

Using Data to Teach Graduate Students & Jumpstart MCH Careers

Russell Kirby, Professor and Merrell Endowed Chair at the University of South Florida College of Public Health, has used the Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health to teach his second year master's and doctoral students since 2009. In his *Secondary Data Analysis for Maternal and Child Health* class, students use data from childhealthdata.org to generate research hypotheses. Then, using the DRC-produced datasets, fully coded and labeled with approximately 100 variables, Dr. Kirby works with his students through the research and analysis process focusing on their chosen topic. The class culminates in a presentation and manuscript, which some students take to national conferences.

Sara Kennedy is a former student of Dr. Kirby. "He is just a great professor. More than any other class, I use skills learned in his [class] every day. *Secondary Data Analysis* was very focused on practical data applications and skills needed for a career in research." In Dr. Kirby's class Sara used the National Survey of Children's Health to explore how health insurance status relates to patient-provider communication. She won an award for [her work](#) from Delta Omega, an Honorary Society in Public Health, which sent her to the American Public Health Association conference to present the findings. After finishing her MPH in 2011, Sara now works for Research Triangle Institute as a public health analyst on issues related to smoking and health.

Dr. Kirby has taught *Secondary Data Analysis* four times since joining USF, and he has seen many students like Sara excel by using the Maternal and Child Health Bureau's surveys—as made easily accessible by the DRC—in his course. "The tools that the DRC has made available are invaluable. Using the 2007 NSCH as an example, SAS coding for indicators provided by the DRC are very helpful. Most of my students are new to complex data work and having a template they can use as an example is a very good learning opportunity that will be valuable to their future career."

Teachers and professors interested in using tools provided by the Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health for work with graduate students can contact us at cahmi@ohsu.edu and request a data set at www.childhealthdata.org/help/dataset.

[Dr. Russell Kirby](#) has generously offered his contact information for educators interested in learning more about how he has used the national data sets provided by the DRC in his *Secondary Data Analysis* course.