

# **NATIONAL CHILD WELFARE INFORMATION STUDY (NCWIS)**

## **NDACAN Dataset Number 236 USER'S GUIDE**



National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect

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# National Child Welfare Information Study (NCWIS)

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National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect

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## CONTENTS

- [TITLE PAGE](#)
- [PREFACE](#)
- [ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SOURCE](#)
- [PUBLICATION SUBMISSION REQUIREMENT](#)
- [ABSTRACT](#)
- [STUDY OVERVIEW](#)
  - [Study Identification](#)
  - [Purpose of the Study](#)
  - [Study Design](#)
  - [Date\(s\)of Data Collection](#)
  - [Geographic Area](#)
  - [Unit of Observation](#)
  - [Sample](#)
  - [Data Collection Procedures](#)
  - [Response Rates](#)
  - [Sources of Information](#)
  - [Type of Data Collected](#)
  - [Measures](#)
  - [Related Publications & Reports](#)
  - [Analytic Considerations](#)
  - [Confidentiality Protection](#)
  - [Extent of Collection](#)
  - [Extent of Processing](#)
- [DATA FILE INFORMATION](#)
  - [File Specifications](#)
  - [Data File Notes](#)

## **PREFACE**

The data for *National Child Welfare Information Study (NCWIS)* have been given to the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN) for public distribution by Brian Deakins, Christine Leicht, Michael Long, Sharika Bhattacharya, Elizabeth Eaton, Dannele Ferreras, Katelyn Sedelmyer, Sarah Pfund, and Christina Zdawczyk. Funding for the project was provided by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau (Award Number(s): HHSP233201600080C).

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SOURCE**

Authors should acknowledge the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN) and the original collector(s) of the data when publishing manuscripts that use data provided by the Archive. Users of these data are urged to follow some adaptation of the statement below.

The data used in this publication were made available by the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, and have been used with permission. Data from *National Child Welfare Information Study (NCWIS)* were originally collected by: Brian Deakins, Christine Leicht, Michael Long, Sharika Bhattacharya, Elizabeth Eaton, Dannele Ferreras, Katelyn Sedelmyer, Sarah Pfund, and Christina Zdawczyk. Funding for the project was provided by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau (Award Number(s): HHSP233201600080C). The collector(s) of the original data, the funder(s), NDACAN, Cornell University and their agents or employees bear no responsibility for the analyses or interpretations presented here.

The bibliographic citation for this data collection is:

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## **PUBLICATION SUBMISSION REQUIREMENT**

In accordance with the terms of the *Data License* for this dataset, users of these data are required to notify the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect of any published work or report based wholly or in part on these data. A copy of any completed manuscript, thesis abstract, or reprint should be emailed to [NDACANsupport@cornell.edu](mailto:NDACANsupport@cornell.edu). Such copies will be used to provide our funding agency with essential information about the use of NDACAN resources and to facilitate the exchange of information about research activities among data users and contributors.

## **ABSTRACT**

How we access information and use technology is rapidly changing. With so many ways to access an ever increasing amount of information, it is becoming increasingly difficult for information clearinghouses and technical assistance providers to be responsive to the needs and preferences of a diverse child welfare workforce and to get useful, trusted information into the hands of those who need it most. The Child Welfare Information Gateway, funded by the Children's Bureau, conducted a research study to better understand how professionals search for, access, and share information, including their use of social media and technology. The study gathered data about the behaviors and preferences of current and future members of the child welfare workforce, including child welfare agency professionals, child welfare professionals working with Tribes, legal professionals, and students in social work programs through an online survey, tailored to each respondent group, and telephone focus groups. To ensure the study design and instruments were informed by appropriate stakeholders, various experts were engaged through stakeholder groups to provide structured feedback on overall study design, target audiences, and instrument development. Stakeholder groups were composed of experts in child welfare systems, issues, policies, technology, communication, and research methodology. Study participants were invited to be a part of the study through a variety of channels, including the agencies for which they worked, through intermediary organizations such as professional associations, and through contacts at university social work programs. Because of the different contexts of each of the targeted audiences, recruitment approaches were tailored and multiple methods were used to maximize responses. Ultimately, 4,134 individuals responded to the survey, including 3,191 child welfare agency professionals, 122 child welfare professionals working with Tribes, 371 legal professionals, and 450 students in social work programs. Study findings are meant to support the enhanced design and reach of information, resources, and services for child welfare agency administrators, program managers, supervisors, caseworkers, judges and attorneys, and future members of the child welfare workforce so that they are more accessible, useful, and effective for improving child welfare practice.

# STUDY OVERVIEW

## Study Identification

*National Child Welfare Information Study (NCWIS)*

### **Principal Investigator(s):**

Brian Deakins  
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### **Funded By:**

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

### **Award Number(s):**

HHSP233201600080C

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research study was to better understand how child welfare professionals search for, access, and share information, including their use of social media and technology, so

that information clearinghouses and technical assistance providers can be responsive to the needs and preferences of a diverse child welfare workforce and to get useful, trusted information into the hands of those who need it most.

### **Study Design**

A mixed methods study was conducted, including the previously mentioned survey of four audiences, and focus groups and interviews with subsets of survey respondents (note that only the survey data are available from the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect). Survey items were developed to capture findings related to questions of interest -including but not limited to: level of access to child welfare information; habits and preferences related to searching, receiving, and sharing information; and use of mobile technology and social media to access and share child welfare information. Various stakeholders, including representatives of targeted audiences, federal staff, and methodologists, provided feedback on survey items during instrument development. Each tailored survey instrument was then cognitively tested with members of respondent populations. The focus group data collected during the course of the study are not included in this dataset.

### **Date(s) of Data Collection**

Data collection for the study started January 2019 and ended May 2019 with data collection for each specific respondent group starting and ending at different times within those dates.

### **Geographic Area**

National (U.S.)

### **Unit of Observation**

The unit of observation was the individual respondent who identified with one of four groups of survey participants: a) child welfare professionals working with state, county, and private agencies (including direct service providers, managers, directors, and administrators); b) child welfare professionals working with Tribes (including caseworkers, administrators, program leaders); c) legal professionals working with children and families in the child welfare system, including judges and attorneys; and d) students enrolled in undergraduate or graduate social work programs.

### **Sample**

This study collected information from four audiences via survey: a) child welfare professionals working with state, county, and private agencies (including direct service providers, managers, directors, and administrators); b) child welfare professionals working with Tribes (including caseworkers, administrators, program leaders); c) legal professionals working with children and families in the child welfare system, including judges and attorneys; and d) students enrolled in undergraduate or graduate social work programs. Any potential respondent who accessed the survey and did not identify with one of the roles described above was excluded from the survey.

For example, respondents from the first audience group had to indicate that they worked for an organization or agency providing support to children and families involved in the child welfare system, and furthermore, worked in one of the specific capacities described above. Those working in support staff roles within a child welfare agency (e.g., finance, building management) were excluded from the survey. Those responding as part of the second or third audience group had to indicate that they spent at least 10% of their time on work directly related to children and families in the child welfare system. If a potential respondent did not meet this criterion, they were excluded from the survey. Those responding as part of the fourth audience group had to be enrolled in a social work program; graduate or undergraduate students in other programs were excluded from the survey. The focus group data collected during the course of the study are not included in this dataset.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Individualized recruitment approaches were implemented for each of the audiences targeted for the survey, given their various contexts. For the first audience (child welfare professionals working with state, county, and private agencies), frontline workers, managers, supervisors, and directors were targeted for inclusion. The study team identified an intentional sample of state and county agencies that were operating in states of varying population sizes and represented diverse geographic regions. Purposive sampling was used to compile a list of six states that varied on: ACF region, state population size, administration type, privatization, urbanicity, child entry rates, and rates of permanency within 12 months for children who enter care. Depending on each state's child welfare agency structure, state or county agencies sent the survey to their staff. A smaller proportion of child welfare professionals from other states found out about the survey through other channels and responded.

Child welfare professionals working with Tribes and legal professionals were recruited for the study through email distribution lists, listservs, and social media. Professional membership associations included information about the study and survey in their newsletters, and fliers were distributed at conferences and other professional events. Children's Bureau regional staff were involved in supporting recruitment of child welfare professionals working with Tribes. Student recruitment was supported by contacts at universities that implement Title IV-E stipend programs, programs that provide professional and monetary support to students intending to pursue or continue a career in public child welfare. An informational webinar was held with university partners to describe the study; these partners then disseminated information about the study to students within their programs.

### **Response Rates**

It was not possible to calculate response rates, because recruitment methods involved dissemination of the survey invitation to various mailing lists and listservs through intermediaries. We do not have information on the total pool of potential respondents for each audience who may have received the invite. Our final sample included 3,191 child welfare professionals working with state, county, and private agencies; 122 child welfare professionals working with Tribes; 371 legal professionals working in child welfare; and 450 undergraduate and graduate social work students.

## **Sources of Information**

Information was collected using an online survey.

## **Type of Data Collected**

Survey

## **Measures**

### ***National Child Welfare Information Study Survey***

The study team developed the instrument to capture information on: characteristics and context of respondents, general information habits and preferences; general level of access to child welfare information; habits and preferences related to searching for, receiving, and sharing child welfare information; training preferences; and use of mobile technology and social media to access and share child welfare information. Stakeholders with technical expertise as well as professionals deeply familiar with the targeted audiences reviewed the instrument and provided input on item content, format, and length of the instrument. Following initial instrument design and development, the study team conducted cognitive testing to understand how potential participants might be interpreting items. Participants were purposefully sampled to ensure the inclusion of members from key respondent populations. Cognitive testing results informed additional revisions to the instrument. The instrument was developed and then adapted for four tailored versions for the targeted audiences (child welfare professionals working with state, county, and private agencies; child welfare professionals working with Tribes; legal professionals working in child welfare; and undergraduate and graduate social work students).

Child Welfare Information Gateway (2019). *National Child Welfare Information Study Survey [Instrument]*. Fairfax, VA: Child Welfare Information Gateway. Available from: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/>

## **Related Publications and Final Reports**

**Users are strongly encouraged to review published works, based upon these data, before doing analyses. To view a complete list of publications for this dataset, please visit our online citations collection called “canDL” at:**

**<https://www.zotero.org/groups/421939/candl/tags/236-NCWIS/library> or go to the [child abuse and neglect Digital Library \(canDL\) NDACAN webpage](#).**

## **Analytic Considerations**

Secondary analysts should note that there are four different versions of the same survey and participants received a survey version based upon their group:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Version of Survey Received</b>
Child welfare professional working w/state, county, or private agencies	508-Compliant-Child-Welfare-Info-Study-Survey-S-Final
Child welfare professional working with Tribes	508-Compliant-Child-Welfare-Info-Study-Survey-T-Final
Legal Professional	508-Compliant-Child-Welfare-Info-Study-Survey-C-Final
BSW/MSW student	508-Compliant-Child-Welfare-Info-Study-Survey-U-Final

Participant group membership is captured in the variable named “Survey” and as a letter appearing at the end of each participant's ID in the “ID” variable.

### **Confidentiality Protection**

The dataset underwent a confidentiality review by NDACAN and it was determined that no recodes were necessary. Verbatim response variables were cleaned of potentially identifying information. There are no primary or secondary identifiers in the dataset.

### **Extent of Collection**

This collection consists of the User’s Guide, Codebook, and survey instruments in four different versions based upon the respondent type, one text data file (.dat) with import program files for SAS (.sas), SPSS (.sps), and Stata (.do), a tab-delimited formatted data file (.tab), and files native to SPSS (.sav), Stata(.dta), and SAS (.sas7bdat).

### **Extent of Processing**

NDACAN produced the User's Guide, data and syntax files formatted for use in SPSS, SAS, Stata, and tab-delimited format for use in spreadsheet and other software applications. Documents that were contributed in MS Word format were modified to meet 508 standards and converted to PDF's.

## **DATA FILE INFORMATION**

### **File Specifications**

There is one data file named "DS236-NCWIS" in the following file formats: SAS, SPSS, Stata, Tab-delimited. The data file has 169 variables and 4,134 records.

## **Data File Notes**

Data files are being supplied in both native formats (.sas7bdat, .sav, .dta) and as text data (.dat) with import program files (.sas, .sps, .do) to import the data into one of the three stats software packages (SAS, SPSS, and Stata). Using the import program files to load the .dat version of the data will circumvent any issues that may arise if the data user's software version differs from the version for which the native files were created. For example, the 32-bit version of SAS will not be able to open the native version of the SAS files which may have been created for 64-bit version of SAS. Formats program files are provided with the SAS native data files (.sas7bdat), so that value labels can be assigned to the respective data files. Tab delimited text data files (.txt) are also provided for data users interested in analyzing the data using spreadsheet programs like MS Excel. Data users interested in using R, can go to our online User Support page to review help documents that provide instructions for reading the SPSS native data file or the tab-delimited data file into R (<https://www.ndacan.acf.hhs.gov/user-support/user-support.cfm>).

The following abbreviations and acronyms are used in this document:

<b>Acronym/abbreviation</b>	<b>Definition/meaning</b>
ACF	Administration for Children and Families
canDL	child abuse and neglect Digital Library
NDACAN	National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect
NCWIS	National Child Welfare Information Study
R	R open source statistical software program
SPSS	IBM SPSS Statistics - software program
SAS	SAS statistical software program
Stata	Stata statistical software program
U.S.	United States

**Technical support for this dataset is provided by NDACAN.**

**Please send your inquiries to [NDACANSUPPORT@cornell.edu](mailto:NDACANSUPPORT@cornell.edu)**

**Visit the User Support page of the NDACAN website for help documents and videos (<https://www.ndacan.acf.hhs.gov/user-support/user-support.cfm>).**