

The University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy
Chapin Hall
NORC at the University of Chicago
Orlin Research

Family Self-Sufficiency Research Data Center

Goal: The goal of this project is to develop and operate a Family Self-Sufficiency Data Center (Data Center) that will increase the amount and quality of data available for FSS research, making both new and existing data sources easier to access, interpret, and analyze securely and efficiently. The Data Center will provide an empirical, data-driven research platform for researchers, policymakers, and administrators to use in answering fundamental policy and program questions, and it will build a knowledge base that will ultimately be translated into better policy and practice.

Needs Assessment: This initial activity will provide an assessment that gathers information in three areas: definitions of family self-sufficiency, the current state of family self-sufficiency and stability research, the data availability of states, and the data requirements of the data-user community. Information will be collected primarily through phone interviews (at least 60) across the spectrum of potential data users, including federal, state, and local leaders and administrators; researchers in academic and non-academic settings; and foundations and advocacy groups. The results will be analyzed and used as a guide in designing and implementing a strategy to accomplish the Data Center's goals.

Data Development: This effort will be informed by the needs assessment, but it is currently proposed that three types of data relevant to family self-sufficiency will be the focus:

1. **State and local administrative data.** These data will be processed to improve their usability via cleaning, record linking, and other methods. Data access and acquisition from states and localities will also be addressed.
2. **Surveys and other national data.** To make these data easier to access and use, basic metadata for major national data sets will be placed in a searchable archive. Data will also be placed into a database framework that has customized access tools such as search, data recoding, record restructuring, and file creation.
3. **Evaluation study data.** Results from national impact evaluations that address self-sufficiency will be collected and organized into an accessible, searchable archive.

NORC's Data Enclave and the Orlin Data System form the technical infrastructure for the Data Center.

Research and Data Support: In conjunction with data development, a metadata archive and a flexible data access/management/file creation system will be developed to help users search and understand their data, perform recodes and restructure tasks, link records across time or other categories, and create and use appropriate analysis files. Technical assistance and training will also be provided to both data providers and users, customized for the Family Self-Sufficiency field. Finally, analytic capacity will be available to help users who need to analyze data quickly.

Outreach and Collaboration: Outreach will be conducted to potential users through academic, public agency, and practitioner-professional networks, websites, e-mail lists, conferences, and other venues. Collaboration with stakeholders will involve internal and external advisory groups as well as other efforts to obtain feedback from stakeholders and ensure their views are represented.

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