

Social Policy and Program Analysis Selected Information Resources & Strategies

This guide is designed to help social work students develop a strategy for doing social policy research, and to introduce a variety of information sources that support this type of research. The focus is on federal policy, although a section on state policy resources is included on page 4.

Part I. Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Federal Policy Research

How do I go about identifying a piece of legislation on a given topic?

There is no single way to identify legislation related to a particular topic. You may wish to consult the *Encyclopedia of Social Work* since the chapters concerning various topics frequently mention recent legislation in that area. The *Contemporary World Issues* series also publishes topic-specific handbooks on various social issues, which include reviews of recent legislation on their given topic. Another good option is to review the web sites of advocacy groups for a particular issue. For example, the *Children's Defense Fund* site includes sections on recent legislation. Keep in mind the fact that advocacy groups will likely interpret legislation in a manner that supports their position. This is, of course, what advocacy groups are supposed to do, but you need to be aware of this when interpreting information from these sites. Finally, remember that many of your social work professors are specialists in a particular area such as aging, criminal justice, or mental health. Consider talking with them about legislation on a particular topic.

How do I find the text of a bill or law concerning my policy issue?

Search *Lexis/Nexis Congressional* or *Thomas*. Both sources allow you to search for the full text of legislation going back to the 100th or 101st (1988 or 1989-90) Congress. You may also search the text of public laws – those bills that have already been passed into law.

Printed copies of legislation and legislative information may be found in Anschutz Library, which contains KU's Government Information collection. KU is a federal depository for government publications and maintains extensive collections of these publications.

How do I determine the reaction to a policy, learn whom it has affected, and other background issues?

1. Search a news database such as *LexisNexis Academic*, *Expanded Academic ASAP*, or *Ethnic Newswatch* to see if articles or editorials have been written about your policy or piece of legislation - note the names of any agencies or individuals who are quoted.
2. Review resources for national policy research such as *CQ Researcher* or *PolicyFile* to see what has been written concerning your topic.
3. Articles published in academic journals may provide analysis of social policy and the "cause/effect" cycle of issues behind the policy. Databases that may prove helpful include *Social Work Abstracts*, *ERIC* (education), *PsycInfo* (psychology and related issues), *Criminal Justice Abstracts*, *Health and Wellness Resource Center* (healthcare), and *PubMed* (medical/health). Ask a reference librarian for additional suggestions.

How do I learn about current action related to my bill?

1. The **Bills** section of the *Lexis/Nexis Congressional* database includes a tracking feature. You may also search **Bill Summary & Status** information via the *Thomas* web site.
2. Regular searching of the news resources mentioned is another good way of learning about the status of pending legislation.

How do I find the NASW's perspective on a particular issue?

Consult *Social Work Speaks: NASW Policy Statements*. The most recent edition is shelved in Watson Reference. HV 85 .N33a

Part II. Information Resources Useful for Social Policy Research

Most sources listed in this section are available in the Watson Library Reference area and/or through the KU Libraries home page.

Reference Books

Contemporary World Issues series

Call Numbers vary

This series covers a range of contemporary social issues including abortion, adoption, health care, literacy, homelessness, AIDS, child care, capital punishment, and immigration. To search for them using the KU Libraries' Online Catalog, do a **Keyword (and/or/not) Search** combining your topic with the series name (e.g., **homelessness AND "contemporary world issues"**). These handbooks provide essays, statistics, descriptions of legislation, etc.

Editorials on File

D 839 .E3 Watson Reference

Reprints newspaper editorials from across the country. Editorials grouped by subject; easy to find an array of opinion on a topic.

Encyclopedia of Social Work

HV 35 .S6 Watson Reference

Excellent source for "background information" on many topics relevant to policy research such as adoption, juvenile and family courts, mental health, etc. Each chapter includes references.

Shephard's Acts and Cases by Popular Names

KF 90 .S52 1999 Anschutz Reference

A cumulative index to the popular names of public laws. A handy tool for learning that the "welfare reform" act is actually formally known as the "Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996."

Social Work Speaks: NASW Policy Statements

HV 85 .N33a Watson Reference

Includes NASW statements on a wide range of policy issues. You may also wish to connect to www.naswdc.org National Association of Social Workers website.

Databases & Web Sites

All resources with a computer icon (🖨) are databases licensed by the KU Libraries. These databases are available on all networked library workstations and to KU faculty, students, and staff with remote Internet access via the Libraries' Web site:

<http://www.lib.ku.edu>.

Bureau of the Census

<http://www.census.gov>

Federal Register

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html>

The Federal Register is the official daily publication for rules, proposed rules, and notices of Federal agencies and organizations, as well as executive orders and other presidential documents.

Code of Federal Regulations

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html>

CFR is the codification of the general and permanent rules published in the Federal Register by the executive departments and agencies of the federal governments.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance

<http://www.cfda.gov>

The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Programs (CFDA) is a "government-wide compendium of all 1,458 Federal programs, projects, services, and activities that provide assistance or benefits to the American public."

🖨 *Contemporary Women's Issues*

Provides full-text access to global information on women, including journals, newsletters, and research reports from non-profit groups, government and international agencies.

🖨 *CQ Public Affairs Collection (including CQ Researcher)*

Complete source for in-depth, analytical reporting on the most current and wide ranging national public policy issues.

🖨 *Criminal Justice Abstracts*

Comprehensive coverage of international journals, books, dissertations, etc. on criminology & related disciplines.

🖨 *Ethnic Newswatch*

Provides full-text articles from newspapers, magazines and journals of the ethnic, minority and native press in America.

Expanded Academic ASAP

Offers access to 1600+ general magazines, scholarly journals and the *New York Times* newspaper. The database (with the BackFile) covers 1980-present. The full-text of some sources is provided online.

Gallup Organization

<http://www.gallup.com>

The Gallup web site offers results of many current polls on social issues. KU Libraries also subscribe to the *Gallup Poll Monthly* reports (shelved in **Watson Reference HM 261 .A1 G34**)

Genderwatch

GenderWatch is a full-text database comprised primarily of the many ongoing periodicals that focus on women and women's issues, including academic and scholarly journals, regional publications, magazines, newspapers, newsletters, booklets and reports.

GPO Monthly Catalog

GPO Monthly Catalog contains citations to over 380,000 items covering all subject areas of interest to the United States government.

Green Book

<http://aspe.hhs.gov/2000gb>

The Green Book presents background material and statistical data on the major entitlement programs within the jurisdiction of the House of Representatives' Committee on Ways and Means: Social Security, Medicare, Unemployment Compensation, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Child Support Enforcement, Supplemental Security Income, the Title XX Social Services Block Grant program, Child Welfare, Foster Care, Adoption Assistance, and Child Care programs.

KU Libraries Online Catalog

A database that is unique to the collections available locally at KU. Use **keyword** searching to look up books or other materials on policy issues such as child poverty, health care reform, etc. The Online Catalog should also be used to determine which journals the Libraries have, either in print format or electronic full-text. Use the **journal title** search feature for this purpose. See also the KU Libraries E-Journal Catalog.

KU Libraries E-Journal Catalog

This database tells you which journals the KU Libraries offer electronically in full text. *This is not the place to search for articles by topic.* Instead, use this to search by **journal title** to learn whether full text is available for a journal in which you have identified a citation.

LexisNexis Academic

This database brings together a collection of databases offering news, business, and legal information, updated daily. Almost all sources are provided in full-text. Most, though not all, files date back to the early 1980s. The **Reference** section includes opinion polls and surveys.

LexisNexis Congressional

Provides access to legislative and regulatory information from the United States Government. It is an excellent resource for tracking federal legislation on a particular topic.

National Journal Group's Policy Central

This is a comprehensive online resource on politics and policy for the academic community. Information is updated daily. Policy Central includes access to National Journal online, Congress Daily, The Hotline, Technology Daily, Almanac of American Politics.

PAIS (Public Affairs Information Service) International

PAIS consists of over 200,000 records representing articles, books, conference proceedings, government documents, book chapters, grey literature, research reports, and statistical directories in the area of public affairs.

PolicyFile

Collects data from world renowned public policy think tanks. Vital for public policy research and information. The database can be browsed by primary contributor or thematically and all abstracts have been linked to home pages, electronic mail address and full text documents, where available. Coverage is 1990-present.

ProQuest Research Library - a comprehensive database that indexes and abstracts general interest magazines and scholarly journals, trade publications, magazines and newspapers in the social sciences, humanities and sciences. The database includes more than 3820 titles -- over 2550 in full text -- from 1971 forward. Topics covered include arts, business, children, education, general interest, health, humanities, international studies, law, military, multicultural studies, psychology, sciences, social sciences, and women's interests.

PsycInfo

The premier database for psychology; citations for journal articles, books, chapters, dissertations, etc.

Public Agenda Online: The Inside Source for Public Opinion and Policy Analysis

<http://www.publicagenda.org>

A great starting point for researching a range of current policy issues.

Social Services Abstracts

This is a useful database for social work research, somewhat more international in scope than *Social Work Abstracts* (see next listing). *SSA* indexes social work journals as well as journals in related fields.

Social Work Abstracts

This key database for social work research includes policy studies. It is published by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). This is an important resource to search when determining how social work researchers interpret particular policy issues and areas.

Social Work and Social Services Web Sites

Washington University in St. Louis

<http://gwbweb.wustl.edu/websites.html>

A comprehensive index of Internet resources of interest to social workers.

University of Wisconsin, Madison

<http://socialwork.library.wisc.edu/sites-of-interest/index.html>

Another comprehensive index of Internet resources of interest to social workers.

Sociological Abstracts

The key database for researching sociology and related fields.

Statistical Abstract of the United States

Location: Watson Reference and Anschutz

Reference - Call Number: HA 202 .S7x

A comprehensive resource for finding statistical information. Statistics are drawn from governmental reports.

See also: <http://www.fedstats.gov>

Thomas

<http://thomas.loc.gov>

Excellent Web resource for legislative information from the past and present. Maintained by the Library of Congress. The **FAQ** is very helpful to first-time policy researchers as it explains the legislative process, how to track bills, etc.

USA.gov

<http://www.usa.gov> – Links to a vast number of government websites, federal, state, local, and tribal.

Wilson Omnifile Full Text Select

Contains indexing, abstracting, and full-text articles published in a wide range of general and scholarly journals.

Other Ideas

Consider information published by advocacy groups when researching a particular policy issue. For example, the *Institute for Research on Poverty* at the University of Washington offers statistics, definitions, press releases, etc.

State and Local Policy Resources

This guide focuses on federal policy, but there are also many good resources for state policies.

Kansas.gov (formerly Access Kansas)

<http://www.kansas.gov>

Kansas.gov may be used to track bills and laws in the Kansas Legislature. It also provides information on various state agencies.

CJ-Online: The Topeka Capital Journal

<http://www.cjonline.com>

The *Capital Journal* provides good coverage of Kansas government activities. The paper's web site includes a searchable archives of stories dating back to 1997.

Influencing State Policy

<http://statepolicy.org>

ISP was developed by a group of social workers/educators as a means of helping social work researchers understand and influence state-level policy and legislation. The site includes links to state legislatures, information about current policy issues, and other resources.

Kansas Legislative Hotline

This is a very helpful service provided by the Kansas State Library. You may call to inquire about bills, bill tracking, and related information. The toll-free number is: 1-800-432-3924.

Lawrence Journal World

<http://www.ljworld.com>

Access and searching capabilities in the paper's archives, which date back to 1989. If you are accessing the archives from off-campus, there is a fee to view stories.

Other Questions?

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