

Prevention

Child sexual abuse (CSA) poses a serious threat to the health, safety, and development of our nation's children. While there is no precise estimate for the prevalence of CSA, studies indicate that millions of children are impacted by CSA. One recent study of child sexual abuse prevalence estimates an overall prevalence rate of 7.5-11.7%, with girls being disproportionately affected compared with boys.¹ Victims experience both short term and life-long impacts from child sexual abuse, including chronic health conditions and mental health consequences.² Additionally, the lifetime public health and economic costs to society for CSA cases occurring in a single year have been estimated to be \$9.3 billion.³

Due to the pervasiveness of child sexual abuse and the significant consequences to both victims and society, it is imperative to devote more resources to preventing as well as responding to child sexual abuse. Public health, which focuses on creating broad population-level impact, can play an important and unique role in preventing CSA and in complementing the criminal justice-oriented approaches already in place. Taking a public health approach to preventing CSA requires the expertise to identify, track, and analyze the problem; identify factors that increase or decrease risk; implement and evaluate preventive measures and approaches; assure widespread adoption of evidence-based approaches; and track progress on reductions in CSA.

Although the evidence base for effective CSA prevention efforts is small and growing, evidence suggests that preventing CSA is possible at the individual, relationship, and community levels⁴:

- Individual-level prevention programs focus on providing information, treatment, or training to individuals guiding them to alter or manage their behaviors.
- The relationship level examines relationships that may increase the risk of experiencing or perpetrating CSA, such as programs designed to reduce conflict, foster healthy relationships, and build protective factors within families, peers, mentorship relationships, or other bystanders who may witness abuse.
- Community-level prevention programs seek to identify and modify the social, economic, and environmental aspects of the community and create safer spaces where people live, work, go to school, and play.

Many researchers and practitioners advocate for addressing all forms of child sexual abuse, exploitation, and assault in a unified approach due to shared risk factors and intervention approaches.⁵ A comprehensive approach to preventing child sexual abuse involves three types

¹ Catherine Townsend and Alyssa A. Rheingold, "[Estimating A Child Sexual Abuse Prevalence Rate for Practitioners: A Review of Child Sexual Abuse Prevalence Studies](#)," *Darkness to Light*, August 2013. The estimated prevalence rate for girls is 10.7% to 17.4% and the rate for boys is 3.8% to 4.6%.

² <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childsexualabuse/fastfact.html>

³ Elizabeth J. Letourneau, et al., "[The Economic Burden of Child Sexual Abuse in the United States](#)," *Child Abuse & Neglect*, March 2018.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "[Report to Congress on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention](#)," 2019.

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "[Preventing Multiple Forms of Violence: A Strategic Visions for Connecting the Dots](#)," 2016.

of prevention: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary prevention is aimed at stopping violence before it occurs.¹⁰ Secondary prevention is aimed at immediate responses to violence, and tertiary prevention includes long-term responses to those who have been exposed to violence and breaking the cycle of victimization.¹¹

Across all types, an intervention could be directed to prevent victimization or perpetration. Criminal justice approaches have traditionally relied on secondary and tertiary prevention strategies, but there has been increasing interest in primary prevention research and practices in recent years. The VetoViolence website from the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has resources with more information about the basics of violence prevention, along with strategies and approaches to prevent different forms of violence.¹² The Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART) has also funded prevention initiatives in

Minor Sex Trafficking Prevention Programs in the US

The University of New Hampshire (UNH) is conducting research into child sexual abuse prevention.⁶ With funding support from the Department of Justice, the University of New Hampshire (UNH) is currently evaluating the survivor care programs developed by Love146. Love 146 is a nonprofit anti-trafficking organization that offers survivor care and prevention education for youth that are either at high-risk or confirmed survivors of domestic minor sex trafficking.⁷ Formative evaluation procedures will be conducted to inform the future rigorous outcome evaluation, including developing feasible research tools and procedures for involving this vulnerable population. The next phase of this work, which involves an outcome evaluation, was funded by NIJ in FY2022.

Also with funding support from the Department of Justice, Boston University conducted a three-year, longitudinal, multi-site evaluation of the My Life My Choice program, which provides mentorship programs for survivors of domestic minor sex trafficking.⁸ Positive results were seen after just 6 months of participation in the program, and after a year, youth were less likely to have experienced commercial sexual exploitation, to have engaged in delinquent behavior, be arrested or detained by police, and had improved coping skills.⁹

⁶ David Finkelhor and Lisa Jones, "[Prevention](#)," University of New Hampshire Crimes Against Children Research Center.

⁷ National Institute of Justice Grant #2020-V3-GX-0076, "[Improving Outcomes for Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Victims: A Phased Evaluation of the LOVE146 Victim Services Program](#)." See also <https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/awards/15pnij-22-gg-03291-nonf>

⁸ National Institute of Justice Grant #2014-R2-CX-0005, "[A Longitudinal Evaluation of a Survivor-Mentor Program for Child Survivors of Sex Trafficking in the United States](#)."

⁹ Emily F. Rothman, et al., "[A Longitudinal Evaluation of a Survivor-Mentor Program for Child Survivors of Sex Trafficking in the United States](#)," *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 100, 2020.

¹⁰ Roberto H. Potter, Jeanne E. Krider, and Pamela M. McMahon, "[Examining Elements of Campus Sexual Violence Policies: Is Deterrence or Health Promotion Favored?](#)" *Violence Against Women* 6 (12), 2000; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "[Stop SV: A Technical Package to Prevent Sexual Violence](#)," 2016.

¹¹ David S. Lee, et al., "[Sexual Violence Prevention](#)," *The Prevention Researcher* 14 (2), April 2007; Pamela M. McMahon, "[The Public Health Approach to the Prevention of Sexual Violence](#)," *Sex Abuse* 12 (1), 2000.

¹² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "[VetoViolence](#)."

college and university campuses¹³ as well as organizations focused on preventing abuse within the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic movements¹⁴, environments that can present safety risks for children and adolescents. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention continues to fund the Supporting Effective Interventions for Youth with Problematic or Illegal Sexual Behavior Program through the National Center on the Sexual Behavior of Youth, an initiative that supports communities in developing and implementing intervention strategies to prevent offenses on other children.¹⁵ Lastly, the Department of Health & Human Services Office on Trafficking in Persons has dedicated more of its focus to prevention efforts, including funding a Human Trafficking Youth Prevention Education (HTYPE) Demonstration Program, which allows local educational agencies to develop and implement skills and education-focused prevention programs in partnership with anti-trafficking nonprofits as subgrantees.¹⁶

Many primary prevention programs have not yet undergone full evaluations of their effectiveness. However, there is limited but promising research about the effectiveness of primary prevention programs, including several targeted towards adolescents and peer sexual violence. For example, Shifting Boundaries, a program targeting 6th and 7th graders that included targeted interventions and efforts to increase awareness of dating violence over a 6–10 week period, resulted in meaningful reductions in perpetration and victimization of sexual harassment and peer sexual violence, as well as reductions in dating sexual violence victimization, amidst mixed results for other outcomes.¹⁷ A similar program, Safe Dates, which targeted 8th and 9th graders with a 10-session curriculum focused on consequences of dating violence, gender stereotyping, conflict management skills, and attributions for violence, as well as increased services for dating violence victims in the community, showed significant reductions in sexual dating violence perpetration.¹⁸ The prevention education logic model for sexual abuse is also bolstered by the evidence for successful offense reductions with educational programs targeting bullying,¹⁹ general delinquency and aggression,²⁰ all contexts that considerably overlap with sexual abuse behaviors.

Importantly, the above programs were largely primary prevention programs focused on educating youth about peer-to-peer sexual violence. They do not address sexual abuse of younger children by adults, and more research is needed to identify effective prevention interventions for all types of CSA. The increased attention to primary prevention strategies arises from the realization that the problem of child sexual abuse is too large to ever be eradicated only by

¹³ SMART Opportunity ID #SMART-2015-4157, "[SMART FY 15 Campus-Focused Sexual Assault Perpetration Prevention and Education Program](#)."

¹⁴ SMART Award #2018-KY-B8-0001, "[U.S. Center for SafeSport](#)." SMART Award # 15PSMA-21-GG-02193-KYAS, "[U.S. Center for SafeSport - Keeping Young Athletes Safe](#)"; see also <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/>.

¹⁵ OJJDP Opportunity ID #O-OJJDP-2022-171269, "[OJJDP FY 2022 Supporting Effective Interventions for Youth With Problematic or Illegal Sexual Behavior](#)"

¹⁶ Office on Trafficking in Persons, "[Human Trafficking Youth Prevention Education Demonstration Program](#)," 2020.

¹⁷ Sarah DeGue, et al., "[A Systematic Review of Primary Prevention Strategies For Sexual Violence Perpetration](#)." *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 19 (4), 346–362, August 2014.

¹⁸ DeGue, et al., *A Systematic Review*.

¹⁹ Maria M. Ttofi and David P. Farrington, "[Effectiveness Of School-Based Programs to Reduce Bullying: A Systematic and Meta-Analytic Review](#)." *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 7(1), 27–56, 2011.

²⁰ Sandra Jo Wilson and Mark W. Lipsey, "[School-Based Interventions for Aggressive and Disruptive Behavior: Update Of a Meta-Analysis](#)." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 33(2 Suppl.), 130–143, August 2007.

holding individuals accountable for their crimes after a child has been harmed. The large volume of child sexual abuse cases will continue to overwhelm investigators unless more resources are devoted to preventing as well as responding to CSA. It is imperative that investments continue to be made comprehensively and strategically in these efforts.

Insufficient Program Evaluation

Despite the prevalence, investments in the prevention of CSA have been severely lacking. In 1978, Congress authorized 3 to 4 million dollars annually to develop effective prevention, treatment, and law enforcement strategies to address CSA. That funding disappeared in the 1980s and while some funding has recently been appropriated, it has not returned to the same level. Without a significant investment of resources to build this evidence base, there is not enough research to truly guide the growing number of legislative initiatives in this area.

Much of the legislation and public awareness efforts relating to CSA prevention have focused on providing children with prevention education. In many states, this type of education is required by law. These laws have different names across the country, but common names are “Jenna’s Law” or “Erin’s Law”, named in honor of survivor advocates. In some states, prevention education related to child sex trafficking (CST) is also required. According to a 2019 report to Congress from the CDC these programs are often able to demonstrate effectiveness in teaching children the intended information (e.g., how to recognize safe v. unsafe touch, how to report, how to assert your own personal boundaries and respect the boundaries of others) but most programs have never been evaluated to determine if these programs decrease victimization of children.²¹

Furthermore, in some states, including those with statutory requirements, schools can be reluctant to teach on this topic due to parental pushback on the issue, as it may cross over into sex education, an issue fraught with sensitivities. Appropriate education can help youth understand the fundamentals of healthy relationships, such as how to recognize safe and unsafe touch, how to report harassment or exploitation, and how to assert your own personal boundaries and respect the boundaries of others. Safety-focused education, such as that around identifying and responding to instances of abuse and trafficking, only addresses exploitation once the relationship between the child and the perpetrator has gone too far, whereas arming children with

“My daughter was 15 when she met her perpetrator, and she was missing for 3 weeks. During that time, I had been working in social services for many years. I was knowledgeable about the resources available and how to access them, how to move up chains of command, and to navigate things and get things done. But it’s different and overwhelming when it’s your family.”

“I think more education on child sexual abuse is needed in the school setting if the training material can be done in an appropriate way. I understand sex education is tied to morals and values that are specific to each family, but if presented in a way that focuses on safety education, it’s really valuable. There are kids that hear the information and then go to counselors sharing that they think their friend is at risk. We just can’t deny that this is a real threat to teens with access to the internet.”

Parent of a child sex trafficking survivor

²¹ CDC, [“Report to Congress on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention.”](#)

the knowledge and confidence they need to better navigate relationships could help reduce their risk.

The Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Forces are required to develop and deliver internet crimes against children public awareness and prevention programs (Section 103(8) of PROTECT ACT). However, there is no evaluative research demonstrating whether internet safety programs are effective in reducing child sexual exploitation, despite a desire from the ICAC units to collaborate and explore the impacts of prevention messaging. Recent research reviews conclude these efforts are most likely ineffective based on research comparing internet safety programs to established principles of effective prevention programs.^{22,23} Even though minimal resources have been dedicated to implementing these programs, sufficient resources have not been allocated to evaluate the effectiveness of these approaches.

Of course, it should never be a child's responsibility to stop their own abuse by adults. It is up to adults and communities to protect children. This is the philosophy of Stop It Now!, an organization that offers various prevention programs aimed at helping adults take responsibility to prevent and stop CSA.²⁴ Building a true culture of safety around children must also include education for adults to identify and interrupt signs of abuse, as well as interventions targeted towards adults with regular interaction with children and those at risk of perpetration.

Research

Though important research about preventing child sexual abuse is ongoing, a much bigger investment in child sexual abuse prevention is needed to understand more about these crimes and how to effectively prevent them. Critical areas for additional research include epidemiologic data on the magnitude, nature, and causes of child sexual abuse; research on risk and protective factors; and research on effectiveness of strategies to prevent child sexual abuse and child sex trafficking. This research should be cross-disciplinary because there is a need for consistent definitions related to child sexual abuse so that the research can be compared and aggregated. For more details on these recommendations, see the CDC Report to Congress on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention.²⁵

²² Lisa Jones, Kimberly J. Mitchell, and Wendy A. Walsh. "[Evaluation of Internet Safety Materials Used by Internet Crimes Against Children \(ICAC\) Task Forces in School and Community Settings, 2011-2012 \[United States\]](#)," *Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research*, March 2016.

²³ David Finkelhor, et al., "[Youth Internet Safety Education: Aligning Programs With the Evidence Base](#)," *Trauma Violence Abuse*, April 2020.

²⁴ Stop It Now!, "[About Us](#)," 2021.

²⁵ CDC, "[Report to Congress on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention](#)."

Siloed Expertise in Prevention Activities

Many different types of professionals with unique areas of expertise overlap in efforts to protect children from sexual abuse, including human development and sexuality educators, sex offender treatment providers, positive youth development program developers, child sexual abuse prevention experts, educators, therapists, etc. Unfortunately, these disciplines often work in their own silos and do not listen to and incorporate important research and practice findings from other fields even though effective approaches to prevention need to be holistic in approach and scope. These siloes are often reinforced by funders and policymakers, who may prioritize implementation strategies over prevention or certain aspects of child exploitation over others. With limited funding available for this work, many non-profits and NGOs are forced to be territorial in their work to retain existing funding levels, rather than collaborate and develop cross-disciplinary approaches.

Differing Approaches Across States and Agencies

Prevention education efforts are hampered by a state-by-state approach with little coordination between states on standards and little guidance available for local jurisdictions about how to determine which programs are effective in preventing child sexual abuse. Some states have taken the initiative to develop technical guides to assist in understanding different prevention curriculums such as *Georgia's Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Prevention Technical Assistance Resource Guide*²⁹ and the *Human Trafficking Prevention Curriculum Matrix*.³⁰ These guides are useful, but also underscore how complicated it is to compare and evaluate the plethora of prevention curricula available to local jurisdictions.

Work occurring within any given agency is far too often siloed from similar work in any of the other departments also addressing issues relating to child exploitation, in many of the ways that states are. Overall, the “patchwork” approach by different states and disciplines makes it extremely challenging to consolidate knowledge, evaluate what is effective, and integrate all the

Australia's Approach to Prevention

The Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has spent approximately \$342 million across five years to better understand the issue of child sexual abuse in Youth-Serving Organizations (YSOs). This funding has generated 17 volumes of findings that can contribute to our understanding of underlying risk factors related to abuse in YSOs.²⁶

In 2019, Victoria, the second largest state in Australia, legislatively mandated that all YSOs, which include schools, residential facilities, medical clinicals and hospitals, as well as other youth organizations, comply with seven child safe standards.²⁷ A set of national principles for child safe organizations has also been developed and endorsed by all Australian state and territorial governments.²⁸ This standard may offer a model for the U.S. to consider when building a basic set of child safe standards for YSOs.

²⁶ Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, “[Final Report](#),” December 15, 2017.

²⁷ Commission for Children and Young People, “[Being A Child Safe Organisation](#).”

²⁸ Australian Human Rights Commission, “[National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#),” 2018.

²⁹ Georgia Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force, “[Georgia's Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation Prevention Technical Assistance Resource Guide](#),” July 2017.

³⁰ North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault, “[Human Trafficking Prevention Curriculum Matrix](#),” August 2020.

necessary expertise into comprehensive approaches, much less scale-up those best practices at the national level.

Advancing Technology

Advancements in technology make it easier to proactively identify and remove child sexual abuse material (CSAM) and content related to child sex trafficking, such as advertisements from the internet. Removal of this exploitative online material minimizes further trauma due to widespread circulation. The increased ability and dedication of resources to find this content is apparent in the dramatic reporting increases to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) CyberTipline in recent years. Despite these technological advances, the sheer volume of reports of online child sexual exploitation remains a tremendous challenge. Continued investment is needed to keep pace with advancing technology and the ever-increasing volume of exploitive content circulating online. Additionally, improvements should be made to public-facing systems for reporting exploitative content to technology companies. Technology is needed to both prevent easy access to CSAM by offenders and proactively remove CSAM from the web to interrupt the ongoing victimization for children whose exploitation continues every time the image or video of their abuse is viewed, even long after any hands-on assault has ended. Continued investment in all these areas is important to help these programs keep pace with rapidly evolving technological challenges in keeping children safe from sexual abuse in all its forms.

The technology industry partners are critical in preventing CSA and building a culture of safety around children. Several companies are proactively considering efforts to stem child sexual exploitation online, with a recent example being Apple's announcement of expanded protections and child safety features on their devices.³¹ These efforts have been postponed following discussions with stakeholders about balancing the privacy concerns from users with the government's endeavors to fight child sexual exploitation.³² In any case, the dialogue around these potential interventions confirms that the industry must be a fully engaged partner to prevent the spread of child exploitation on their platforms.

Significant Developments

Offender Focused Prevention Efforts

Until recently, the focus of prevention programs has been on preventing victimization, collecting data on the prevalence of victimization, and developing better investigation and response to reports of victimization. In the last few years, there have been significant shifts and accomplishments that expanded efforts from solely preventing victimization to also include a focus on preventing repeat or potential child sexual abuse offenders from offending.

³¹ Chloe Setter, "[Apple's Fresh Approach To Child Protection Can Be A Game-Changer](#)," WeProtect Global Alliance, August 11, 2021.

³² David K. Li and Olivia Solon, "[Apple Delays Plans To Scan Devices For Child Sexual Abuse Images](#)," NBC News, September 3, 2021.

There is growing recognition that if we want to prevent child sexual abuse before a child is harmed, we must also look at ways to target those at risk of offending. Perpetration-focused initiatives are critical to a comprehensive approach to prevention. An example of this approach is Thorn’s online deterrence program, where an individual looking for CSAM is redirected to offender treatment options.³³

There has also been a shift towards “outer-layer” prevention³⁴ – prevention that happens by changing the community, the environment, and social norms. The focus of these efforts is decreasing risk factors that increase the likelihood of causing harm and increasing protective factors that reduce the likelihood of harm. Some DOJ resources have enabled examination of the impact of the environment on effective prevention in both campus and sports organizations. The CDC has identified this strategy as “creative protective environments” and the CDC Foundation, with technical assistance from the CDC, is currently developing resources based on the best available evidence to support diverse youth-serving organizations (YSOs) in preventing CSA and ensuring safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments.³⁵

In recent years, in response to high-profile child sexual abuse cases, such as the horrific abuse of more than 150 young gymnasts by USA Gymnastics team doctor Larry Nassar, there have been legislative initiatives elevating the importance of child sexual abuse prevention. In 2017, the U.S. Center for SafeSport was established and, since then, SafeSport has developed extensive educational materials about situational prevention, conducted abuse prevention training, published an inaugural athlete culture and climate survey,³⁶ required organizational prevention policy requirements,³⁷ and regularly audited sport National Governing Bodies.³⁸ As noted earlier, many states have passed legislation requiring or recommending child sexual abuse prevention in schools, although these efforts tend to focus on victimization rather than offending. Some states have recently added requirements to include child sex trafficking prevention as well. Prevention online training materials prepared by nonprofits funded in part by the Department of Justice’s OJJDP and SMART offices are used by numerous youth sports organizations.

There has also been a shift in recent years towards looking at the intersection of discrimination, poverty, and inequity with child sexual abuse. By looking at how we can better address these issues within families and communities, there may be opportunities to decrease risk factors to children’s safety. For example, efforts to support safe and available housing resources can reduce risk, because a child’s guardians will not be put into positions of accepting housing in situations that could jeopardize their child’s safety because they cannot afford anything else.

³³ <https://www.thorn.org/deterrence-prevent-child-sexual-abuse-imagery/>

³⁴ Joan Tabachnick, “Preventing Perpetration: Promising Advances in Situational and Developmental Approaches,” *The Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking*, May 4, 2021.

³⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in Youth-Serving Organizations: Creating Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships and Environments,” June 4, 2021.

³⁶ <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/survey-results/>

³⁷ <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/training-and-education/minor-athlete-abuse-prevention-policies/>

³⁸ <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/audit-reports/>

Interdiction for the Protection of Children (IPC) Program

In 2008, the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) began to create what is believed to be the first program designed to train patrol officers to identify signs of child sexual exploitation and other forms of abuse during routine encounters with citizens. Since that time the Interdiction for the Protection of Children (IPC) program has expanded to other states and has become an innovative, proactive policing approach to prevent criminal offenses through active intervention as well as intelligence gathering. Initially, the foremost area of concern for IPC was child abduction. The focus has since broadened to include trafficking and a wide variety of other crimes involving the abuse, exploitation, and/or neglect of children.³⁹

During the past five years, the U.S. Marshals Service has partnered with the Texas DPS to assist with the ongoing development of the program. USMS personnel also supplement the training cadre for the two-day IPC course. The USMS Behavioral Analysis Unit gathers intelligence on multiple types of indicators. The goal is to better identify and validate observable signs during law enforcement encounters that suggest something is amiss. Although some signs are obvious, others are subtler; without training, these indicators can be easily overlooked or explained away by even experienced officers. With training, law enforcement personnel learn to quickly recognize signs of harm. IPC training courses are funded, in part, by a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office.⁴⁰ To date, graduates of the program have rescued more than 591 children during routine law enforcement encounters.

Strategic Response

Short-Term Goals	Long-Term Goals
Housing: Identify and utilize funding sources to support the development and operation of housing for minors who have experienced or are at risk of child sexual trafficking and exploitation	Collaboration: Enhance multidisciplinary collaboration focusing on racial and other inequities relating to access to resources, including those with past experiences of victimization
Outreach: Explore standardized prevention programs for ICAC task forces, including training to supply the effective presentation and messaging skills needed to successfully execute prevention programs; establish standards for prevention best practices and training based upon research, including an understanding of the impact on disproportionately affected populations.	Resources: Establish a centralized entity to oversee prevention resources at the national level for professionals and families; enhance access to resources for mandated reporters and investigators working to prevent and address online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

³⁹ Bourke, M. L., Prestridge, D., & Malterer, M. B. (2016). Interdiction for the Protection of Children: Preventing sexual exploitation one stop at a time: *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 30, 68-75.

⁴⁰ Grant numbers: 2019CKWXK021, 2018CKWXK002

<p>Education and Outreach: Evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of prevention education across the United States at the federal, state, and local level; identify other gaps in prevention education and outreach, including adequate safety information available through online platforms; explore legislation needed to implement prevention and education strategies.</p>	<p>Research and Evaluation: Identify key areas for continued research and evaluation to ensure that resources, programs, and legislation are based upon best available science; enhance existing federal data collection efforts on CSA to improve their relevance and comprehensiveness; evaluate prevention policies, programs and practices for effectiveness and scalability.</p>
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Training

To increase common understanding of effective prevention practices across the country, there is a clear need for easily accessible cross-disciplinary training for professionals who provide prevention education alongside school administrators and other stakeholders responsible for implementing prevention programs. Once ample supportive evidence for prevention programs has been collected, a national clearinghouse for resources would be an ideal body to lead the development and implementation of these types of trainings for the field. The CDC’s VetoViolence website⁴¹ is an example of the type of information and resources that would benefit from wide dissemination to prevention decision-makers and program developers. Another important training topic, particularly for ICACs and other law enforcement agencies developing their own prevention programs, is applying prevention science from other domains to the CSA space.

<p>Education-Focused Prevention Programs in the Non-Profit Sector</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Love146 Not a Number program offers an interactive child trafficking and exploitation prevention curriculum designed to provide youth with information and skills that inspire them to make safe choices and identify and utilize healthy support systems that may decrease their vulnerabilities.⁴² Several states are currently leveraging the Not a Number Trafficking Prevention Curriculum. • 3Strands Global Foundation⁴³ offers the PROTECT program, an online platform created by Arizona State University to both train and enhance awareness of all school staff on child exploitation, abuse, and trafficking. PROTECT addresses the required mandates for human trafficking prevention training and curriculum in most states across the country. All staff, after their initial training, can download the K-12 curriculum which provides engaging interactive lessons and developmentally appropriate strategies structured to build student self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, resilience and responsible decision making. Participants can also connect with peers to discuss what they have learned and how they can create an inclusive trauma-informed environment in their school.

⁴¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “[VetoViolence](#),” 2019.

⁴² Love146, “[Not a Number](#).”

⁴³ 3Strands Global Foundation, <https://www.3strandsglobalfoundation.org/education>

- The A21 education curriculum *Bodies Are Not Commodities* is a resource for high school educators and students. It is designed to equip high school students with tools to combat human trafficking both globally and locally. It includes 5 sessions, aligned to education standards, as well as a facilitator guide, student guide, and videos. An evaluation of the program found that participants were highly engaged in the content and as a result, the lessons had an influence on students' attitudes and positions of advocacy regarding human trafficking.⁴⁴
- Teach2Reach in North Carolina is working with researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to develop evidence-informed and developmentally appropriate content and protocols to teach students in North Carolina public schools about sex trafficking and connect at-risk students with needed services.

Funding and Research

There is a lack of funding for primary prevention of child sexual abuse. While significant funding has been designated for specific prevention programs or policies, there has not been a widespread investment in prevention. A dedicated investment in prevention would not only help limit the number of children from being victimized but would reduce the tremendous societal costs of child sexual abuse. This is a burgeoning space, with several promising frontiers for investment. Critical needs include:

- An investment in data management and research; specifically:
 - Creating datasets with representative CSA perpetration prevalence and incidence data
 - Updating existing data reports to document the changes in prevalence and funding
 - Enhancing existing federal data collections to allow for better trend assessment and policy analysis in the context of CSA⁴⁵
 - New research to explore the impact of exploitation on disproportionately affected populations
 - Understanding risk and protective factors for first time perpetrators to inform the primary prevention of CSA
 - Exploring the differences in these dynamics across various forms of CSA
- Establishing clear standards for program evaluation and interpretation of the effectiveness of a policy or intervention

The CDC is currently rigorously evaluating several CSA prevention programs, specifically programs designed to prevent CSA in education settings and targeting adults with sexual interest

⁴⁴ Lacia M. Scott, Christina Crenshaw, and Elena M. Venegas, "[Bodies Are Not Commodities: Examining A21 Curriculum's Impact on Students' Knowledge, Attitudes, and Advocacy About Anti-Human Trafficking Rights and Issues](#)," *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 5:1, 25-42, 2019.

⁴⁵ Relevant data collections include the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, the National Incident Based Reporting System, the National Crime Victimization Survey, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, the National Survey of Children Exposed to Violence, the National Juvenile Online Victimization Survey, and the Youth Internet Safety Survey. See also <https://crimesolutions.ojp.gov/>

in children.⁴⁶ The CDC Foundation is also currently updating their 2007 report on preventing child sexual abuse in youth-serving organizations.⁴⁷ The CDC's prevention-focused research portfolio will continue to grow as new funding is awarded to rigorously evaluate CSA programs. This work is critical, as it not only will enable the evaluation of existing programs but also support the development of new prevention approaches that are based on solid, evidence-backed frameworks and insights.

Legislation/Policy

There are many initiatives across the U.S. focused on child sexual abuse prevention education and policies, but there is a lack of consistent standards, evaluation of what is working, and funding. These mandates, often issued without additional dedicated funding to support them, stretch limited resources, especially without a clear direction. Legislation requiring schools to provide prevention education to students, educators, and parents also needs to provide adequate funding to implement, monitor, evaluate, and expand prevention education programs.

Similarly, consideration should be given to the PROTECT Act's requirements for ICAC Task Forces. Task forces should have access to prevention education and awareness programs created by subject matter experts with substantive prevention expertise and experience. The ICAC Task Force Public Awareness Working Group has developed a Prevention and Communication Plan that identified the need to create a collaborative approach with technology safety subject matter experts to develop safety prevention resources addressing some of the most pressing child exploitation issues, including self-produced sexually explicit material. A national prevention clearinghouse, as discussed above, could provide guidance for internet safety programs supported by federal funding such as those provided to ICAC Task Forces. Prevention programs should also specifically include evaluation components to assess effectiveness.

⁴⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "[Child Sexual Abuse Funded Research](#)," September 23, 2020.

⁴⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "[Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in Youth-Serving Organizations: Creating Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships and Environments](#)," June 4, 2021.