

**Laura Evans: University Studies**

**Mentor: William Steidwiser, Laura Evans -- INBRE**

***How can the Gallatin Valley Lactation Program utilize Department of Family Services home-visit data to analyze breastfeeding rates for at-risk families?***

Research was conducted by examining already-existing, deidentified data sets concerning breast feeding data from the Montana Department of Family Services and information from Home Visiting, which is part of Gallatin City County Health Department. The data contained the number of referrals to the Department of Family Services, and information from Home Services. This data was gathered and combined into one data set in order to evaluate the possible correlation between breastfeeding rates and at-risk families. For the purposes of this study at-risk is defined as tobacco users, parents with mental illness, and drug use. The data sets were not publicly available, but were given on request. There are no restrictions on the data sets. This research will provide the basis of a grant proposal needed by the Lactation Education Program. The main focus of this research is to examine the possible correlations between the rates of breastfeeding over six months and the number of children referred to the Department of Family Services. The reason the rates are examined over six months is because it has been shown that the benefits of breastfeeding only show up after this period of time with sustained breastfeeding. Although, the breastfeeding rates of Gallatin County are the highest in Montana, they are not sustained. A meta-literature review was also conducted to gather the major findings concerning breastfeeding rates and the behavior described above that can classify a family as at-risk. Once completed the Lactation Education Program hopes to use the findings to support their grant writing efforts. Their grant will be used to institute programs that will hopefully reduce the number of children referred to the Department of Family Services by increasing the rates of breastfeeding.