

California

Out of the Shadows Index: Shining a Light on Prevention of and Response to Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in the United States



It takes place mostly in the shadows, but sexual violence against children is happening everywhere, irrespective of income level, age, race, religion and sexual orientation. Yet, child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) can be solved, and there are strategies that have proved to be successful in reducing it. When CSEA is approached as a public health problem, with the child at the center of reforms, progress is possible.

The Out of the Shadows Index United States pilot (the US pilot index) aims to understand how states are tackling CSEA both in person and online. It serves as a tool for policymakers, frontline workers and civil society, capturing state action to combat CSEA and identifying key areas for attention.

Background indicators

Population (m)	39.5
Population under 18 (%)	23.7
Median household income (US\$)	75,253
GDP per head (US\$)	73,132

State summary

California has made important progress in its effort to combat CSEA, including its delivery of child-centered response services. There is, however, room for improvement in relevant school-related policies and data collection efforts.

Where has progress been made?

Child-centered medical care: California has developed key standards and protocols for the medical care and forensic examination of child sexual abuse victims, which all hospitals are required to follow. Additionally, the state mandates that staff specialized in the examination and care of child victims of sexual abuse are present, or on call, in hospitals.¹

Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs): California has recognized the critical role CACs play in providing holistic care to child sexual abuse victims by both defining CACs in state law and setting a high bar for accreditation standards for CACs providing services to California's families.

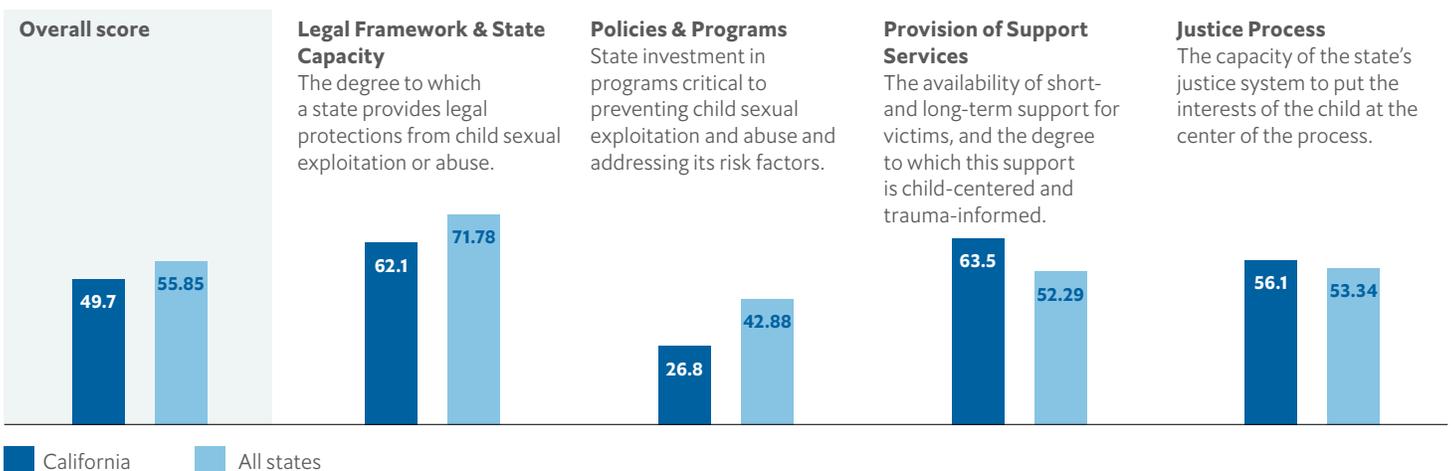
Holistic sex education: California mandates the provision of medically-accurate and culturally-sensitive sex education, including HIV/ STI education, contraception and all sexual orientations and gender identities to students.

What more needs to be done?

Limited data collection: California does not have publicly-available data on CSEA-related arrests, charges or convictions. Furthermore, no clear evidence of engagement with various stakeholders to assess and improve the criminal justice response to CSEA was found.

School policies and services: California has yet to establish standards or codes of conduct for school personnel that include information on appropriate boundaries with students and a requirement for training among school staff on the impacts of trauma and mental health issues. There is also no requirement for school districts to establish school-based or linked mental health services.

Index scores



¹ The state requires each county with a population of more than 100,000 to arrange for professional personnel trained in the examination of victims of sexual assault, including child sexual abuse, to be present or on call either in the county hospital that provides emergency medical services or in any general acute-care hospital that has contracted with the county to provide emergency medical services. In counties with a population of 1,000,000 or more, the presence of these professional personnel shall be arranged in at least one general acute-care hospital for each 1,000,000 persons in the county.

Out of the shadows: Shining light on the response to child sexual abuse and exploitation

Indicator		Score/100	Indicator		Score/100
	Prevention	44.5		Response	61.2
1.1)	Gender Equality, Gender Protection and Marriage Laws	61.7	3.1)	Support - Child Welfare	24.3
1.2)	Consent Laws	50	3.2)	Support - Immediate Support and Recovery	56.6
1.3)	Laws Against CSEA	63.8	3.3)	Rehabilitation & Prevention	75
1.4)	Exemptions & Qualifiers	58.6	3.4)	Children's Response to Online Sexual Harms	81.8
1.5)	Background Checks/Disqualifications	80	4.1)	Child-Centered Emergency Response	72.8
1.6)	Data Availability	59.4	4.2)	Police Capacity	42.9
2.1)	Building Individual Skills & Knowledge	40.7	4.3)	Integrated Response and Coordination	75
2.2)	Educating Providers	16.7	4.4)	Judicial Processes	78.3
2.3)	Promoting Community Education	0	4.5)	Legal Representation & Advocacy	89
2.4)	Fostering Coalitions & Networks	0	4.6)	Monitoring & Evaluation	4.8
2.5)	Changing Organizational Practice	40			
2.6)	Influencing Policy & Legislation	48.4			

 First quartile (100-75)	 Second quartile (74.9-50)
 Third quartile (49.9-25)	 Fourth quartile (24.9-0)

For a full explanation of indicators, weightings and more detailed information on California's performance, please see the interactive Excel model available on the [US pilot index website](#).

In addition to the full methodology, a report outlining the overall findings is also available.

What is the Out of the Shadows Index?

The World Childhood Foundation USA's (Childhood USA) US pilot Out of the Shadows Index, developed by Economist Impact, examines how stakeholders are responding to the threat of child sexual abuse and exploitation in 12 states. It does not attempt to measure the scale of the problem or incorporate information on the prevalence of sexual violence against children in each state. Rather it uses 182 individual metrics aggregated into 22 indicators and grouped into four categories to measure the extent to which states are acknowledging the problem of sexual violence against children, and whether they are implementing measures to prevent and address the problem holistically.

While the US pilot index can help highlight key areas for attention, existing resources such as the Center for Disease Control's [Technical Package on Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect](#) and [Prevent Child Abuse America](#) offer more detailed information and support for implementation of solutions.

Please use the following when citing this state profile:

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