Finding Information about Social Problems and Policies on the Internet

1. Every major government and private agency has a website.

2. Most major government agencies have subsidiary agencies. Both the parent agency’s website and the subsidiary agency’s website provide access to policies and information.

3. You can get valuable policy and program information from both the parent agency’s website and the subsidiary agency’s website as well as links to additional agencies and policies.

4. The sites include important primary source material about the policies and programs as well as the policies themselves.

5. Laws and legislation are examples of pure policies that assist people. By finding the full text of legislation, you can obtain the language used by legislators to address social problems.

- **Sources to Consider:**
  - Government Agency Websites
  - Private Agency Websites
  - Legislative Websites

**A. Government Agency Structure**

→ Example: Department of Health and Human Services

Operating Divisions:

- Administration on Children and Families (ACF) - [http://www.acf.hhs.gov](http://www.acf.hhs.gov)
- Administration for Community Living (ACL) - [http://www.acl.gov](http://www.acl.gov)
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) - [http://www.ahrq.gov](http://www.ahrq.gov)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - [http://www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- Food and Drug Administration (FDA) - [http://www.fda.gov/](http://www.fda.gov/)
- Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) - [http://www.hrsa.gov](http://www.hrsa.gov)
- Indian Health Service (IHS) - [http://www.ihs.gov](http://www.ihs.gov)
- National Institutes of Health (NIH) - [http://www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) - [http://www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)
B. Finding a Government Agency through a Search Engine:  
Social Problem: Mental Illness

- Go to www.google.com
- Search for google advanced search.
- In the first search box enter the term Mental Illness.
- In the narrow your results by…site or domain box, enter .gov – This ensures that all of your results will come from U.S. Government Sites.
- The click on **Advanced Search**

- Notice how the title clearly places this agency as a subsidiary of the National Institutes of Health.
- Look at the Health topics listed on the right side of the page.  
  →**Example: Depression** - This page includes a general description of this disorder and provides links to:
  - Science News about Depression
  - Posts from the Director’s Blog about Depression
  - Featured Publications about Depression
  - Research Results
  - Journal Articles about Depression from PubMed
  - Clinical Trials
- Choose Outreach, Outreach Partners and click on National Partners. You obtain a list of over 80 National Organizations offering programs to help people with Mental Illness.
- Search the National Institutes of Health website for Mental Illness. You will find information about programs sponsored by other government agencies as well.
C. Finding a Specific Government Policy through a Search Engine:
   →Policy: Head Start
   o Search for Head Start in google advanced search and limit to the .gov domain. (this ensures that you only obtain the information from government sites)
   o Select Head Start - Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center
   o This site provides background of the program as well as a Policy & Regulation section that includes the **Head Start Act of 2007**

D. Finding Policy and legislative Information from an agency’s website:
   →Problem: Teenagers and Foster Care
   o Select Practice Areas and click on **Family Foster Care**.
   o Click on Critical Issues.

   **Family Foster Care: Critical Issues**
   - July 2007. GAO Report—African American Children in Foster Care: Additional Help Needed to Help States Reduce the Proportion of Care (PDF file requires Adobe Acrobat Reader)
   - Ensuring Safe, Stable, and Affordable Housing for Young People Aging Out of Foster Care
   - Programs and Resources for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care
   - Issue Brief: Children Missing from Care
   - Pediatricians Should Ensure Foster Children Get Needed Care Article by CWLA President/CEO Shay Bilchik from the March 2005 issue of AAP's monthly magazine of the American Academy of Pediatrics
   - Accessing Educational Supports for Youth in Out-of-Home Care
   - Interested in becoming a foster parent? Visit the [National Foster Care Month website](http://www.nationalfostercaremonth.org).

   This webpage includes:
   - [Statement of the National Foster Youth Advisory Council](http://www.cwla.org/)
   - [Report of CWLA's Survey of State Independent-Living Coordinators](http://www.cwla.org/)
   CWLA surveyed state independent-living coordinators to gather information about state policies and practices that affect housing outcomes for young people leaving the foster care system.

E. Finding a Specific Law from a Legislative Website:
   → Legislation: The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999
   o Go to the official source for federal legislative information for the United States at: [www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov).
   o Select -- Search Multiple, Previous Congresses.
   o Search for the Foster Care Independence Act.
F. Finding Current Legislation Using Keywords:

→ Topic: Foster Care

- Go to www.congress.gov and limit to Current Legislation.
- Search for “Foster Care” (you must put phrases in quotation marks).
- You will obtain 136 Bills, Laws or Resolutions that demonstrate how the current congress is discussing the term Foster Care, including:
  - H.R.4058 - Preventing Sex Trafficking and Improving Opportunities for Youth in Foster Care Act
  - H.R.4016 - Quality Foster Care Services Act of 2014
  - S.Res.147 - A resolution recognizing National Foster Care Month as an opportunity to raise awareness about the challenges of children in the foster care system, and encouraging Congress to implement policy to...
  - H.R.3205 - Promoting Adoption and Legal Guardianship for Children in Foster Care Act
  - S.1118 - Child Sex Trafficking Data and Response Act of 2013
  - H.R.3124 - Investing in Permanency for Youth in Foster Care Act

*Note – This list represents legislation in various stages of the legislative process.*
Citing Online Government Sources in APA Style

- View Citing Government Documents Guide.
  - From the library’s homepage, select Research by Subject Area
  - Choose Social Work
  - Find Citing Government Documents on the bottom under Additional Resources.

Selected Websites for Finding Social Policies and Information:

- Federal Government Policy and Information
  - U.S. Census - Population Reports, Poverty, etc. - www.census.gov

- Social Policy and Information
  - Administration on Aging - http://www.aoa.gov/
  - Centers for Disease Control - www.cdc.gov
  - Child Welfare League of America - www.cwla.org
  - National Center for Children in Poverty - http://www.nccp.org/
  - National Organization of Women - www.now.org
  - NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund- www.legalmomentum.org
  - Urban Institute - www.urban.org

- Pennsylvania Government and Statistical Resources
  - Pennsylvania Department of Education: www.pde.state.pa.us
  - Pennsylvania State Data Center: http://pasdc.hbg.psu.edu/
  - Philadelphia Regional Office, U.S. Census Bureau: http://www.census.gov/rophi/www/

- Federal Statistical Resources:
  - Bureau of Justice Statistics: http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/
  - Bureau of Transportation Statistics: http://www.bts.gov/
  - The National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics http://www1.va.gov/vetdata/
  - National Center for Educational Statistics: http://nces.ed.gov/
  - National Center for Health Statistics: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/
  - Population Reference Bureau: www.prb.org
  - U.S. Census Bureau: www.census.gov
Additional Resources:

Legislation Finding Aid

Social Work Subject Guide

Preferred Terms for Life Stages/Age Groups

Take Home Guide to APA Style

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