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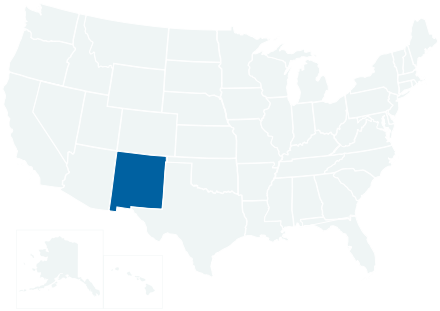

New Mexico

Estimations of the scale, scope and cost of child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSAE) in the United States are alarming.[1] The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that approximately one in four girls and one in 20 boys will experience sexual abuse during childhood in US,[2] while the estimated lifetime cost per child sexual abuse victim is $282,734 million.[3,4] The good news is that CSAE is preventable. A range of interventions have been identified to help prevent child abuse and sexual violence from occurring in the first place and to minimize the impacts on survivors and their families.[5,6,7]

Economist Impact's Out of the Shadows Index, supported by World Childhood Foundation USA, was designed to shine a spotlight on state action—and inaction—to address CSAE. The assessment includes more than 170 metrics aggregated into 22 indicators and grouped into four categories to gauge the extent to which states have introduced essential measures to prevent and respond to this pressing issue. It aims to be a tool to highlight areas for prioritization, drive change, and benchmark progress.

The following state profile was created as part of the second iteration of the Out of the Shadows Index (2024). For full findings and insights from the 2025 index, visit www.childhood-usa.org

2025 results

Score	Rank
48.7/100	27/51

Background indicators

Population (m)	2.12
Median household income (USD)	53,992
Poverty rate (% below poverty level)	18
Educational attainment (% with a bachelor's degree or higher)	28
Female representation in state government (%)	44
Investment in education per pupil (USD):	12,127

State overview (2024)

Although New Mexico has made progress in tackling CSAE, increased investment is needed to guarantee a more comprehensive and holistic approach to this pressing issue. Specifically, greater focus could be placed on strengthening prevention efforts and ensuring a trauma-informed and child-friendly response.

State spotlights

New Mexico requires **age-appropriate and evidence-based sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention training** for public school students in ninth through 12th grade.[8]

New Mexico's Interpersonal Violence Data Central Repository collects sexual assault data, including data on offences committed against children, from law enforcement agencies, service provider agencies and courts across the state. The analyzed data are published annually at the state and county level to help planning, practice and policy development.[9]

Priority areas for future focus

Strengthen the legal framework against sexual abuse by:

- Setting a minimum age for marriage[10] and requiring all marriage license applicants to provide official proof of their age; and by
- Adopting a clear and explicit statutory definition of sexual consent.[11]

Boost prevention capacity through the development of a statewide child sexual abuse prevention plan or strategy, encompassing in-person and online abuse. Reforms should include:

- Enhancing the comprehensiveness of sex education, requiring that sex education and instruction on HIV/STIs include information on consent and be evidence-based, culturally appropriate and inclusive of *all* students;
- Mandating that child sexual abuse prevention education includes instruction on potential abuse that can be experienced online; and by
- Requiring regular training on child sexual abuse and teen dating violence for employees and volunteers of youth-serving organizations beyond schools.[12]

Guarantee that children have access to services of the highest standards by:

- Mandating the use of Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs)[13] and trained forensic interviewers in all cases of suspected child sexual abuse; and by
- Ensuring that CACs across the state have access to adequate and consistent funding.

Promote a trauma-informed response by:

- Mandating ongoing, statewide training for child protective service investigators, law enforcement and prosecutors on providing a trauma-informed response to child sexual abuse; and by
- Ensuring that children up to the age of 18 have access to measures protecting against re-traumatization during criminal proceedings.[14]

Support survivors' access to justice by eliminating the criminal statute of limitations for all child sexual abuse crimes *and* the civil statute of limitations for child sexual abuse claims against all defendants.

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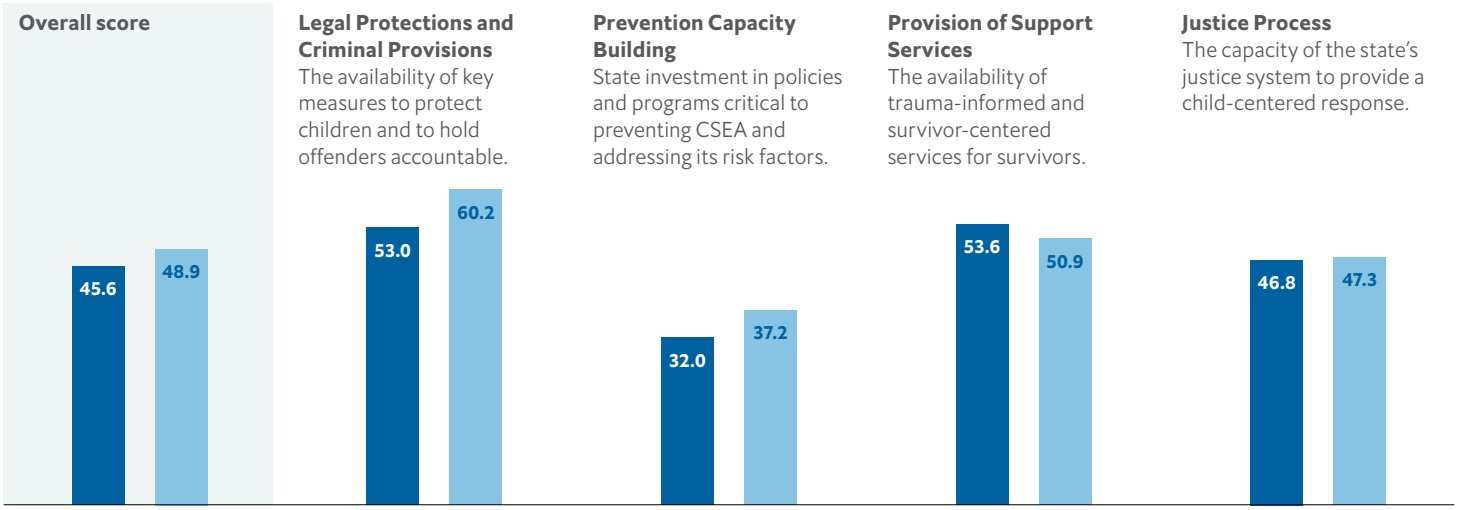
What leaders on the ground are saying

Leaders of the CAC movement in New Mexico underscore the importance of a holistic approach to addressing the root causes of sexual violence. Jess Clark, the Director of Sexual Violence Prevention at New Mexico Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, elucidates: "In New Mexico, we understand that child sexual abuse prevention must start by centering the experiences of those at the margins and building protective communities that allow young people to exist as their fullest selves. Coalitions of organizations across New Mexico are doing this by organizing to reduce economic insecurity for all children and families through policies like paid family leave, expanding the child tax credit, further investing in early childhood education, and addressing the growing housing crisis. By shifting towards focusing on social determinants of health, we can prevent child sexual abuse."

Index scores (2024)

New Mexico | 28-state average



Issue spotlights[15] (2024)

Creating protective environments		
Mandated sex education and HIV/STI instruction	Sex ed / HIV/STI instruction	◐
Comprehensiveness of sex education and HIV/STI instruction (if/when provided)[16]	Scale of comprehensiveness	1/7
Mandated sexual abuse prevention and awareness education	Yes / no	●
Mandated online sexual abuse prevention and awareness education	Yes / no	○
Required school dating violence policies	Yes / no	○
Required training on child sexual abuse (CSA) for educators	Yes / no	●
Required training on CSA for youth-serving organization employees	Yes / no	○
Educator code of ethics: appropriate teacher/student boundaries	Yes / no	●
Addressing risk and protective factors		
Statewide child sexual abuse prevention plan	Yes / no	○
Child marriage laws	18 without exception / required proof of age	◗
Mandated parental leave	Yes / no	○
Non-discrimination statutory protections[17]	Protection for sexual orientation / gender identity	◐
Legislated minimum wage above the low-income threshold	Yes / no	○
Income-eligible children with access to early head start	%	9
Eligible children under age 3 served in evidence-based home-visiting programs	%	5.7
Regular collection of prevalence data on child sexual abuse	Yes / no	○

Building trauma-informed systems		
Statute defining CACs in line with national standards[18]	Yes / no	●
Statute requiring the use of CACs in suspected CSA cases, where available	Yes / no	○
State funding for CACs: general revenue and special revenue	General revenue / special revenue	◐
Mandated training for child protective services investigators[19]	Child sexual abuse / trauma	◗
Mandated training for law enforcement	Child sexual abuse / trauma	◗
Mandated training for prosecutors	Child sexual abuse / trauma	◗
Preventing retraumatization in court: testifying by alternative means in CSA cases	Younger children / all minors	◐
Preventing retraumatization in court: hearsay exception in CSA cases	Younger children / all minors	◗
Supporting justice and healing		
Medical care following sexual abuse: minors' authority to consent	Yes / no	○
Medical care following sexual abuse: right to an advocate	Yes / no	●
Rape kit reform	Some reform / full reform	◐
Criminal statute of limitations: full elimination for all CSA crimes	Yes / no	○
Civil statute of limitations: full elimination for all CSA claims	Yes / no	○
Revival or window law for expired civil claims	Yes / no	○
Crime Victims Compensation eligibility: extended filing period for survivors of CSA[20]	Yes / no	●
Crime Victims Compensation eligibility: alternatives to police reports for survivors of CSA[21]	Yes / no	○

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Endnotes:

1. The index and profile may refer to specific forms of child maltreatment or sexual violence (eg, child sexual abuse or child sexual exploitation) to distinguish between findings or areas of research.
2. https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childsexualabuse/fastfact.html#:~:text=Many%20children%20wait%20to%20report,States%20experience%20child%20sexual%20abuse
3. $282,734 is the average lifetime cost for female victims of non-fatal child sexual abuse (CSA). For male victims, it is approximately $74,691 (although this lower estimate is likely influenced by the insufficient data available on productivity losses). The lifetime cost for victims of fatal CSA per female and male victim was estimated, on average, to be $1,128,334 and $1,482,933, respectively. All estimates pertain to the year 2015.
4. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29533869/#:~:text=Estimating%2020%20new%20cases%20of,%241%2C482%2C933%2C%20respectively%2C%20and%20the%20average
5. https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/CAN-Prevention-Resource_508.pdf
6. https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/SV-Prevention-Resource_508.pdf
7. https://www.togetherforgirls.org/en/resources/what-works-to-prevent-sexual-violence-against-children-evidence-review
8. Minors aged 16 or 17 are permitted to marry in New Mexico with parental consent or with court authorization as requested by a parent/legal guardian. Minors of any age under 16 are permitted to marry with judicial authorization if requested from a parent/legal guardian or where an applicant for marriage is pregnant (NM Stat. Ann. § 40-1-6).
9. https://nmcsap.org/resources/reports/
10. NM Stat. Ann. § 22-13-1(H)(1)
11. This definition should include reference to consent being "freely" or "voluntarily" given.
12. Currently, all school district personnel, school employees, school volunteers, contractors and contractors' employees are required to complete evidence-based training on child sexual abuse and assault within the first year of employment (NM Stat. Ann. § 22-10A-32). No similar requirement exists, however, for employees of youth-serving organizations beyond schools.
13. Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) are organizations located throughout the US that help facilitate a multidisciplinary and child-centered response to CSAE. These centers bring together several of the key actors—law enforcement, child protective services investigators, medical and mental health professionals, forensic interviewers, victim advocates, and more—under one roof, helping to minimize the number of times a child has to be interviewed and offering critical therapeutic and other support to children and their families.
14. Testimonial aids can help protect a child who has already been the subject of sexual abuse from incurring further trauma. This includes avenues by which child victims or witnesses of sexual abuse may testify by an alternative method outside of the courtroom, such as via closed-circuit television. Many states also have statutory exceptions for child hearsay—or the admissibility of certain out-of-court statements made by a child, such as those made to police or forensic interviewers—which have been widely established for use in cases involving sexual abuse.
15. The research for the 2024 index was conducted between March and September 2023. As such, the findings reflect the most recent available data at the time the research was completed.
16. "Comprehensiveness" is assessed based on the following standards: whether the state has a law or statewide rules, regulations or standards with the force of law requiring that sex education and HIV/STI instruction be evidence-based, medically accurate, culturally appropriate and inclusive of all students, and whether related courses are required to include information about contraception and consent.
17. This figure indicates whether statewide laws or policies explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity in all of the following areas: employment, housing, and education.
18. "National standards" refers to the National Children's Alliance's National Standards of Accreditation.
19. These indicators consider whether the state mandates specialized training for child protective services investigators, law enforcement, and prosecutors on CSA and/or trauma at regular intervals (eg, every two years). A separate indicator assesses basic training requirements for mandated reporters in the state more broadly.
20. This indicator considers whether state law establishing eligibility for the state's Crime Victim Compensation Programs provides an explicit time frame exception that is applicable to survivors of CSA (eg, minor victims of crime have up to the age of 21 to file a claim).
21. This indicator assesses whether state law establishing eligibility for the state's Crime Victim Compensation Programs provides alternatives to making a police report for survivors of CSA (such as reports made to child protective services, a sexual assault counselor, or a CAC employee; a restraining or civil protection order granted to the victim; or records from a sexual assault forensic examination). Limited, time bound, or vague exceptions to this requirement were not considered.

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