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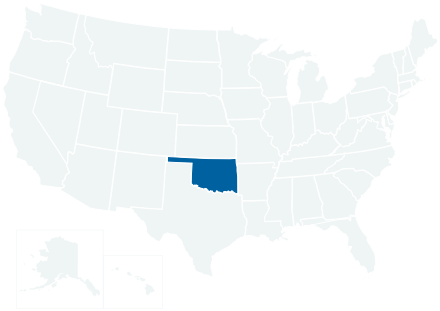

Oklahoma

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
48.6/100	28/51

Background indicators

Population (m)	4.05
Median household income (USD)	55,826
Poverty rate (% below poverty level)	16
Educational attainment (% with a bachelor's degree or higher)	26
Female representation in state government (%)	20
Investment in education per pupil (USD):	10,498

State overview (2025)

Although Oklahoma has taken several important steps to address CSAE, increased investment is needed to ensure a more comprehensive and holistic approach to this pressing issue. In particular, the state should consider enacting more robust training requirements for employees of youth-serving organizations and adopt measures that can facilitate survivors' access to justice and compensation.

State spotlights

The **Oklahoma State Plan for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (2019–23)**, published by the Oklahoma State Department of Health, sets out specific actions, milestones and metrics related to the prevention of child sexual abuse. This includes goals to increase the number of sexual abuse prevention programs and provides parents with the tools to "be their child's first and best resource for sexual education".[8]

Oklahoma mandates that all investigations of child sexual abuse be carried out by one of the state's multidisciplinary teams—comprising professionals from various disciplines such as law enforcement, child protective services workers and the district attorney—and according to standardized protocols.[9] Some of these teams are "freestanding", while others have become one of Oklahoma's 20 accredited Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) that conduct investigations while also offering a more comprehensive set of services for children and families.[10]

Priority areas for future focus

Address risk factors and build community awareness of sexual violence by:

- Establishing a minimum marriage age of 18 without exception;
- Running a public awareness campaign focusing on child sexual abuse and relationship violence among children and teens; and by
- Requiring regular training on child sexual abuse and teen dating violence for employees and volunteers of youth-serving organizations beyond schools.[11]

Ensure young people have the information needed to stay safe and healthy by:

- Mandating comprehensive sex education—requiring that sex education be provided in all public schools and emphasize evidence-based, medically accurate and inclusive content for *all* students; and by
- Mandating that student-focused child sexual abuse prevention education covers potential abuse that can be experienced online.

Support survivors' access to justice and compensation 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; and by
- Reforming the state's eligibility requirements for crime victim compensation to address potential barriers to critical financial assistance for survivors of child sexual abuse (eg, to cover costs related to medical and therapeutic care).[12]

Guarantee children's access to services of the highest standards by ensuring that CACs across the state have access to adequate and consistent funding.

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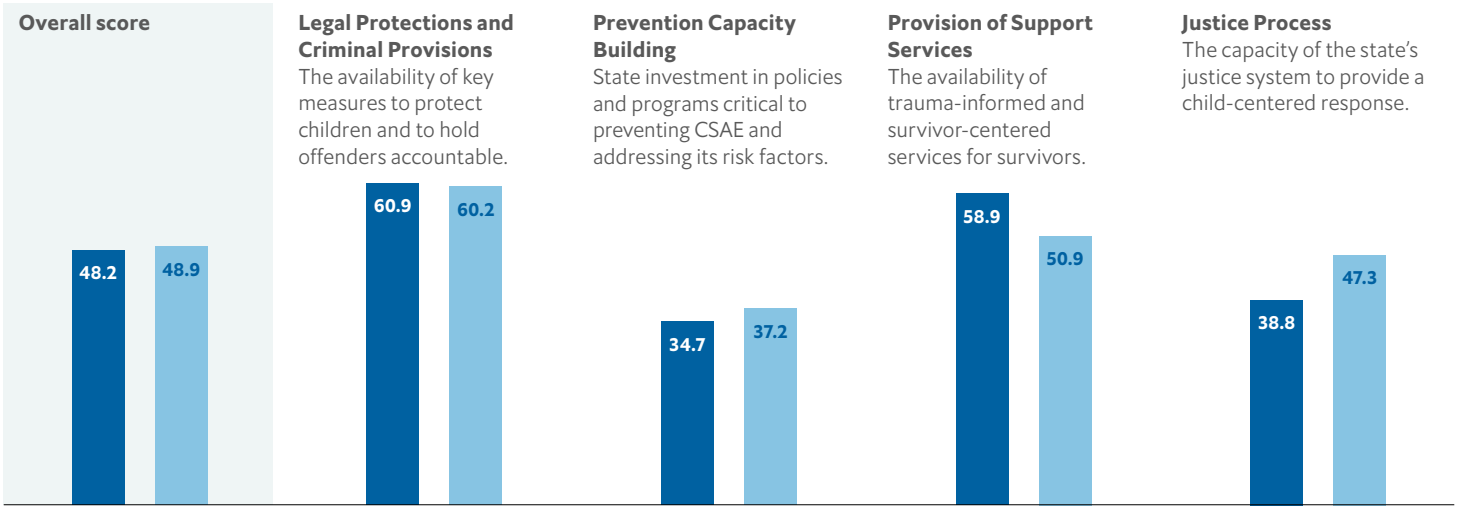
The United States Out of the Shadows Index: Oklahoma

What leaders on the ground are saying

For leaders of the CAC movement in Oklahoma, access to reliable funding is a top priority. Carrie Little, Executive Director of Children's Advocacy Centers of Oklahoma, explains, "Funding is an issue for virtually all CACs in Oklahoma. The majority of our accredited CACs are nonprofits, many of which are located in rural communities where resources can be especially scarce. Every year, accreditation standards and best practices require that CACs spend more on the programming, which we know to be critical to the safety and well-being of children. As demand continues to rise–with our centers serving an increasing number of children–our resources, unfortunately, remain unstable."

Index scores (2024)

Oklahoma | 28-state average



Issue spotlights[13] (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)[14]	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[15]	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	%	10.9
Eligible children under age 3 served in evidence-based home-visiting programs	%	8.2
Regular collection of prevalence data on child sexual abuse	Yes / no	○

Building trauma-informed systems		
Statute defining CACs in line with national standards[16]	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[17]	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[18]	Yes / no	○
Crime Victims Compensation eligibility: alternatives to police reports for survivors of CSA[19]	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. https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/health/health2/documents/ok-state-plan-for-prevention-of-can-2019-2023-final-002.pdf
9. OK Stat. Ann. § 10A-1-9-102
10. 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 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.
11. In Oklahoma, district boards of education must establish professional development programs for certified teachers and administrators of the district, which must include training on the recognition of child sexual abuse at least annually (OK Stat. Ann. § 70-6-194). No similar requirement exists, however, for employees of youth-serving organizations beyond schools.
12. Key barriers that can prevent survivors from accessing victim compensation include set timeframes for when an application can be filed and/or requiring a police report as a condition for eligibility.
13. 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.
14. "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.
15. 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.
16. "National standards" refers to the National Children's Alliance's National Standards of Accreditation.
17. 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.
18. 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).
19. 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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