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K-STATE PROFESSOR INVITED TO SUMMER RESEARCH INSTITUTE ABOUT NATIONAL DATA ARCHIVE ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

MANHATTAN — A faculty member at Kansas State University has been invited to participate in a summer research institute at Cornell University about the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect.

Ryan Spohn, assistant professor of sociology, will be in New York May 31 to June 4 for training to analyze data from the archive. The archive is sponsored by the federal government to increase knowledge of causes and consequences of child maltreatment.

The research institute's goals are to facilitate analysis projects which will result in publication of the results, as well as providing opportunities for networking and collaborating with other researchers.

The institute will offer workshops on research methodology and statistics, as well as secondary analysis and data management. Participants will work in computer labs doing hands-on work with the data to gain the skills needed to pursue their projects.

In his research, which will be conducted at K-State, Spohn will be looking specifically at social outcomes of children who have had contact with the child welfare system because of allegations of abuse or neglect. He is studying what works and for whom, and what can be done to ensure that the life trajectories of these children aren't completely determined by these early childhood experiences.

"I seek to determine if negative pathways of at-risk youth are altered by social factors and professional intervention," he said. "This pathway theory is founded on the assumption that individual differences in factors such as cognitive and emotional development lead to trajectories that often lead at-risk youth down paths of negative social and behavioral outcomes."

Spohn said the activities youths are involved in, as well as their expectations of the future, could potentially alter negative behavioral pathways. Also, official interventions and services, and social control and support could help youth toward pathways of pro-social behavior.

(more)

Spohn has conducted research on abused and neglected children, examining different factors that influenced abuse resulting in delinquency, as well as research that looked at how family structure affects abuse incidence.

"The major findings were that the most detrimental abuse is where there is a stepfather or live-in boyfriend," he said. "Abuse is most common in what we call these mixed families. Our conclusion was that you can't ignore abuse, regardless of family type."

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