

Hot spots for shaken-baby syndrome cases identified

December 11 2013, by Erin White

Counties in the United States with higher rates of shaken-baby syndrome cases include Sarpy and Douglas, Neb., Richmond, Ga., Weber, Utah, and Summit, Ohio, The Medill Justice Project discovered in a year-and-a-half long database research project, the findings from which are published today. On a state level, Nebraska ranks first with the most shaken-baby syndrome cases per 100,000 people, followed in order by Utah, Oklahoma, Wisconsin and Ohio.

This is the first known study that has identified where people are being accused of shaken-baby [syndrome](#) crimes throughout the country. Shaken-baby syndrome crimes involve caregivers who are accused of inflicting severe head trauma on children, typically under the age of 2, causing a triad of symptoms—brain bleeding, brain swelling and bleeding within the eye. Criminal justice experts, statisticians, health authorities and others interviewed offered several possible explanations for the higher rate of cases in certain regions. The factors include aggressive prosecutors in places like Queens, N.Y., influential physicians, medical examiners and hospitals, heavily enforced state laws and a large amount of media attention on [shaken-baby syndrome](#) issues.

Working with undergraduate and graduate journalism students at Northwestern University, The Medill Justice Project identified and confirmed more than 3,600 cases of shaken-baby syndrome, using more than 30 sources, including press accounts, public record searches, through such databases as LexisNexis, and court documents.

For the first time, The Medill Justice Project is releasing its database to the public. With the help of a team of engineering graduate students at Northwestern's McCormick School of Engineering, the database includes the gender of those accused, and the county and state where each case occurred. The Medill Justice Project plans to update the [database](#) as more categories of data are verified.

More information: For more information, see www.medilljusticeproject.org/visualization/

Provided by Northwestern University

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