CENTRE FOR SOCIAL DATA ANALYTICS

AUT UNIVERSITY NEW ZEALAND

Insights from the Centre for Social Data Analytics – March 2021

CSDA's research and analytics tools are used by local and international agencies to support smart policy and sound decision-making in areas including health, housing, and child protection. This issue: a new child welfare decision aid tool project, a promising evaluation for the Douglas County Decision Aid and good frontline feedback for our Allegheny Housing Assessment tool.

Child Welfare Tools

The CSDA team has been busy working on new and ongoing predictive risk modelling projects.

One of our newest partnerships is with Northampton County (PA, US). This is a three-year project using the county's data to develop a call screening tool to support better child welfare screening decisions. Read a recent media article about the Northampton project.

In addition to developing call screening tools, we have been doing some really encouraging work building tools to help agencies better supervise open child welfare cases. We are working with the Children's Data Network to deliver a supervision tool for the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, as well as working towards piloting a supervision tool in one or more Colorado counties. Learn about supervision support tools.

The pilot of the Allegheny County (PA, US) Hello Baby programme, a tiered approach to child harm prevention supported by a CSDA decision aid tool, continues, with full rollout expected around September this year.

The initial (randomised controlled trial) impact evaluation of the Douglas County Decision Aid was recently completed by researchers at Cornell University, US. We built this tool to support child welfare call screening decision making in Douglas County (CO, US), and the evaluation has shown that when the tool was used, higher risk children were more likely to be screened in and lower risk children were less likely to be screened in than when the tool wasn't used. Please get in touch if you would like to know more about the evaluation.

Homelessness Tool

The Allegheny Housing Assessment (AHA) tool developed by CSDA is being used in Allegheny County to assess requests for housing help from people at risk of homelessness. The AHA tool replaced the VI-SPDAT (a lengthy survey instrument). Reports from frontline staff using the tool suggest clients are benefiting, because less time is spent asking and answering questions and more time is spent addressing people's needs.

Data Resilience Research

Rhema Vaithianathan is a chief investigator at a new Australian Research Council training centre for information resilience (CIRES) led at The University of Queensland by data science expert Professor Shazia Sadiq. The five-year research programme at CIRES aims to remove the barriers to data-driven transformation by bringing together business organisations, end users, technology providers and cutting-edge research.

CQI Conference – 24 March

On 24 March Rhema Vaithianathan will join Emily Putnam-Hornstein to present their work for Los Angeles County on risk stratified supervision, at the UC Davis CQI State-wide Conference for Child Welfare and Probation.

A message from CSDA Director, Professor Rhema Vaithianathan

Our CSDA projects are being used as case studies in teaching ethical data science, and are being referenced positively in research papers on the topic. Recently I had the pleasure of delivering a guest lecture about 'law in the algorithmic society' for George Washington University Law School. Our work was referenced in discussions of best practice in this recent paper from Drake et al and our projects have been included as case studies for UNICEF's policy guidance on AI for Children.

CSDA has been working hard to develop a new data analytics minor in the School of Social Sciences and Public Policy at AUT, with teaching to start in the second semester of 2021. This new minor will allow students both on and off campus to enrich their social science degrees with a good understanding of data analytics.

Finally, it is my pleasure to introduce our new Business Development Manager Dr Vivienne Hunt, who many of you will have already met. Vivienne is the point of contact if you'd like to set up an opportunity to learn more about our work or talk with us about how CSDA could add some value to your agency via data analytics.

A message from CSDA Business Development Manager, Dr Vivienne Hunt

It's been great to meet county stakeholders and learn more about how the Centre's predictive risk modelling tools inform child welfare decisions and help front line workers manage cases. I can see the potential for this work on a broader scale, and look forward to extending the Centre's reach across counties and states. Please email if you would like to learn more about the tools offered by CSDA or how we could potentially help your organisation.

I hope to meet some of you through our new Data for Action webinar series, which will showcase the range of tools offered by CSDA. Look out for our invitation to the first webinar on 27 April (28 April NZT), which will focus on the Child Welfare Supervision Support Tool.

We have sent you CSDA eNews because you have previously shown interest in our work. If you would prefer not to receive this newsletter, please let us know.

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