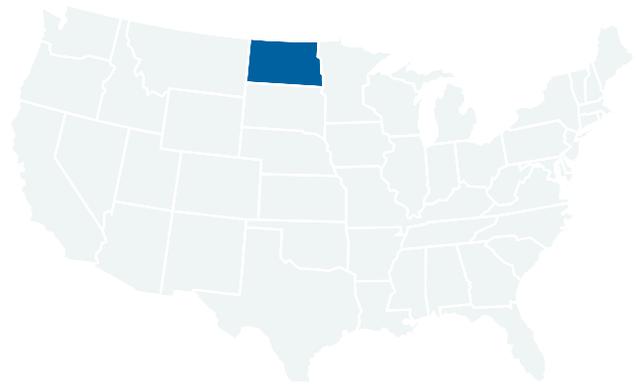


North Dakota

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)	0.8
Population under 18 (%)	24.5
Median household income (US\$)	64,894
GDP per head (US\$)	70,420

State summary

North Dakota has made some progress on combating CSEA in the state, including expanding access to Children’s Advocacy Centers and implementing child-friendly court processes. Greater investment in prevention is needed.

Where has progress been made?

Children’s Advocacy Centers (CACs): Every county in the state is served by a National Children’s Alliance-member CAC¹, ensuring the availability and quality of centers providing child-friendly services to victim-survivors of CSEA and their families. Furthermore, the state has taken steps to ensure reliable funding for CACs in the state, as well as defining CACs in state law and setting a high standard for accreditation.

Medical care: The state has developed a protocol for the examination and treatment of victims of sexual abuse, which includes specific guidance for adolescent and child victims.² The state also precludes hospitals from billing victim-survivors and their families directly for many services and tests following sexual abuse.³

Child-friendly court processes: The state has enacted laws ensuring that child victims of sexual abuse under the age of 15 have an alternative to testifying in the presence of the defendant and that children are protected from duplicative or lengthy interviews interview, testimony, or discovery proceedings. This approach could be strengthened, however, by extending this protection to all children under that age of 18.

What more needs to be done?

Education and help-seeking information: The state does not mandate instruction for students in public schools on identifying and protecting themselves from sexual abuse or information on accessing help if abuse occurs. Schools are also not required to post student safety posters or other help-seeking information in classrooms or hallways.

Prevention strategies and services: North Dakota has made limited progress in implementing programs and services supporting families and children in early childhood, including Early Head State and home visiting programs, which can help prevent child maltreatment. Furthermore, prevention programs and services for individuals who are concerned they might be at risk of sexually abusing children are lacking.⁴

Child welfare agencies: Child welfare caseworkers are not required to have regular training on child sexual abuse, culturally sensitive practice, or the impacts of trauma. The state could also take greater action to assess the caseload of caseworkers and develop caseload standards.

Index scores

Overall score

53.4

55.85

Legal Framework & State Capacity

The degree to which a state provides legal protections from child sexual exploitation or abuse.

65.7

71.78

Policies & Programs

State investment in programs critical to preventing child sexual exploitation and abuse and addressing its risk factors.

36

42.88

Provision of Support Services

The availability of short- and long-term support for victims, and the degree to which this support is child-centered and trauma-informed.

63.2

52.29

Justice Process

The capacity of the state’s justice system to put the interests of the child at the center of the process.

50

53.34

North Dakota

All states

1 <https://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/cac-coverage-maps/>

2 Although this protocol is an important step, the state has yet to enact a requirement for hospitals to employ or contract staff trained to provide forensic medical examinations and specialised care to child victims of sexual abuse.

3 North Dakota prohibits hospitals and emergency rooms from directly billing victims of sexual abuse for pregnancy tests, STI tests, and related medications. These efforts could be strengthened further by covering costs associated with injuries sustained during the abuse, emergency contraception, and long-term mental health counselling.

4 <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/CAN-Prevention-Technical-Package.pdf>

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

Indicator	Score/100	Indicator	Score/100		
Prevention		Response			
	50.9		59.1		
1.1)	Gender Equality, Gender Protection and Marriage Laws	38.8	3.1)	Support - Child Welfare	32.9
1.2)	Consent Laws	75	3.2)	Support - Immediate Support and Recovery	73.3
1.3)	Laws Against CSEA	88.8	3.3)	Rehabilitation & Prevention	50
1.4)	Exemptions & Qualifiers	57.1	3.4)	Children's Response to Online Sexual Harms	70.7
1.5)	Background Checks/Disqualifications	30	4.1)	Child-Centered Emergency Response	49.6
1.6)	Data Availability	58.9	4.2)	Police Capacity	27.3
2.1)	Building Individual Skills & Knowledge	34.4	4.3)	Integrated Response and Coordination	75
2.2)	Educating Providers	33.3	4.4)	Judicial Processes	50
2.3)	Promoting Community Education	33.3	4.5)	Legal Representation & Advocacy	30
2.4)	Fostering Coalitions & Networks	0	4.6)	Monitoring & Evaluation	40.5
2.5)	Changing Organizational Practice	30			
2.6)	Influencing Policy & Legislation	53.7			

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 North Dakota'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:

Economist Impact. 2022. Out of the Shadows - US Pilot: Shining a Light on Prevention of and Response to Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in the US. North Dakota State Profile. Economist Impact, London, UK.

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