



Studies in the News

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Impact of Family Visitation on Incarcerated Youth's Behavior and School Performance.

By Sandra Villalobos Agudelo. Vera Institute of Justice. Apr. 2013. 6 p.

<http://www.vera.org/pubs/impact-of-family-visitation-on-incarcerated-youth>

Although this issue brief concerns family visitation of incarcerated youth in Ohio, the joint project between the Vera Institute of Justice and the Ohio Department of Youth Services (OYS) could be helpful for other states because "... there is very limited research on whether family visitation affects incarcerated

juveniles' behavior." This study found that when incarcerated youth received frequent visits from family, behavioral incidents decreased and school performance improved. The author notes that families often face huge geographical barriers to visit incarcerated loved ones imprisoned far from their home, and recommends that youth placement decisions factor in the importance of family visitation.

ECONOMY

State and Local Governments' Fiscal Outlook, April 2013 Update. United States Government Accountability Office. GAO-13-546SP. Apr. 2013. 15 p.
<http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/654255.pdf>

"The state and local government sector continues to face near-term and long-term fiscal challenges which add to the nation's overall fiscal challenge.... [The] state and local sector faces a gap between revenue and spending and long-term fiscal challenges that grow over time.... In the long term, the decline in the sector's operating balance is primarily driven by the rising health-related costs of state and local expenditures on Medicaid and the cost of health care compensation for state and local government employees and retirees."

EDUCATION

Common Sense - Using Common Finals to Measure Postsecondary Student Learning.
By Matthew M. Chingos. Brown Center on Education Policy. Apr. 2013. 18 p.
<http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2013/04/11%20common%20college%20finals%20chingos/11%20common%20college%20finals%20chingos%20report.pdf>

College courses traditionally have instructor-written final exams. While the goal of an exam is to measure student learning in an individual instructor's class, it does not establish whether students in one section learned more or less than students in another section in that same subject, even at the same institution. Common finals used across all sections of the same class, co-authored by all faculty teaching the class that term, could help solve this problem in decreasing fluctuations in class scores across sections.

EMPLOYMENT

Black Employment and Unemployment in February 2013: Data Brief. UC Berkeley Labor Center. Mar. 8, 2013. 21 p.
http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/blackworkers/monthly/bwreport_2013-03-08_59.pdf

"The unemployment rate for Blacks was 13.8% last month. This is according to the latest report on the nation's employment situation released ... by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in its monthly *Employment Situation Summary* report. This rate was unchanged from January, when unemployment in the Black community was also 13.8%. For the nation as a whole, unemployment was 7.7% in the month of February; this was a decrease from January when the national unemployment rate stood at 7.9%. Among Whites, unemployment was 6.8%; among Latinos, unemployment was 9.6%. Comparable January 2013 figures were 7% and 9.7% respectively. Overall, total non-farm payroll employment increased by 236,000 jobs from last month."

ENERGY

2012: Who's Winning the Clean Energy Race? The Pew Charitable Trust. May 3, 2013. 56 p.
<http://www.pewenvironment.org/uploadedFiles/PEG/Publications/Report/-clenG20-Report-2012-Digital.pdf>

“Public and private investment in solar, wind, and other technologies retreated from an adjusted 2011 record of \$302 billion to \$269 billion, an 11% drop. Still, 2012 was the third year in a row that worldwide clean energy investment eclipsed \$200 billion.... Looking at the data in three-year increments, average clean energy investment increased by at least \$90 billion triennially - from an average of \$64 billion in the 2004-06 period to an average of \$156 billion in 2007-09 and \$245 billion in 2010-12.”

ENVIRONMENT

The Impact of the Nation's Most Widely Used Insecticide on Birds. By Pierre Mineau. American Bird Conservancy. Mar. 2013. 98 p.
http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/toxins/Neonic_FINAL.pdf

Neonicotinoids are the most widely used insecticides in the U.S. Much of the concern regarding their use has focused on the impact on bees and other insect pollinators. This report focuses on another impacted species: native bird populations. The acute toxicity of these insecticides to birds is lower than that of many they replaced; however, there remains concern about the chronic/reproductive toxicity of neonicotinoids. Many of these insecticides are used systemically, and the chemical can persist in the environment since they are often used as seed treatments, increasing their impact on avian species.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

The California Secure Choice Retirement Savings Program: An Innovative Response to the Coming Retirement Security Crisis. By Aleta Sprague. New America Foundation. Apr. 2013. 18 p.
<http://assets.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/CAretirementFinal4.26.13.pdf>

The traditional pension model depended on financial support from private pension, Social Security benefits, and personal savings to benefit retirees. Unfortunately, that benefit plan has become more of a liability to retirees. The newer model, a defined contribution (DC) plan where employers and employees pay into the retirement plan, is also not working because more than half the private sector does not offer a DC plan to their employees. This report analyzes an alternative called the California Secure Choice Retirement Savings Program, passed into law in September 2012, which would “establish automatic retirement accounts for all workers in the private sector who do not otherwise have access to a workplace retirement plan.”

HEALTH

Declining Medicine Use and Costs: For Better or Worse? IMS Institute for Healthcare Informatics. May 2013. 56 p.
http://www.imshealth.com/cds/ims/Global/Content/Insights/IMS%20Institute%20for%20Healthcare%20Informatics/2012%20U.S.%20Medicines%20Report/2012_U.S.Medicines_Report.pdf

“In 2012, utilization of healthcare services declined nationally and contributed to a reduction in the overall cost of medicines. The drivers of these declines are many and complex and point to the paradox that while drug costs are actually falling for many patients, their exposure to healthcare costs is increasing. These issues are affecting patients differently depending on the type of insurance coverage they have,

and which diseases they suffer from.” This study focuses on healthcare trends in 2012 and projects that healthcare spending will continue to grow more rapidly than spending on medicines, at least through 2017.

HUMAN SERVICES

Advancing the Self-Sufficiency and Well-Being of At-Risk Youth: A Conceptual Framework. Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Mar. 15, 2013. 76 p.

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/ydd_final_report_3_22_13.pdf

“This document presents a research-based framework for efforts to increase the likelihood that youth at greater risk of negative outcomes will enter a career trajectory and prepare to become well-functioning, self-sufficient adults.... The framework suggests the promise of using evidence-informed interventions to address two primary areas: youths’ resilience and human capital development. It points toward tailored solutions grounded in a trusting relationship between youth and program staff to help move youth toward both healthy functioning and economic self-sufficiency as they transition to adulthood.”

Informal Kinship Care Most Common Out-of-Home Placement after an Investigation of Child Maltreatment. By Wendy A. Walsh. Carsey Institute. Feb. 2013. 2 p.

http://carseyinstitute.unh.edu/sites/carseyinstitute.unh.edu/files/publications/FS-Walsh-Kin%20Care-Maltreatment-web_0.pdf

“After the initial child maltreatment investigation, the vast majority of children remained in their home. Among those who were placed in out-of-home settings, informal kinship care [where a parent voluntarily places a child with a family member] was the most common.... The findings highlight the need to pay attention to the role of kinship care in placement decisions. The growing use of informal kinship care follows the federal guidelines emphasizing a preference for kin caregivers.... Although kin caregivers play an important role in caring for maltreated children, they are less likely to receive services, including financial assistance, than other types of substitute caregivers.”

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Medicare Provider Charge Data. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. May 2012.

<http://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/Medicare-Provider-Charge-Data/index.html>

Interactive graphic: http://glimmer.rstudio.com/muschellij2/Shiny_Health_Data/

“As part of the Obama administration’s work to make our health care system more affordable and accountable, data are being released that show significant variation across the country and within communities in what hospitals charge for common inpatient services. The data provided here include hospital-specific charges for the more than 3,000 U.S. hospitals that receive Medicare Inpatient Prospective Payment System (IPPS) payments for the top 100 most frequently billed discharges, paid under Medicare based on a rate per discharge using the Medicare Severity Diagnosis Related Group (MS-DRG) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2011. These DRGs represent almost 7 million discharges or 60% of total Medicare IPPS discharges.”

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Crashes Involving Cell Phones: Challenges of Collecting and Reporting Reliable Crash Data.
National Safety Council. May 7, 2013. 12 p.

http://www.nsc.org/safety_road/Distracted_Driving/Documents/NSC-Under-Reporting-White-Paper.pdf

This report reviewed 180 fatal crashes from 2009 to 2011, for which the researchers found “reliable evidence” indicating that a driver was using a cell phone at the time of the crash, and compared those case findings to data recorded in the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) database. Of these 180 fatal crashes, only 51 were coded in the national data as involving cell phone use, strongly suggesting that FARS data currently may significantly undercount the effects of cell phone usage on moving vehicle accident rates.

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