

Louisiana

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)	4.6
Population under 18 (%)	25
Median household income (US\$)	49,469
GDP per head (US\$)	50,619

State summary

Louisiana has enacted important requirements for instruction in public schools on assault awareness and protection for students and taken steps to improve inter-agency coordination in the response to CSEA. Training of frontline workers and weak legal protection and support for the rights of at-risk groups, however, remain a challenge.

Where has progress been made?

Classroom instruction: The state requires public schools to provide age- and grade-appropriate, in-classroom instruction to students on child assault awareness and prevention. Further, instruction for students on internet and cell phone safety and potential risks of online CSEA for students is mandated. School districts are also required to adopt dating violence policies.

State plan on child maltreatment: In 2020, Louisiana released the State Plan on the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, which includes strategies to combat CSEA. A range of stakeholders, including non-profit leaders, teachers, social workers, and youth themselves, were engaged in the development of the plan.

Inter-agency coordination: Louisiana requires the establishment of multidisciplinary teams for the investigation of child abuse within each judicial district, an effort that is supported by the widespread availability of Children's Advocacy Centers throughout the state.

What more needs to be done?

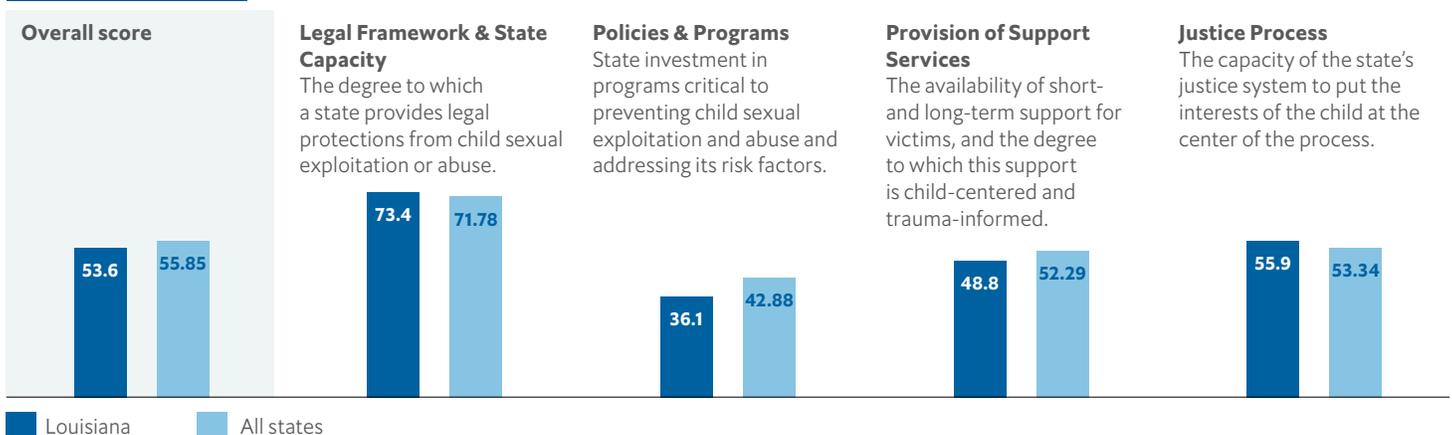
Sexual education: Despite the requirement for schools to provide instruction to students on assault awareness and prevention, Louisiana does not mandate that basic sex education, HIV/STI education or information on contraception be delivered in public schools.

Limited sexual health autonomy for minors: Minors' access to and receipt of sexual health services are limited without the consent or involvement of their parents. For instance, physicians in Louisiana are able to inform a minor's parents or guardians when the minor seeks or receives STI services. It is also not clearly enumerated in law whether a minor can receive a forensic medical examination following a sexual assault without parental consent and/or notification. Lastly, minors' access to abortion is restricted without parental involvement, even in cases of abuse, assault, or incest.

Training of frontline responders: There is a lack of regular training requirements among various frontline workers, including child welfare agencies, law enforcement personnel, and prosecutors and judges, on responding to child sexual abuse in a trauma-informed way.

Limited protection for at-risk groups: Louisiana scores poorly on indicators evaluating legal protections for women's rights and laws and policies supporting LGBTQ+ rights.^{1,2}

Index scores



1 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24582321/>
 2 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3134495/>

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

Indicator	Score/100	Indicator	Score/100
Prevention	54.8	Response	51
1.1) Gender Equality, Gender Protection and Marriage Laws	28	3.1) Support - Child Welfare	48.9
1.2) Consent Laws	75	3.2) Support - Immediate Support and Recovery	40
1.3) Laws Against CSEA	98.2	3.3) Rehabilitation & Prevention	50
1.4) Exemptions & Qualifiers	89.5	3.4) Children's Response to Online Sexual Harms	80.7
1.5) Background Checks/Disqualifications	53.3	4.1) Child-Centered Emergency Response	54.4
1.6) Data Availability	52.8	4.2) Police Capacity	49.9
2.1) Building Individual Skills & Knowledge	60.4	4.3) Integrated Response and Coordination	100
2.2) Educating Providers	66.7	4.4) Judicial Processes	45
2.3) Promoting Community Education	0	4.5) Legal Representation & Advocacy	47.6
2.4) Fostering Coalitions & Networks	100	4.6) Monitoring & Evaluation	4.8
2.5) Changing Organizational Practice	40		
2.6) Influencing Policy & Legislation	18.8		

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 Louisiana'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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