

- Events** An event is a single placement or exit of a child. Most children have several events associated with them -- a placement into foster care and reunification with his/her family, for example. An event is a specific point-in-time episode.
- Spells** Spells are continuous periods of time demarcated by changes in the status of a child. Spells start with a placement event (e.g.: into kinship care) and end with an exit event (e.g.: adoption). A spell can have more than one placement event, but only one exit event.

All Spells

https://dvapyat.chapinhall.org/fcda/www/r Google

Rendezvous Apple .Mac Amazon eBay Yahoo! News Toolbar Favorites

Current State: Illinois New Query HOME CODES HELP

**DATABASES**

- ALL EVENTS
- ALL SPELLS
- REPORTS

**SEARCH BY**

- HISTORY OF PLACEMENT
- MOVEMENT HISTORY
- DISCHARGES
- RE-ENTRY

**ALL SPELLS**

SEARCH SPELL RECORDS BY . . .

County:

ALL COUNTIES  
Adams  
Alexander  
Bond  
Boone

**CHILD INFORMATION**

Child ID:

Start Age: Min:  Max:

Gender: Both Male Female

Ethnicity: All White Black Hispanic

**SPELL OVERVIEW**

Admission Type: All First Admission Re-entry

Start Type: All PFC PKC PCC

**STRATA**

None Selected  
Strata 1  
Strata 2  
Strata 3

**TIME OF PLACEMENT**

COHORT  
Show child spells that started between:  
From:   
To:   
e.g. 12-31-1990

POINT IN TIME  
Show child spells that were active on:  
Date:  e.g. 01-11-1990  
Most recent database update 12-31-2002

**HISTORY OF PLACEMENT**

Number Child Spells:  
Min:   
Max:

**DEFINE OUTPUT**

LIST RECORDS:  
Choose columns to return for selected spells.

All Child ID State County

LIST RECORDS



# Examples

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## LENGTH OF STAY REPORT

**Your Area:** Hamilton County, TN

**Comparison Area:** All the other counties of Tennessee

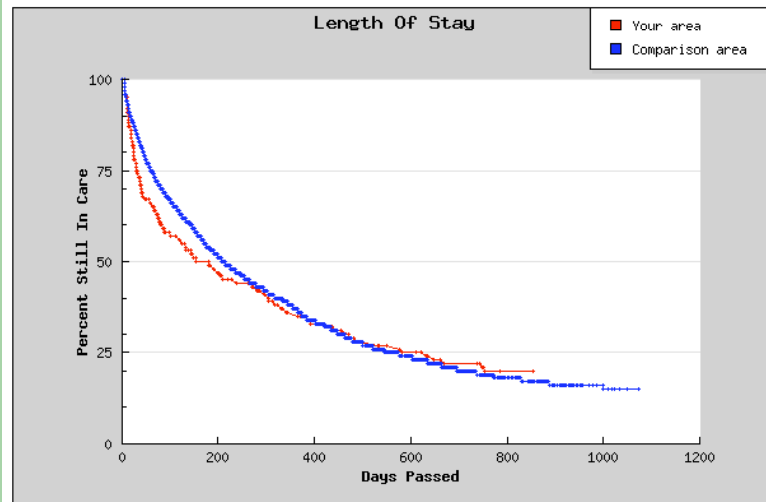
**Summary of Selection Criteria:**

Spell Start >= 1-1-2001 and Spell Start <= 12-31-2001

Days Passed Before Percentage of Selected Spells Are Completed		
	Your area	Comparison area
25%	32	60
50%	180	211
75%	621	559
100%	N/A	N/A

**Total Spells (Your area):** 255

**Total Spells (Comparison area):** 4491



## LENGTH OF STAY REPORT

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[LOGOUT](#)

**Your Area:** Knox County, TN

**Comparison Area:** All the other counties of Tennessee

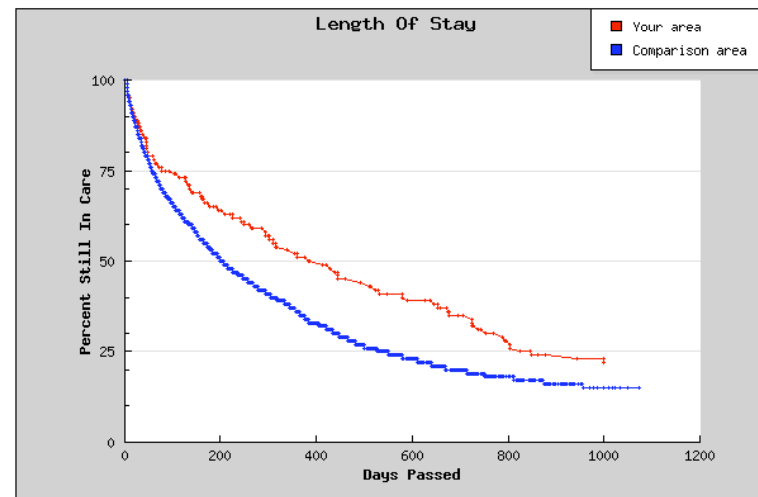
**Summary of Selection Criteria:**

Spell Start >= 1-1-2001 and Spell Start <= 12-31-2001

Days Passed Before Percentage of Selected Spells Are Completed		
	Your area	Comparison area
25%	84	58
50%	386	203
75%	845	540
100%	N/A	N/A

**Total Spells (Your area):** 251

**Total Spells (Comparison area):** 4495



# **Independent Research Project: Data Analysis for Child Welfare**

Terry Shaw



# Data Analysis for Child Welfare

- Independent Research Course (SOWK 798)
- Focus is on the steps to actually DO research.
- Meets in computer lab for 1.5 hours per week
- Students are expected to work on their own for 5 hours per week.
- Extended office hours available to students.

# Placing research into context

- Identifying a meaningful research topic based on practice knowledge or identified gaps in literature.
- What does the extant literature, INCLUDING other sources of administrative data, say about problem.
- Limitations of administrative data research (availability of data, accuracy of data, permission to use data, ability to access and query data, correctly interpreting data, etc.)
- Telling a story - being able to synthesize the information into an understandable and meaningful description of the problem and findings.

# Data Analysis for Child Welfare: Graded Elements

- Participation, participation, participation
- Development of a meaningful, and defensible question.
- Development of a research and analysis plan.
- Writing a final research paper.
- Presenting the data and recommendations.

# Research in Child Welfare

Diane DePanfilis



# Research in Child Welfare

- Course geared to three child welfare outcomes: child safety, permanency, and child well-being
- For the unit on permanency, students gain hands-on experience working with the data tool to answer a research question and prepare a report on this exploration.

# Research Report

- Statement of the problem (including a review of at least one study that has used administrative data to answer the student's research question).
- Identification of the research question
- Description of methods
- Presentation of results
- Conclusions & implications

## Contact information

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