Erin Calkins: Health & Human Development  
Mentor: Vanessa Simonds -- Health & Human Development  
Exploring Pregnant Women’s Perceptions, Knowledge, and Behaviors Related to Fish and Seafood Consumption

The purpose of this project was to explore the perceptions, knowledge, and behaviors of pregnant women related to fish and seafood consumption during their pregnancy. We conducted individual interviews with 10 pregnant women living in Park County, MT. We asked questions related to demographic information, perceptions about fish and seafood risks and benefits, fish and seafood health information sources, fish and seafood consumption behaviors, and preferences in information sources. Participants consisted of pregnant women ages 18-45, seeking prenatal services from a partner clinic and dietary nurse advisor. A registered nurse was present at all interviews to provide assistance debriefing and to clarify any diet related questions that arose for participants. Women reported that they avoided fish because they felt it was unsafe. Some women perceived their risk for exposure to contaminants as low because of low consumption of fish and many did not know about any of the nutritional benefits of eating fish. Many women obtained information from the internet and had not consulted providers about the information they found. Our project provides evidence that educational materials are needed to clarify this topic for pregnant women. We plan to use these findings to develop an educational tool that health care providers can use to facilitate conversations with their pregnant patients.