

Child Injuries in Childcare Centers: Example from an Eastern State

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This technical research abstract will provide a glimpse at a larger study involving an eastern state with exploring the relationship between child injuries in childcare centers and other regulatory compliance and demographic characteristics. Regulatory compliance does not have many empirical demonstrations of outcome studies in determining if children are healthier and safer in childcare centers. This abstract will attempt to begin to provide some guidance related to this question.

The key variables in this study are the following: child injuries, complaints, program size, and regulatory compliance. Child injuries are the outcome variable, what we are trying to impact. Complaints, program size and regulatory compliance are the independent variables that were collected by the respective state where this study is being conducted. The number of programs in this abstract is 200. The final study will involve over 400 programs. However, the results in reviewing the first 200 programs are so statistically significant that it warranted sharing the results to date.

The results show some very interesting relationships. For example, and this should not be overly surprising, there is not a very strong relationship between child injuries and overall regulatory compliance. When you think about overall regulatory compliance, some rules could influence upon child injuries directly, such as overall supervision, group size, staff child ratios and the overall safety of the childcare center, but when you think of the other rules that make up regulatory compliance involving structural, or record compliance not so direct a relationship. However, it is this more targeted rule identification that does have an effect, and this is very evident when one begins to look at the series of complaints and its relationship to child injuries ($r = .20$; $p < .005$).

The strongest predictor of child injuries is not regulatory in nature but more demographic related to the size of the program. Child injuries generally occur in larger childcare centers rather than in smaller centers ($r = .41$; $p < .0001$). So, it appears that we really want to pay attention to the size of the childcare center, especially if the program has an enrollment of over 100 children.

This brief abstract is presented in the interest of attempting to get additional empirical evidence in the research literature related to regulatory compliance outcomes. So far in this study, it is demonstrating that overall regulatory compliance is not significantly related to preventing child injuries, but specific, targeted rules appear too, such as supervision and staff child ratios. This is consistent with the theory of regulatory compliance in which it is finding the deep-rooted cause structure when it comes to regulatory compliance rather than a more generic regulatory compliance level. This pilot study is being expanded to include all the childcare centers in the particular state and to expand the study to other jurisdictions to determine if these same relationships hold up under greater scrutiny.