



Apr 27th, 12:00 PM - 4:30 PM

## Seven Different Effects on Indication Rates of the Department of Children and Family Services for Demographically Similar Counties in Illinois

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Foulk, Melinda K. and Sikora, Faculty Advisor, James, "Seven Different Effects on Indication Rates of the Department of Children and Family Services for Demographically Similar Counties in Illinois" (1991). *John Wesley Powell Student Research Conference*. 35.  
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**SEVEN DIFFERENT EFFECTS ON INDICATION RATES  
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES  
FOR DEMOGRAPHICALLY SIMILAR COUNTIES IN ILLINOIS**

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This pilot study examines child abuse and neglect by looking at one aspect of this complex public issue: the current state of advocacy in Illinois. The reader is familiarized with the field of child abuse/neglect, and the need for advocacy. After a general review of the literature, this paper explores the vital role of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and its participation in advocacy for abused and neglected children.

A sample of six demographically similar counties from the State of Illinois are selected for study. Although demographically similar, the counties have statistically significant differences between their indication rates -- those children found to be abused and neglected through investigation by DCFS. Current and respected theories in the fields of sociology, social work, and criminology are briefly examined to determine if they can explain these differences in indication rates. Although there is statistical significance and face validity indicated between some of the variables and indication rates, the small sample indicates further exploration.

Therefore, two final hypotheses are extensively examined. First, the influence of the organizational structure and cohesion of each individual DCFS office on its indication rate is investigated. Second, the effect of public visibility of each individual agency on indication rates is explored. Telephone interviews surveying these two hypotheses were completed by the directors of the six agencies. Of all the variables considered, the visibility of the DCFS office in the community is found to have the highest correlation to indication rates both statistically and on face validity.

These findings are discussed and recommendations are made for continued and an expanded study. It is hoped that this study will increase public knowledge of child abuse and neglect, and therefore help increase protection of the vulnerable child.