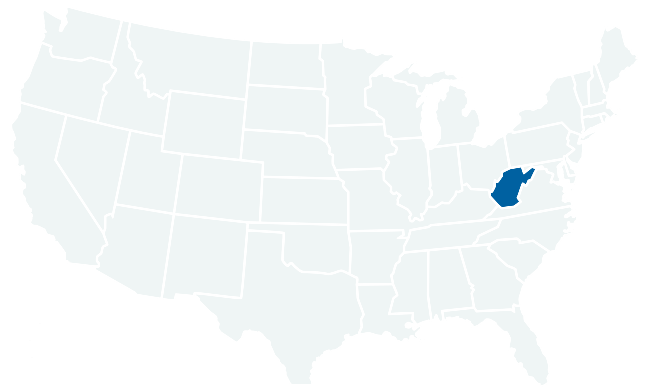


# West Virginia

## 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)	1.8
Population under 18 (%)	21.2
Median household income (US\$)	46,711
GDP per head (US\$)	42,832

### State summary

West Virginia has established a number of policies and programs aimed at preventing CSEA, including mandatory education on this issue for both students and educators. However, gaps persist, including training for criminal justice professionals and weak legal protections for the rights of at-risk groups.

#### Where has progress been made?

**Sex education:** West Virginia mandates that public schools provide sex education and HIV/STI instruction, including information on contraception.<sup>1</sup> Schools are also required to deliver age-appropriate safety information on sexual abuse to students, including on the potential risks of social media usage. Furthermore, parents are unable to opt their children out from participation in such instruction.

**Training educators:** Public school employees are required to undergo training on developing skills, knowledge, and capabilities related to preventing CSEA and recognizing and responding to abuse. Further training on the impacts of trauma and mental health is also mandated. This training is supported by a requirement for districts to establish school-based or school-linked mental health services.

#### What more needs to be done?

**Training for professionals:** West Virginia has a lack of required training for criminal justice professionals: neither law enforcement nor prosecutors and judges are mandated to receive regular training on child sexual abuse or providing a trauma-informed response.

**Medical care:** Although state law prohibits hospitals from billing victim-survivors of sexual abuse directly for the cost of medical forensic examinations, similar protection is not extended to many related services, such as STI tests and medication, emergency contraception and treatment of related injuries.<sup>2</sup>

**Limited protection for at-risk groups:** West Virginia scores poorly on indicators evaluating legal protections for women's rights and laws and policies supporting LGBTQ+ rights.<sup>3,4</sup>

### Index scores

#### Overall score

60.4

55.85

#### Legal Framework & State Capacity

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

73.4

71.78

#### Policies & Programs

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

58.5

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.

45.3

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.

54.7

53.34

West Virginia

All states

1 These efforts could be further strengthened by adding requirements that sex education be medically accurate, evidence-based, and culturally responsive.

2 Please note that victim-survivors may be able to access support to help pay for medical bills through West Virginia's victim compensation program if they meet the program's eligibility requirements.

3 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24582321/>

4 <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
	<b>Prevention</b>	<b>66</b>		<b>Response</b>	<b>48.2</b>
1.1)	Gender Equality, Gender Protection and Marriage Laws	35.6	3.1)	Support - Child Welfare	50.3
1.2)	Consent Laws	75	3.2)	Support - Immediate Support and Recovery	47.6
1.3)	Laws Against CSEA	94.3	3.3)	Rehabilitation & Prevention	25
1.4)	Exemptions & Qualifiers	43.3	3.4)	Children's Response to Online Sexual Harms	84.2
1.5)	Background Checks/Disqualifications	90	4.1)	Child-Centered Emergency Response	35
1.6)	Data Availability	51.4	4.2)	Police Capacity	27.1
2.1)	Building Individual Skills & Knowledge	53.3	4.3)	Integrated Response and Coordination	100
2.2)	Educating Providers	66.7	4.4)	Judicial Processes	70
2.3)	Promoting Community Education	66.7	4.5)	Legal Representation & Advocacy	46.7
2.4)	Fostering Coalitions & Networks	66.7	4.6)	Monitoring & Evaluation	28.6
2.5)	Changing Organizational Practice	70			
2.6)	Influencing Policy & Legislation	35.5			

<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:#004a7c; border:1px solid #004a7c;"></span> First quartile (100-75)	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:#0072bc; border:1px solid #0072bc;"></span> Second quartile (74.9-50)
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:#4db8e6; border:1px solid #4db8e6;"></span> Third quartile (49.9-25)	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:#a6c9e6; border:1px solid #a6c9e6;"></span> Fourth quartile (24.9-0)

For a full explanation of indicators, weightings and more detailed information on West Virginia'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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