



keep kids safe
prevention. healing. justice.

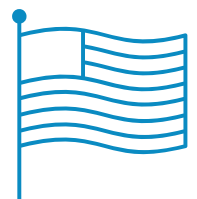
**U.S. NATIONAL BLUEPRINT TO
END SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST
CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS**



NOVEMBER 18, 2021

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*World Day for Prevention, Healing and Justice
to End Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents*



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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We thank the diverse range of stakeholders, organizations, and the over 10 coalitions who provided input and recommendations. Over 50 nonprofit and community-based organizations, academics, researchers, advocates, and individuals from around the United States contributed to the National Blueprint. A special thanks to Dr. Paul Zeitz and Jenny DiJames for their tireless contributions in drafting this Blueprint.

The development of the National Blueprint would not have been possible without rigorous engagement from a broad group of stakeholders, and its implementation will rely on our continued work together. We look forward to continuing this collaboration in service of our vision of ending sexual violence against children and adolescents in the United States and around the world.

STEERING GROUP



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ABOUT KEEP KIDS SAFE

Keep Kids Safe (KKS) was formed in June 2020 to catalyze a national movement to end sexual violence against children and adolescents by advocating for “prevention, healing, and justice” policies and programs implemented across the United States. The unique voices and perspectives of adult survivors of sexual violence as children have guided and informed our federal policy advocacy. Keep Kids Safe, partners, and allies created the National Blueprint to share a vision for transformative federal policy to go to scale with prevention, healing, and justice policies and programs, including specific objectives that require executive and legislative action.

AGENDA FOR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ACTION



Children and adolescents are exposed to sexual violence in multiple forms. child sexual abuse, incest, child sexual exploitation, rape, online child sexual abuse and exploitation, sexual violence in dating/intimate relationships, sexual violence among peers, child marriage, and sexual harassment, among others. Sexual violence is happening in families, local communities, schools, sports, places of worship, and online. Children and adolescents of every age, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity are impacted, as are children with physical, intellectual, and cognitive disabilities. Millions of Americans are survivors and affected family members.

Violence against children and adolescents contributes to an insidious cycle of violence throughout people's lifetimes and can lead to juvenile-on-juvenile and adult perpetration. Additionally, child sexual violence victims are at increased risk of re-victimization and are at twice the risk of intimate partner violence (IPV) later in life.¹ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has noted that these adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) impact victims' short-term and long-term social and emotional development. Many victims experience devastating mental health challenges, including depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, and increased risk for suicide or suicide attempts.²

Child sexual violence was already rampant before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. During the pandemic, lockdowns, increased online activity, economic instability, and other factors only exacerbated the situation. Many children have been hidden from the caring adults, community members, and mandated reporters who could have protected them. Additionally, children are spending unprecedented amounts of time online, increasing exposure to technology-facilitated violence, sexual exploitation, and abuse. Disruptions in routine, isolation, more time spent at home and online, financial insecurity, stress, and anxiety increased the risk and incidents of violence against children.

As the United States recovers from the pandemic, it is critical that our national response include keeping kids safe from sexual violence at home, in schools, online, in sports, in communities, and in places of worship. We must seize this opportunity to ensure that all children and adolescents are safe. *The time to act is now.*

By making smart federal policy and funding investments, we can deliver practical and cost-effective programs that can break the cycle of violence in the United States. The latest evidence and data have identified *three equally important and mutually interdependent pillars of action:*



Prevention: Prevention efforts must be taken to scale in families, communities, schools, nonprofit organizations, sports, and online



Healing: Children, adolescents, and adults who experienced sexual violence as children must have access to culturally appropriate, child- and survivor-centered services so they can engage in processes that help them heal



Justice: Children, adolescents, and adults who experienced sexual violence as children must have access to fair child- and survivor-centered justice

In our call to end sexual violence against children and adolescents, we acknowledge that sexual violence has been fueled by poverty and disenfranchisement. Addressing the longstanding structural barriers that Black, Indigenous, minority, and impoverished communities face in accessing a variety of critical services should be prioritized. In some cases, the systems designed to protect individuals and families have actually caused harm and exacerbated existing inequities. Active involvement of people who have been historically underserved and underrepresented, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality is important to the success of the priorities identified in this National Blueprint. Similarly, children with disabilities face unique obstacles and challenges to accessing services. Finally, inadequate sexual health education remains a major challenge.

We urge President Joe Biden and the U.S. Congress to launch initiatives to end sexual violence against children and adolescents that drive action to deliver prevention, healing, and justice solutions at full scale in the United States and globally:

1. **Approve an executive order mobilizing a whole-of-government approach for prevention, healing, and justice of sexual violence against children and adolescents to include the following:**
 - a. **Declare November 18 the National Day for Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Prevention, Healing and Justice** and mobilize support for a congressional resolution and global action.


This initiative would establish an annual day of observance for promoting awareness on the prevention, healing, and justice of sexual violence against children and adolescents. The day of recognition would serve to acknowledge the magnitude of the problem and importance of sustained long-term funding for organizations focused on prevention, healing, and justice; unite organizations and advocates across disciplines through promoting partnerships and sharing resources for effective prevention, healing, and justice; and help ensure that survivor voices and experiences are heard, acknowledged, and honored.

(Executive; Legislative)

- b. **Mobilize financial resources** from existing funding, the Fiscal Year 2022 and 2023 budget and appropriations cycles, as well as, mobilize investments from the private sector, foundations, and other donors for domestic and global programs.

This should include funding Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grants at the highest possible levels, as well as focused federal funding for child sexual abuse prevention research in the CDC's budget, Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) funding, Victims of Child Abuse Act (VOCAA) and child advocacy training funding, and online child abuse and exploitation program funding, among others.

(Executive; Legislative)



We must rededicate ourselves to creating a society where sexual violence—including sexual assault and sexual harassment—is not tolerated, where survivors are supported, and where all people have an opportunity to thrive without fear of abuse or assault.

— **PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATION O. NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND AWARENESS MONTH, MARCH 31, 2021**

- c. **Declare sexual violence against children and adolescents a U.S. public health emergency** and authorize an annual U.S. Surgeon General's report that defines the problem and progress in our national response.

The Secretary of Health and Human Services can declare a public health emergency. The Secretary should declare sexual violence against children under 18 years of age a public health emergency and issue an annual U.S. Surgeon General's report that is proactively and widely disseminated to the public and incorporated into training for service providers and educational institutions. The Surgeon General is encouraged to update incidence and prevalence statistics, prioritize research, and dedicate resources annually.

(Executive; Department of Health and Human Services)

- d. Convene a **federal interagency task force** on the prevention, healing, and justice of sexual violence against children and adolescents, chaired by the White House and coordinated by an appointed White House czar, to develop and implement a national plan to end sexual violence against children and adolescents.

The establishment of a senior leadership position in the White House specifically focused on children and adolescents with authority to coordinate with federal agencies with direct roles in combatting child sexual abuse will elevate the importance of this work. Unifying these agencies, under the direction of the White House and with appropriate resources, will result in more efficient and cost-effective policy and results. Representatives serving on this task force could include:

- Department of Health and Human Services (CDC, ACF, NIH, U.S. Surgeon General);
- Department of Education (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education);
- Department of Justice (OJJDP, OVC, NIJ);
- Department of Homeland Security (HSI, C3);
- Department of State;
- U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID);
- Corporation for National and Community Service;
- Department of Defense;
- Department of Treasury;
- White House Offices of Public Engagement (OPE) and Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

Utilizing a whole-of-government approach, this task force would be charged with meeting regularly and working together to coordinate timely responses to ending sexual violence against children and adolescents. This work should include regular reports to the President and to Congressional committees of authorization and appropriations, including an annual National Strategy to End Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents. (Executive)

- e. Establish an interagency “End Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents” **data working group** to develop standard definitions for child sexual abuse prevention, healing, and justice that can be applied across the federal government. The data working group should focus on regularly upgrading statistics, data collection methods and systems, and reporting protocols to establish a tracking system accessible across government. (Executive)

The working group will ensure that relevant federal datasets are disaggregated by age, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and geography when available. It will support agencies in implementing actions that expand and refine the data available to the federal government to measure the extent of sexual violence against children and adolescents and the equitable impact of programs and services that address the diverse needs of the American people. The data working group should publish a data blueprint annually. (Executive)

- f. Hold a **Keep Kids Safe National Summit** on the prevention, healing, and justice of sexual violence against children and adolescents. It would be convened by the White House and coordinated by the White House czar, supported by appropriate executive agencies (e.g., DHHS, DoE, DHS, DOJ), and attended by survivors and



My Administration is committed to expanding efforts to improve prevention initiatives, enhance trauma-informed responses to assist children and adolescents impacted by sexual violence, and work toward healing and justice.

— **PRESIDENT JOSEPH R. BIDEN, APRIL 8, 2021**

families; thought leaders; researchers; federal, state, and local leaders; and others from allied organizations around the United States. It would promote awareness and generate executive and legislative recommendations and best practices from experts in the field. (Executive)

- g. Mobilize the federal government, state governments, civic groups, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector to **launch public education and engagement campaigns** to shift societal norms, end stigmatization, and encourage public action, including promoting and participating in the national day of recognition on November 18 each year.

The White House Office of Public Engagement (OPE), Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, and the Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, and Justice should coordinate public education and engagement strategies at the local, state, regional, and national levels with the participation of concerned citizens, survivors, community leaders, nonprofit leaders, universities, the private sector, and local and state government to break the conspiracy of silence, end stigmatization, and encourage public action so that sexual violence

is widely recognized, understood, and seen as preventable and unacceptable.
(Executive)

2. Develop and pass into law comprehensive national legislation, the “Keep Kids Safe Act,” and include an expanded annual budget request and appropriations.

The initiative will encourage a bipartisan, bicameral congressional coalition to effectively address the public health crisis of sexual violence against children in the United States. It will support and build upon the groundbreaking work of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), the Victims of Child Abuse Act (VOCAA), the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), the CDC Rape Prevention and Education Program (RPE) and related research, and the PROTECT Our Children Act of 2008. The congressional coalition should work to pass comprehensive national legislation, increase federal funding for programs and research, and expand federal incentives to improve state laws to increase the reach of trauma-informed and evidence-informed or evidence-based prevention, and effective healing and justice programs to prevent violence, protect survivors, reduce the cost of sexual violence to society, and to provide access to justice for children and adolescents. (Legislative; Executive)

3. Establish a diverse bipartisan “Keep Kids Safe Commission” by congressional statute or executive action.

Established through executive order or legislation, the commission should be comprised of experts including researchers, practitioners, bipartisan policymakers, and, importantly, adult survivors to act as a catalyst to collect and synthesize data and research so that policymakers and the public would garner a comprehensive understanding of the crisis, the costs to society, and the potential to scale up available solutions to prevent abuse, heal, and ensure justice. Modeled after the Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities³ in the United States, and successful commissions in other countries,⁴ the commission should be directed to focus on systemic issues, be informed by an understanding of individual cases, and make findings and recommendations to better protect children against sexual abuse and alleviate the impact of abuse on children when it occurs. This work should include public hearings, private sessions, a policy and research program, and the development of findings and recommendations. As one example, we applaud Australia’s leadership in establishing an eSafety Commissioner with the power to deal directly with online child sexual exploitation and support congressional efforts to model this policy and practice in the United States. (Executive; Legislative)

4. **Expand U.S. support for global programs to end sexual violence against children and adolescents, both through support to U.S. government bilateral programs, as well as a U.S. fair share contribution to the multilateral End Violence Fund to support survivor leadership and implementation of prevention, healing, and justice programming at scale.**

Building on U.S. leadership in advancing children's well-being, there is an important opportunity to galvanize global action to end sexual violence against children and adolescents by increasing international funding to scale prevention, healing, and justice programs; through expanded and coordinated bilateral programs; and through multilateral investment opportunity through the End Violence Fund. This investment will elevate the leadership and influence of the United States in addressing gender-based violence across the lifespan, and in the protection of children and adolescents from violence globally. (Executive; Legislative)

Details on the building blocks and implementation priorities for an expanded and comprehensive U.S. national effort to end sexual violence against children and adolescents, can be found in the following sections of the National Blueprint.



We will aim to improve prevention initiatives and enhance trauma-informed responses domestically and globally to assist children and adolescents affected by sexual violence, as well as adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse, and expand access to healing and justice.

— **WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL STRATEGY ON GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY, OCTOBER 22, 2021**

THEORY OF CHANGE

How will the U.S. look different?

US Government will set goal to end sexual violence against children and adolescents in the U.S. and establish and fund critical programs to achieve this goal.

What will change for children?



Prevention

Trauma-informed and evidence-informed/ based prevention efforts will be taken to reach all families, communities, schools, youth-serving organizations, sport and online to ensure the safety of all children.



Healing

Children, adolescents and adults who experienced sexual violence will access equitable, child- and survivor-centered trauma-informed and evidence-informed/based services and engage in processes that help them heal.



Justice

Children, adolescents and adults who experienced sexual violence will access fair, child- and survivor-centered protection and justice.

Research, evidence, and data will inform prevention, healing and justice.

How will the change take place?

Social norms are shifted to break the conspiracy of silence.

Transformative policies and programs are developed, implemented, taken to scale, and funded.

Stigma will be reduced for survivors and their families.

Public awareness, education and engagement will increase, so that sexual violence is seen as widespread and preventable (e.g. empathy skills, consent)

Bold and ambitious global and national agendas will increase attention, pressure, accountability, and political will to act.

Funding will increase significantly.

What needs to change?

Children and adolescents are subjected to the longest lasting public-health crisis of sexual violence that affects 1 in 13 boys and 1 in 4 girls, and has lifelong impacts on health and well-being. It happens in homes, communities, schools, youth-serving organizations, and in sport, places of worship, and online. Children and adolescents of every age, race, ethnicity, caste, religion, nationality, sexual orientation and gender identity are affected. Sexual violence needs to be recognized as unacceptable, criminal and preventable. This will require broad and sustained mobilization of survivors and their allies. It will also require a fundamental shift in norms, attitudes and willingness to act.



Children, youth, and families are at a time of crisis across the nation as the health, economic, and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have taken a heavy toll. We are at a unique crossroads, presented with an opportunity to rebuild better systems and create more prosperous futures for all of our nation's children and adolescents with an eye toward promoting long-term racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic equity and equality. The issue of sexual violence against children and adolescents should be a priority within these efforts to build back safer. Given the strong evidence that there is a cycle of violence across the lifespan, where children who are exposed to violence are at greater risk of either perpetration and/or further victimization in adulthood, prevention and support for child survivors will contribute to preventing violence in the longer term.⁵

There are no exact estimates of the percentages of children and adolescents in the United States who experience some form of sexual violence. However, according to the CDC⁶, child sexual abuse is a significant but preventable public health problem. Many children wait to report or never report sexual abuse. Although estimates vary across studies, the data show:

- About 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys experience sexual abuse at some point in childhood.
- One in 10 children will be sexually abused before the age of 18, a rate of sexual victimization 2.3 times higher than adults experience.⁷
- 91% of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by someone the child or child's family knows.
- The total lifetime economic burden of child sexual abuse in the United States in 2015 was estimated to be at least \$9.3 billion. This is a conservative figure since an estimated 90% of child sexual abuse is never reported.
- Sexual violence starts early. One in 3 female rape victims experienced it for the first time between 11 and 17 years of age, and 1 in 8 reported that it occurred before age 10. Nearly 1 in 4 male rape victims experienced it for the first time between 11 and 17 years of age, and about 1 in 4 reported that it occurred before age 10.⁸

In addition, children who are victims of sexual exploitation are often arrested on prostitution charges and punished as perpetrators rather than seen as victims and survivors who need supportive services⁹:

- In 2019, 214 juveniles were arrested for prostitution and commercialized vice.
- Girls account for approximately 71% of juvenile prostitution arrests.

- Black children make up nearly 51% of all juvenile prostitution arrests, the most of any racial group.¹⁰

Sexual violence in dating relationships is also high for adolescents. According to the CDC, among high school students, about 1 in 8 girls and 1 in 26 boys report having experienced sexual dating violence in the last year.¹¹

The handful of studies that exist show that rates of sexual violence are seven to 10 times higher for children and adolescents with cognitive and physical disabilities. Gender nonconforming and transgender children and adolescents, as well as LGBTQ+ adolescents, are also at greater risk.

Moreover, a recent study indicated that 13% of current and former childhood athletes experienced one form of sexual abuse at least once as a child in sports.¹² Further, elite athletes experienced higher rates of sexual assault than lower-level athletes.¹³ Three out of four families in the United States with school-aged children have at least one child playing an organized sport—a total of about 45 million youth. More than 8 million high school students participate in organized sports, and more than 460,000 NCAA athletes compete in collegiate sports every year. With sport participation levels as they are today, there are an estimated 5.91 million survivors of sexual abuse in sports in the United States alone.

There are many reasons why incidents of sexual abuse go unreported, including the tactics of abusers that make it difficult for children to tell, collusion from family members, repressed memories and disassociation as a means of coping with trauma, legal barriers, and institutions and organizations focused on protecting their reputations rather than the children they serve, among others. With an estimated 12% of child sexual abuse reported to authorities each year,¹⁴ studies have shown that underreporting of sexual abuse of minors can be attributed in large part to the fact that a majority of child victims do not reveal their abuse until later in life, if at all.¹⁵ Studies suggest that many victims—as many as 33%—never tell anyone they were abused.¹⁶ One study found that 60% to 80% of victims of childhood sexual abuse wait until adulthood to disclose their abuse.¹⁷ In fact, the average age of disclosure of child sexual abuse in a study of 1,000 victims was 52 years old.¹⁸

Research, data, and evidence are essential to effectively understand the magnitude of the problem, support policies and programs that are science- and evidence-based, and track progress (or lack thereof) in effectively addressing the problem. Unfortunately, the data, statistics, and evidence are outdated, have substantial gaps in information, or are nonexistent. It is essential that we institute stronger systems to better understand the magnitude of the problem as well as which interventions are working. Although advances have been made in understanding what actually works to effectively prevent and respond to sexual violence against children and adolescents, significant gaps in understanding still exist. Historically, the U.S. investment in prevention, healing, and justice for all forms of sexual violence against children has been inadequate given

the magnitude of the problem. These gaps in data and evidence highlight the need for increased focus on and investment in research and data collection as essential components of an expanded and coordinated response.

Sexual violence against children and adolescents is a public health emergency that has been put on the backburner for far too long and has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, many children have been hidden from safe adults, mandated reporters, and trained educators and childcare workers who could have protected them. Online child abuse and exploitation, already one of the biggest and fastest growing crime challenges nationally, has also spiked as children have spent even more time online. Investing in systems that not only prevent child abuse from happening in the first place but also in those that focus on effective trauma-informed and evidence-informed or evidence-based interventions to assist children and families during and after crisis is critical. Equally important are systems that can help survivors heal, thrive, and seek justice to hold offenders accountable and prevent further victimization.



Sexual violence against children can be prevented, with the last two decades showing considerable advances in evidence-based policies and programs around the world and in some parts of the United States.¹⁹ However, the United States lags behind other wealthy countries in terms of following the science and effectively implementing comprehensive and equitable primary and secondary prevention training programs, policies, and research at the national level aimed at preventing abuse before it occurs. More resources are needed to develop, evaluate, and implement evidence-based primary prevention strategies to ensure the safety of all children, which includes increasing resources for schools and community-based and youth-serving organizations.

We urge President Biden, his administration, and Congress to consider these building blocks for comprehensive prevention-healing-justice executive action and legislation:

PREVENTION TRAINING, PROGRAMS, AND POLICY

Support healthy development of children. Children need quality relational engagement from adults and supportive communities to develop in healthy ways. Early assessment of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) followed by adequate support and services can also help to diminish the effect of victimization or the development of abusive behaviors, whether face-to-face or technology-facilitated.

Promote healthy relationships and through social-emotional learning and child abuse prevention education. Ensure that quality education promoting healthy relationships and healthy sexuality—that is both research-based and developmentally appropriate—is available for all children, youth, and the adults who educate them, inclusive of face-to-face and technology-facilitated interactions.

Invest in programs that prevent initial perpetration of child sexual abuse and exploitation. Create policies that support efforts to prevent initial perpetration of child sexual abuse and exploitation, including technology-facilitated interactions, and with special attention to children and youth with problematic sexual behaviors.

Increase funding for schools, youth-serving organizations, community-based organizations, and child- and family-serving agencies to implement child sexual abuse prevention education training:

- Funding should support training programs to educate all students and all child-serving professionals about the prevention of child sexual abuse and online sexual exploitation.

- The training should be trauma-informed and evidence-informed or evidence-based, culturally responsive, linguistically correct, include medically accurate information about psychosexual development, and be age/developmentally appropriate.
- New and expanded access to grants with increased funding should be made available to these organizations to build their capacity to develop effective prevention programs and community engagement initiatives to prevent all forms of sexual violence against children, including those working with parents and those focusing on serving communities of color or traditionally underserved communities, including LGBTQ+ communities, in a more holistic manner.
- This instruction should be informed by child and adolescent developmental research, including effects that adverse childhood experiences have on brain development, protective factors, and how to build resiliency.
- Comprehensive training plans should include adequate resources and technical assistance so that all child-serving professionals can receive appropriate pre-service training, in-service and/or continuing education, on-site training, and ongoing professional development related to child sexual violence.
- There should be coordination across agencies to develop a framework of mandatory reporting *and response* that includes training on implicit bias, identification of family need, and other issues.
- Youth-serving organizations should be required to implement trauma-informed and evidence-based or evidence-informed prevention policies and practices to safeguard children from abuse, including those implemented by third-party organizations.
- Funding will include a requirement that grantees participate in federally funded evaluations of the implementation and impact of the prevention efforts.
- Research is also needed to evaluate the elements of effective policies and practices across sectors, including but not limited to schools, nonprofit organization settings, sports and recreation, and culturally specific organizations.
- Investments are needed in programs that prevent first-time perpetration by youth with problematic sexual behaviors.
- The U.S. federal government needs to develop a standard definition of child-serving professionals.

(Legislative or Executive Budget Directive; Department of Education, Every Student Succeeds Act eligible uses include child sexual abuse prevention; Department of Health and Human Services; designate these programs an eligible activity under funding enacted as part of the American Rescue Plan.)

Increase funding for schools, youth-serving organizations, community-based organizations, and health care, law enforcement, and child- and family-serving agencies:

- Funding should support these organizations to provide training for all professionals designated by state law as mandated reporters.
- The training should be trauma-informed and evidence-informed or evidence-based, culturally responsive, and linguistically correct. It should include the specifics of how to respond appropriately when a child discloses sexual abuse, the legal responsibilities of mandated reporters within the state, and the logistics of how a report is to be made and to whom, e.g., a designated person within the organization and/or child protective services or law enforcement.
- There should be coordination across agencies within a state to develop a framework of mandatory reporter training that includes implicit bias, identification of family need, and other related issues.
- Training should be informed by child and adolescent research, including effects that adverse childhood experiences, including child sexual abuse, can have on brain development, protective factors that can help mitigate the harm, and how to build child resiliency.
- Funding should support colleges, universities, medical schools, law schools, seminaries, and other institutions of higher education to provide rigorous training for students entering careers where they will serve either as a mandated reporter or as a child protection professional.
- Training should begin at the undergraduate and graduate levels and, once these students enter child-serving organizations, bridge to in-service training and ongoing professional development.
- The training curricula should be research-supported, trauma-informed and evidence-informed or evidence-based, and interdisciplinary. It should incorporate experiential learning, with the inclusion of the intake and investigation process and the impact of the child welfare system on children and families.
- The federal government should also provide training and technical assistance to aid institutions of higher education in developing and implementing courses that meet these standards.
- The U.S. federal government needs to develop a standard definition of child-serving professionals - or provide a definition that includes covered professions.

Establish interdepartmental regional resource centers for prevention, healing, and justice of sexual violence against children and adolescents.²⁰ Urge the secretaries of the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, and Justice to establish a network of interdepartmental regional resource centers to end sexual violence against children and adolescents to promote and provide training and technical assistance to federal agencies, states, and community-based organizations around implementation of a set of standards, best policies, and practices, and to identify funds that can be pooled from their agencies to provide this assistance.

(Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, Justice)

Urge passage of the Jenna Quinn Law. This bipartisan legislation, named after survivor/advocate Jenna Quinn, is modeled after legislation first passed in Texas that mandates K-12 training for students and adult school personnel. This bill amends CAPTA by making federal grants to eligible entities for increasing evidence-based or evidence-informed trainings on sexual abuse prevention education and reporting to teachers, school employees, students, caregivers, and other adults who work with children. Additionally, it ensures these grant recipients coordinate with local educational agencies to make the training available. Many elements of Jenna Quinn Law require additional funding and oversight to ensure implementation.

The Every Student Succeeds Act allows states the option to use federal education funding for age- and developmentally appropriate child sexual abuse awareness and prevention education for K-12 students, school employees, and parents. Funding is a substantial roadblock and not all states have passed or implemented such laws. Some elements of Erin's Law were adopted as part of the Every Student Succeeds Act and allow states the option to use current federal education funding for age- and developmentally appropriate child sexual abuse awareness and prevention education for K-12 students, school employees, and parents.

(Legislative; Department of Health and Human Services)

Enact bipartisan legislation that models the comprehensive provisions recommended in A Call to Action for Policymakers and Advocates: Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Legislation in the States.²¹

Educating School and Youth-Serving Organization Employees and Youth

The bipartisan federal legislation can help protect children from sexual abuse by funding programs in schools and youth-serving organizations (YSOs), including summer camps, that provide age-appropriate lessons to early childhood, elementary, and secondary school students and evidence-based trainings to school and youth organization employees on how to prevent, recognize, and safely report sexual abuse. These trainings would also be made available to parents and guardians. Currently, 34 states and Washington, D.C., have passed child sexual

abuse prevention education legislation; 27 require it and eight only encourage it. However, there is much variability among these laws. Incentives to states to promulgate laws that standardize the education and training of school and YSO employees and students would eliminate these discrepancies.

Screening of Applicants for Positions in Schools and Youth-Serving Organizations

Training, while necessary, is insufficient on its own to address this complex public health problem. Prevention policies, paired with training and transparency policies, hold the best promise of reducing child sexual abuse and its devastating impact on children, their families, and our communities. While only 12 states and Washington, D.C., have passed legislation to address various gaps in current screening policies and practices, none of these laws include the comprehensive set of provisions required to create a strong safety net for children. To support schools and YSOs to adopt policies to keep children safe and their institutions better protected from civil and criminal liability from sexual abuse lawsuits, the federal government should incentivize the promulgation of state laws that standardize screening of new school and YSO employees to eliminate applicants who may pose a sexual safety threat to children. Such state laws should prohibit schools and YSOs from entering into confidentiality agreements with employees engaged in sexual misconduct for the purpose of suppressing information or an investigation about the misconduct, and should prohibit the aiding and abetting of an employee engaged in sexual misconduct to secure a position in another school or YSO.

(Legislative; Department of Education)

Promote access to comprehensive employee and volunteer background check screenings by taking action to address backlogs. Youth-serving organizations, and childcare providers in particular, need access to timely criminal history reviews on prospective and current staff members and volunteers. Backlogs in processing state and FBI background check requests, and delays in returning results to organizations, impact the hiring and effective start dates of staff and volunteers. For childcare providers and youth-serving organizations whose programs provide safe and nurturing environments for children while their parents work, access to timely background checks is critical.

Incentivize school districts to include model policies and best practices regarding sexual assault and abuse in sports. This should include trauma-informed and evidence-informed or evidence-based curricula specific to sexual assault in sports, how to report, student athlete rights, model action post-reporting, and prevention policies and practices. Additionally, it should include a model policy and best practices in sports. All employees and school personnel involved in sports must pass background screenings and complete required training. Educational institutions should have a written policy on handling abuse in sports, with mechanisms to share this policy with student athletes and their parents. It is important to note that many

sports programs in the United States take place outside of the school setting and that model prevention policies and training programs exist for prevention outside of the school setting. (Department of Education)

Significantly increase investments in prevention strategies to reduce sexual violence against children and adolescents, and promote social norms changes, including early childhood empathy building, consent, trauma surveys for youth who might need care and services, programs that support active bystander approaches, those that engage men and boys as allies in changing social norms, and those that engage parents.

Require climate surveys with publicly available results in K-12 education, including adapting Youth Risk Behavior Surveys (YRBS) with questions consistent across states and schools for data collection and measuring culture and climate change to prevent abuse; increased funding for investigations of sexual harassment; and enhance penalties for schools that violate survivors' rights, modeled after the HALT Campus Sexual Violence Act.

(Department of Education)

Robustly engage the private sector to step up voluntary efforts to address the issue of childhood sexual violence. Areas of focus could include reducing the threat of the internet-enabled sexual exploitation of children by the implementation of updated corporate policies and viable technology tools and solutions.²² The appointed White House czar should consider the establishment of a private sector task force to identify the appropriate areas of engagement. This could also include encouraging the inclusion of protecting children from sexual abuse and exploitation as part environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) investment criteria and incentivizing organizations to adopt policies that show shareholders, including investors, that they are prioritizing these efforts.

PREVENTION RESEARCH

Increase funding for research on and prevention programs for sexual violence against children and adolescents at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This research should include effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on brain development, protective factors, and resiliency building, among other topics, and it should be updated annually. Active involvement of people who have been historically underserved and underrepresented, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality—including Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of color; immigrants; diaspora communities; and the LGBTQ+ community—would help to ensure that the research is unbiased. Incentives to participate in this research for historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), minority-serving institutions (MSIs), and tribal-serving institutions (TSIs) would also help gather unbiased data on minority populations.

- Provide \$33 million for the Essentials for Childhood framework to expand from seven funded states to all 50 states.
- Provide \$10 million in funding for the CDC to expand research for the development, evaluation, and dissemination of child sexual abuse prevention practices, including the thoughtful development and rigorous evaluation of primary prevention interventions for child sexual abuse.
- Provide \$101.75 million for the CDC Rape Prevention and Education Program.²³ Ensure that it also addresses sexual violence against children and adolescents.

(President's FY22 Budget Requests \$101.75 million; FY21 Enacted Level \$51.75; House FY22 LHHS report \$101.75 million; Senate FY22 LHHS report \$101.75 million)

- Conduct Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys (VACS) in all 50 states. VACs are nationally representative household surveys designed to measure how much and how often physical, emotional, and sexual violence against children and youth occurs globally. Males and females aged 13 to 24 participate in the survey. The survey also captures information about risk and protective factors, as well as the impact of violence. Findings from VACS provide reliable evidence to enable countries to make better decisions about allocating limited resources to develop, launch, and evaluate violence prevention programs and child protection systems. Currently, over 24 countries are actively engaged in this work, which is led by the CDC with the United Nations, private sector organizations, governments, and in-country partners. The United States must conduct these surveys domestically in each of the states as part of this global effort.
- Conduct an Out of the Shadows Index for all 50 states.²⁴
- Conduct research on trauma-informed and evidence-informed or evidence-based coaching programs and curricula to promote positive coaching.
- Provide increased funding for planning grants and for research and evaluation to develop a wider range of innovative evidence-based practices focused on addressing the disproportionate impact of gender-based violence and the barriers of systemic inequities and racism on survivor communities who have been historically underserved and underrepresented, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality.
- The U.S. federal government should develop a “prevention-healing-justice” research agenda.
- (Legislative and Executive Budget Directive; Department of Health and Human Services)



Healing of individuals and families affected by sexual violence against children and adolescents can occur when safe spaces are provided for survivors to come forward. In those spaces, survivors are believed and supported, and time is created for remembering, reconciling, and releasing the pain, shame and stigma of trauma. Mental health systems and professionals must be equipped to deal with sexual violence trauma. Often that trauma is intersectional, as it can be impacted and amplified, also, by racial trauma, historical trauma and intergenerational trauma which requires expanded and specialized child protection services and healing strategies. Multidisciplinary teams are needed for the physical and mental health treatment required immediately following sexual violence.

Those who have been harmed by sexual violence should be treated with care and compassion, and given access to the support and services they need and want. Survivors should be given the space they need, with the understanding from their family, friends and community that healing is not linear, it isn't always convenient, and often, there is nothing to "get over" but rather finding ways to carry the trauma while moving forward. Survivors should be treated with dignity and recognition of their humanity at every step.²⁵

We urge President Biden, his administration, and Congress to consider these building blocks for comprehensive prevention-healing-justice executive action and legislation:

Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grants and bridge funding. The Keep Kids Safe Coalition, along with other organizations and survivors across the country, applauds Congress for recently passing the VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act (VOCA Fix Act) and President Biden for signing this important legislation into law. This bipartisan effort stabilizes the Crime Victims Fund and prevents ongoing, catastrophic cuts to programs that provide services and direct funding to victims.

Grants from the Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) provide funding for crime victim services nationwide, but they have faced devastating cuts in recent years as a result of an increase in the use of deferred prosecution agreements in federal white collar criminal cases that are a major source of the funds.

The VOCA Fix Act redirects monetary penalties from non-criminal settlements into VOCA funding, allocating an additional \$4 to \$7 billion to support crime victim service providers, trauma recovery centers, and state victim compensation programs. The legislation also removes unnecessary barriers to accessing the grants—it directs states to temporarily suspend the requirement that service providers produce funding to match their VOCA grant during and up to a year after the pandemic, and allows states to continue doing so in the future. The removal

of this barrier will allow more community-based organizations, which are often best positioned to support diverse victims, to become eligible for the essential funding. This new law is critical to long-term sustainability in the Crime Victims Fund; however, due to several years of fewer dollars going directly into the CVF, *additional funds over the next 2-3 years are needed to help bridge the current gaps in VOCA funding until the fund can be replenished.*

In addition to passing the VOCA Fix Act, it is important to note that while the cost of and need for funding for victim services has increased substantially, victim service programs have seen substantial cuts in VOCA grants over the past few years because of the very problem that the VOCA Fix Act addresses. The passage of the VOCA Fix Act in July 2021 should solve this funding crisis in the long term, but because it will take time for additional money to accrue in VOCA's Crime Victims Fund (CVF), Fiscal Year 2022 VOCA grants are likely to receive appropriations cuts.

Currently, the House Fiscal Year 2022 Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations bill allows \$2.6 billion in funds from the Crime Victims Fund to be released, with the draft Senate Fiscal Year 2022 Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations bill releasing \$2.65 billion. These levels are needed to continue directly serving the hundreds of thousands of victims of child abuse, sexual assault, and domestic violence, and we urge these levels to remain in a final FY 2022 budget. Should these dollars be reduced, we request at least \$500 million in supplemental funding this year that could be added to the final FY 2022 CVF level to address the current cuts to VOCA and to help bridge the gap until the Crime Victims Fund has been replenished. These supplemental dollars are aimed at reducing the impact of the current VOCA cuts. We recommend that the funding be allocated directly to the state formula for victim assistance and compensation, and directly to tribes. If supplemental funding cannot be allocated directly to VOCA in a possible reconciliation package, we still ask for this \$500 million in supplemental funding to be allocated to the Judiciary Committee, which can take other steps to reduce cuts to Fiscal Year 2022 VOCA grants.

We remind Congress about the impact of the budget deal in 2015. In that deal, Congress and the Obama administration took \$1.5 billion from the Crime Victims Fund. Survivors were deprived of investments in services, and this move ultimately reduced the funding that could have helped weather the current cuts. \$500 million in supplemental funding would restore just a fraction of what was taken from the CVF in 2015. Additionally, we request that the administration push Congress to set the obligation cap for Fiscal Year 2023 to the maximum amount possible.
(Legislative; Executive)

Increase funding for the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). CAPTA provides federal funding and guidance to states in support of prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution, and treatment activities. It also provides grants to public agencies and nonprofit organizations, including Native American tribes and tribal organizations, for demonstration programs and projects. Additionally, CAPTA identifies the federal role in

supporting research, evaluation, technical assistance, and data collection activities; establishes the Office on Child Abuse and Neglect; and establishes a national clearinghouse of information relating to child abuse and neglect. CAPTA also sets forth a federal definition of child abuse and neglect. In 2015, the federal definitions of “child abuse and neglect” and “sexual abuse” were expanded by the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act to include a child who is identified as a victim of sex trafficking or severe forms of trafficking in persons.²⁶

Robust funding is critical for CAPTA to help state and local systems effectively empower families and communities to be safe and healthy for children to grow and thrive. Congress is currently considering a reauthorization of this legislation. We strongly support and appreciate these bipartisan, bicameral efforts and make the following recommendations:

- ***Increase CAPTA Title I State Grants—\$500 million:*** Title I grants are given to states to improve child protective services in exchange for compliance with reporting, investigation, and treatment requirements. Grants are used for training mandated reporters; improving assessment, screening, and investigations of cases; and improving investigations of child abuse by creating multidisciplinary teams and interagency protocols. Funds are also used for training and workforce recruitment and retention; supporting interagency collaboration between child protective services and the juvenile justice system; and enhancing data collection systems to track and exchange information.
- ***Increase CAPTA Title II Community Grants—\$500 million:*** Title II Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CB-CAP) grants are given to a lead agency in each state for community-based programs providing core family resources and family support services. These public-private partnerships use federal funding to leverage greater state and local public and private funds designed to meet the needs of individual communities. Examples include helplines, voluntary evidence-based home visiting programs, parent support programs, and family resource centers. Expanding this program would be transformational for communities and families and could increase leverage to bring other community programs and partners to the table to prevent child abuse. Robust funding for locally driven services is essential to building healthy and thriving communities.
- ***Update and publish the National Incidence Survey:*** We support the current reauthorization legislative provision to require the secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to conduct research on the national incidence and trends of child abuse and neglect (known as the National Incidence Survey), which has not been published since 2010, when it used data collected in 2005 and 2006. This major, national, multi-method study should be repeated every three to five years to enable valid and reliable assessment of trends. The legislation also requires the Secretary to include in the report to Congress information on the Secretary’s research priorities; a summary of the research conducted; and the results of the survey and how the Secretary will improve the accuracy of the information collected.

(President's FY22 Budget requests \$120M State Grants; \$80M Community-Based-CAP; and \$35M Discretionary Grants.)

(FY21 Enacted \$90M State Grants; \$60M Community-Based-CAP; & \$35M Discretionary; House FY22 LHHS report \$125 million State Grants, \$90 million Community Grants and \$42 million Discretionary; Senate FY22 LHHS report \$125 million State Grants, \$85 million Community-Based grants, and \$35 million Discretionary)

(Note: Senate CAPTA reauthorization draft authorizes \$270M for Title I and \$270M for Title II)

(Note: American Rescue Plan, passed in March 2021, includes \$350 million to CAPTA - \$100M for Title I and \$250 for Title II).

(Legislative; Department of Health and Human Services)

Increase funding for the Victims of Child Abuse Act to \$50 million. Increase funding to the over 900 Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) around the country, which coordinate the investigation, treatment, and prosecution of child abuse cases by utilizing multidisciplinary teams of professionals involved in child protective and victim advocacy services, law enforcement and prosecution, and physical and mental health. It also provides vital resources to the four geographically dispersed Regional Children's Advocacy Centers, which provide resources to state chapters as well as training and technical assistance to multidisciplinary teams nationwide, including dedicated support and access to services to tribal communities with centers serving American Indian/Alaskan Native children. VOCAA also provides training, technical assistance, and other vital resources to child abuse prosecutors throughout the United States. Robust funding through the Victims of Child Abuse Act will not only assist in critical organizational center capacity but will also assist centers in meeting these and other necessary needs so that abused children and their families can heal.

(FY 21 Enacted Level \$30 million; \$50 million requested in Fiscal Year 2022 President's Budget; House FY22 CJS report \$40 million; Senate FY22 CJS report \$45 million)

(Legislative; Department of Justice)

Fund child advocacy training in post-secondary education. In 2012, the U.S. Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence recommended improved undergraduate and graduate training of future child protection professionals and called for a "national initiative to promote professional education and training on the issue of children exposed to violence" at home, in their neighborhood, and in schools. The task force specifically asks academic institutions to "include curricula in all university undergraduate and graduate programs to ensure that every child-and-family-serving professional receives training in multiple evidence-based methods for identifying and screening children for exposure to violence." The task force also included sexual abuse of children in its definition of violence as well as physical abuse, intimate partner violence, and exposing children to violence.²⁷ The U.S. Department

of Justice has provided some funding for this work, and early research is promising, but more robust investment is needed.²⁸

(FY21 Enacted Level \$1 million; Senate FY22 CJS report \$4 million)

(Legislative or Executive Budget Directive; Department of Justice)

Expand the community-based workforce of trauma-informed mental health care support workers:

- Establish criteria for eligibility and training requirements for certification of eligible members of nonprofit organizations and the community as extended mental health care support workers.
- Fund through the comprehensive Community Health Centers the provision of psycho-social spiritual care to individuals experiencing spiritual trauma related to sexual violence against children and adolescents by certified extended mental health care support workers.
- Provide compensation to Community Health Centers for care provided by certified extended mental health support workers under the supervision of a qualified mental health professional.
- Provide targeted funding for culturally specific community-based organizations primarily focused on enhancing access to services and well-being for survivors from communities of color, immigrant communities, and other underserved and underrepresented communities.

(Executive; Department of Health and Human Services)

Explore and invest in demonstrations of culturally rooted, community-based programs that address the issue of child sexual violence with comprehensive mental health services, family and trauma-informed and evidence-informed or evidence-based counseling, remedial justice strategies, strengthening the child welfare and foster care systems, and investments in community accountability processes that may be applicable in some situations related to children and adolescent survivors of sexual violence, if appropriate.

(Executive; Interagency)



Every child victimized by sexual abuse is entitled to safety, healing, and justice. Government serves an important role in protecting public safety and ensuring justice for these victims. We need to ensure that victims and survivors have the means and opportunity to access survivor- and child-centered justice, to vindicate their rights, and to receive every type of support they need. We also need to ensure that perpetrators and the institutions that enable abuse are held accountable and that further victimization is prevented.

One of the biggest and growing crime challenges nationally is the dramatic spike in online child sexual abuse and exploitation. The proliferation of images and videos featuring sexual abuse and torture of children has increased exponentially. In many cases, perpetrators are hands-on offenders. In 2018, tech companies reported an astounding 45 million online photos and videos of children being sexually abused—more than double what they found the previous year. We must recognize the scope of child sexual abuse materials (CSAM) and online child sexual abuse and exploitation and provide a comprehensive approach to combatting online exploitation. This includes robust services to victims of CSAM and investigative technology tools to pace the ongoing and ever-evolving threat and help victims seek justice.

We urge President Biden, his administration, and Congress to consider these building blocks for comprehensive prevention-healing-justice executive action and legislation:

PROTECT CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS FROM INSTITUTIONALIZED ABUSE

Incentivize states to eliminate criminal statutes of limitation and eliminate or extend civil statutes of legislation for crimes of sexual violence against children and adolescents.

With an estimated 12% of child sexual abuse reported to authorities each year,²⁹ studies have shown that underreporting of sexual abuse of minors can be attributed in large part to the fact that a majority of child victims do not reveal their abuse until later in life, if at all. One study found that 60% to 80% of victims of childhood sexual abuse wait until adulthood to disclose their abuse.³⁰ For those brave enough to come forward, most victims miss the deadline for obtaining justice because the trauma affects victims in a way that causes them to delay disclosure of their abuse until many years later. Studies show the average age child sex abuse victims tell anyone they were abused is 52.³¹

(Legislative; Executive)

One of the egregious barriers to justice for child sex abuse victims is short statutes of limitation, which stand in the way of both criminal prosecution and civil remedies in many states and for thousands of victims. Access to justice varies widely depending on the geographical location of the abuse. Without access to the courts, victims cannot get the truth to the public and are forced to bear alone the costs of the abuse. Short statutes of limitations (SOLs) for child sexual abuse play into the hands of the perpetrators and the institutions that cover up for them; they disable victims' voices and empowerment. Making the system accountable requires, at a minimum, legal penalties. The clear trend is toward state expansion and elimination of civil and criminal child sex abuse SOLs, with some including revival of expired claims.³² Yet, because each state has different SOLs, survivors across the United States have vastly different rights and abilities to access justice. The time has come for change at the federal level. Congress can play a role by incentivizing states to improve their statutes of limitations to speed these needed reforms.

- **Amend CAPTA to incentivize states to eliminate civil and criminal statutes of limitation and revive time-barred civil claims for child sex abuse cases.** Allocation of federal funds would be tied directly to the number of reforms achieved and would be in addition to any funds states are eligible to receive under the current CAPTA provisions. (Legislative or Executive; Department of Justice)
- **Support the No Time Limit for Justice Act.** This bicameral legislation would incentivize states to eliminate their statutes of limitations for criminal prosecution and civil suits involving child sexual abuse. The federal criminal code does not impose a statute of limitations for child sexual abuse. However, in the majority of states, statutes of limitations deprive victims and survivors of child sexual abuse of the opportunity to heal and seek justice from their abusers. Only seven states—North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming—have eliminated statutes of limitations for all felony sex crimes.³³

The No Time Limit for Justice Act would allow victims of child sexual abuse to seek justice and finally have their day in court. Specifically, the bill would provide states with a 5% increase in federal grant funding under the Services, Training, Officers, Prosecutors (STOP) Program to help train law enforcement and prosecutors in addressing child sexual abuse. States could qualify for an increase under the STOP formula grant equal to not more than 5% of the average of the three most recent awards made to that state. States would be eligible for funding if they have:

- Eliminated the statute of limitations for prosecuting child sexual abuse; and
- Eliminated the statute of limitations for civil suits involving child sexual abuse.

The STOP grant program is the largest program under the Office on Violence Against Women that provides formula funding to states for victim services and training for law enforcement and prosecutors to constructively address sexual violence, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking.

- **Support the Eliminating Limits to Justice for Child Sex Abuse Victims Act.** This bipartisan legislation would ensure that survivors of child sex abuse are able to seek justice under the federal civil remedy statute, 18 U.S.C. § 2255, without being barred by statutes of limitation. The Eliminating Limits to Justice for Child Sex Abuse Victims Act of 2021 would enable survivors who were victims of over a dozen federal child sex abuse offenses to seek civil damages in federal court no matter how long it has taken the survivor to process and disclose the abuse they suffered.
- **Support the Statutes of Limitation for Child Sexual Abuse Reform Act.** This bipartisan legislation would incentivize states to eliminate their statutes of limitations for criminal prosecution and civil suits involving child sexual abuse, as well as for reviving previously expired civil claims. Specifically, the bill would provide states with federal grant funding under CAPTA. States would be eligible for funding if they have 1) eliminated the statute of limitations for prosecuting child sexual abuse; and/or 2) eliminated the statute of limitations on civil suits involving child sexual abuse; and/or 3) revived previously expired civil claims.

Amend the Title IX regulations to set a federal statute of limitations standard. Establish standards that would apply uniformly to all abuse survivors, regardless of geographic boundaries, preempting states with SOLs that are too short. These changes would apply retroactively to revive any previously time-barred claims. There is a tragic epidemic of sexual assault in our schools and on our college and university campuses. Studies suggest that nearly 1 in 10 students will be the target of sexual misconduct by a school employee by the time they finish high school.³⁴ Approximately 1 in 5 female students and 1 in 16 male students are sexually assaulted while attending college.³⁵ For victims at institutions subject to federal Title IX requirements, their claims against the educational institution are governed by states' statutes of limitations. This creates vastly different access to justice based solely on where victims go to school when they suffer abuse.

(Legislative; Executive)

Amend federal Chapter 11 bankruptcy laws that shield bad actors to accommodate the needs of child sexual abuse victims. Presently, bankruptcy bar dates are set without reference to the relevant state statutes of limitations, but for the benefit of the organization. This forces victims to come forward before their claims have expired under state law, and before they are psychologically prepared to do so. This practice not only protects negligent organizations by allowing them to avoid in-depth discovery regarding their bad acts, but it also deprives many victims of the support they need to heal. Aggregation of claims enables these organizations to significantly reduce their individual settlement payouts such that victims get fractions on the dollar compared to what they could have recovered through civil tort proceedings, and certainly not enough to cover the lifelong costs associated with their abuse. Meanwhile, these institutions emerge from bankruptcy proceedings intact. To that end, the following changes should be made:

- **Amend Chapter 11 federal bankruptcy laws to:**

- 1) set a liberal bar date for child sexual abuse claims so they are not penalized by a short statute of limitations (reserve continuing fund for future claims, especially where there is a discovery rule);
- 2) require the federal bankruptcy court to conduct discovery for each claim to uncover and disclose to public institutional failures to protect children;
- 3) permit a victim impact statement by each survivor prior to reorganization plan approval;
- 4) require all courts to complete a trauma-informed training on child sexual abuse and best administrative practices;
- 5) require a neutral forensic accountant to evaluate a debtor's assets prior to approval of a reorganization plan;
- 6) forbid the state statute of limitations from impacting the classification of a claim; and
- 7) exclude from Chapter 11 entities that recklessly permit children to be sexually abused.

(Legislative; Department of Treasury)

- **Alternatively, exempt child sexual abuse claims from discharge under Chapter 11 bankruptcy.**

(Legislative; Department of Treasury)

Amend the Racketeering Influence and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) to expand its application to include organizations that have perpetuated child sexual abuse, exploitation, or trafficking. Add a predicate act for institutions that foster child sexual abuse by negligently failing to report suspected or known child sex abuse in the organization. RICO provides criminal penalties and civil causes of action for wrongful conduct by organizations, closing a loophole to hold accountable those who have ordered or assisted others in causing harm. Child sexual abuse and child online exploitations are heinous crimes, and the organizations responsible for perpetuating these harms must be held accountable, exposing predators and harmful practices and encouraging organizations to uphold strict child abuse prevention policies.

(Legislative; Department of Justice)

Develop, enact, and fully fund the Violence Against Children Act. Develop a bipartisan bill called the Violence Against Children Act, which directs mandatory funding to enact statute of limitations incentivization, Title IX statute of limitations reform, bankruptcy reform amendments, RICO expansion, and tax-exempt status for organizations that fail to report child sexual abuse.

(Legislative)

Explore options for accountability for sexual violence against children and adolescents in federally chartered organizations.

(Legislative; Executive Branch)

ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

Increase funding for the Missing and Exploited Children's Program. Administered by the Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Missing and Exploited Children's program funds the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force Program and related training and technical assistance; the national AMBER Alert program, and other training and technical assistance programs focused on investigating and preventing child victimization, including child sexual abuse, online child sexual abuse and exploitation, and child sex trafficking. NCMEC operates the CyberTipline, which allows the public and electronic service providers to report online child sexual abuse imagery. NCMEC triages the tips and determines which ICAC Task Force jurisdiction it belongs to, and whether it is a level one, two, or three in severity and level of danger to the child. The ICAC program supports the task forces in responding to online exploitation, conducting proactive and reactive cases, conducting forensic examinations, providing training to law enforcement, and providing public awareness and prevention programs.

(\$120 million requested in Fiscal Year 2022 President's Budget; FY21 Enacted \$94 million; House Fiscal Year 2022 CJS report \$109 million; Senate Fiscal Year CJS report \$110 million)
(Legislative or Executive Budget Directive; Department of Justice)

Increase funding for Department of Homeland Security child exploitation investigations.

- **Homeland Security Child Exploitation Investigations Program:** Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) personnel around the world work tirelessly to protect children from exploitation by predators who are involved in the production, distribution, and possession of child sexual abuse material and who travel internationally to engage in illicit sexual conduct with minors. HSI employs the latest technology to collect evidence and track the activities of individuals and organized groups who sexually exploit children using the dark web, chat rooms, peer-to-peer trading, and other internet-based platforms. We support increased funding to support Homeland Security investigative efforts to increase capacity to interdict child sexual abuse image offenders and to increase efforts to identify children seen in these images who remain unidentified.
- **Homeland Security Investigations Cyber Crimes Center (C3):** The Cyber Crimes Center (C3) includes the Child Exploitation Investigations Unit and the Computer Forensics Unit, the HERO Child-Rescue Corps, as well as the Child Victim Identification Program, which analyzes child sexual abuse materials in an effort to identify and rescue children seen in sexually abusive imagery. The Cyber Crimes Center works with NCMEC

and the ICAC Task Forces to support investigations into online sexual exploitation and abuse of children globally. Digital evidence plays a critical role in the identification of child victims and offenders, and it supports criminal prosecutions. With technology and encryption becoming more sophisticated and the number of cybertips continuing to grow exponentially, it is critical for all units of the Cyber Crimes Center to receive enhanced funding to continue developing new tools and techniques to gather critical digital evidence. Increased funding to support C3 child exploitation investigations, forensics, and child victim identification efforts, including funds to support training and equipment is critical to combat child exploitation crimes.

- **Child Exploitation Investigations Unit (CEIU):** The HSI Child Exploitation Investigations Unit (CEIU), which is housed within the HSI Cyber Crimes Center, provides assistance to HSI field offices; coordinates major investigations; conducts operations throughout the world to identify and rescue child victims and to identify and apprehend offenders; and delivers training to HSI personnel as well as state, local, federal, and international law enforcement partners. Increased funding would enhance investigative capacity for this critical work.

(Senate FY22 CJS report \$21 million for Child Exploitation Investigations Unit (CEIU) at Cyber Crimes Center)

Enact the bipartisan, bicameral Eliminate Network Distribution of Child Exploitation Act (END Child Exploitation Act).³⁶ The END Child Exploitation Act was first introduced in December 2019 following the release of a New York Times investigative report highlighting disturbing growth in online child exploitation across the country. The report found that technology companies reported more than 69 million images and videos depicting abuse in 2019. Currently, these companies are required to retain information on these images for 90 days after reporting the material to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC). However, this timeframe is often not enough for under-resourced law enforcement to conduct the necessary investigative process. The END Child Exploitation Act doubles this timeframe to 180 days and ensures these companies are legally able to retain the material longer if needed to prevent the proliferation of child exploitation material.

(Legislative; Department of Justice)

Enact the Eliminating Abusive and Rampant Neglect of Interactive Technologies Act (EARN IT) Act.³⁷ Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act gives “interactive computer services” significant immunity from civil liability, as well as state criminal liability for third-party content on their platforms. Given this limited liability, many companies do not aggressively go after online child sexual exploitation.

- Creates a strong incentive for the tech industry to take online child sexual exploitation seriously. The bill amends Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act to remove

immunity for technology companies that knowingly facilitate the distribution of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) on their platforms.

- Establishes a National Commission on Online Child Sexual Exploitation Prevention to recommend best practices related to identifying and reporting online child sexual exploitation. The commission consists of the heads of the DOJ, DHS, and FTC, along with 16 other members appointed equally by congressional leadership, including representatives from law enforcement, survivors' and victims' services organizations, constitutional law experts, technical experts, and industry.
- Recourse for survivors and tools for enforcement. The bill bolsters enforcement of child sexual abuse material statutes and allows survivors civil recourse if companies knowingly facilitate the distribution of CSAM.

(Legislative)

Support Child Rescue Act legislation to convene a U.S. working group on children in imminent danger. Support bipartisan legislation to strengthen federal efforts to rescue U.S. children from sexual exploitation and abuse, particularly as reports to the NCMEC Cybertipline have doubled during the pandemic and national sexual abuse hotlines have seen *record levels* of children using their services during the COVID-19 crisis.

In 2020, over 65 million image and video files were reported to NCMEC, and over 325,000 suspect leads were seen by law enforcement task forces distributing child sexual abuse material (CSAM), including images of infants and toddlers enduring sadistic abuse. Based on multiple studies,³⁸ we know that between 50% to 80% of possessors of CSAM are also committing hands-on offenses against children in their own communities. Additionally, thousands of children have been seen in child sexual abuse imagery but have not been identified and rescued. The rescue of these children should be this nation's highest priority.

To address these gaps amid rising rates of child abuse and exploitation, the Child Rescue Act would establish a U.S. working group to study proactive strategies and necessary resources for the rescue of children from sexual exploitation and abuse online and disseminate to the field. This working group would bring together experts from the federal government and the private sector to create a nationwide strategy to rescue children who languish in abusive situations and bring them to safety.

Enforce laws that prevent sexual exploitation of children online.³⁹ The increased use of the internet has enabled offenders to groom children online, and to exchange information and advice on how to abuse children and avoid detection. Internet safety is a growing public health issue and is now the [fourth](#) top ranked issue in the list of health concerns for children in the United States. There are existing laws in place to prevent the sexual exploitation of children online, including federal obscenity laws, child pornography laws, and sex trafficking laws. Enforcement of existing laws and their prosecution should be prioritized and funded by the

Department of Justice to protect the welfare of families and children as child predators seek influence through advances in technology.
(Department of Justice)

Direct and fund research at the National Institute of Justice focused on sexual violence against children and adolescents to include online exploitation.
(Department of Justice)

TRANSFORMING THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

End the sexual abuse to prison pipeline for girls. For girls, one of the main predictors of entry into the juvenile justice system is sexual abuse. The sexual abuse to prison pipeline is a term used to describe the pathways of gendered violence that lead girls into the juvenile justice system as a direct result of their victimization. There is a direct correlation between girls' high rates of sexual abuse and their increased involvement in the juvenile justice system. The proportion of girls—especially girls of color—in the juvenile justice system is increasing, and rates of sexual abuse are more than four times higher for girls in the system than boys. Research has illuminated the link between girls' trauma and the widening law enforcement net in which girls are caught, most in minor offenses. The juvenile justice system typically fails to address, and often exacerbates, trauma that caused girls to be there. This trauma is criminalized, reinforcing the sexual abuse to prison pipeline.

- **Strengthen the JJDP.** Passed in 1974, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) is the single most comprehensive federal legislation that governs conditions of confinement for youth and delinquency prevention. The JJDP sets standards for states' operation of juvenile justice systems, provides federal funding to improve the juvenile justice system and to prevent delinquency, and establishes State Advisory Groups, among other provisions. The JJDP, last reauthorized in 2018, expires in 2023. During reauthorization of the JJDP, we support the recommendations highlighted in *The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline: The Girls' Story*.⁴⁰
- **Close the valid court order loophole.** The JJDP prohibits youth from being incarcerated for status offenses, such as running away or truancy. In 1980, however, Congress created a loophole in that ban: the valid court order (VCO) exception. The VCO exception allows children to be detained if they violate court orders that prohibit them from committing enumerated status offenses. For example, if a court issues an order that forbids a girl from running away, she can be sent into the juvenile justice system under the VCO exception if she later does so. Girls often engage in these behaviors in response to abuse or trauma, for example, running away to escape an abusive situation at home or in foster care.



Violence against children and adolescents globally is a major public health and human rights concern. Sexual violence against children is widespread, especially for girls. Global estimates show that 120 million (or one in 10) girls under the age of 20 have experienced some form of forced sexual contact.⁴¹ Global estimates for boys are currently not available. However, an analysis of available data for over 50 countries (high-, middle-, and low-income countries) showed that sexual violence in childhood ranged from 8% to 31% for girls and 3% to 17% for boys.⁴² UNICEF estimates that approximately 21% of girls globally are married before their 18th birthday, and the International Labour Organization estimates that there are approximately 10.1 million children who are victims of human trafficking globally.

Children with disabilities are three to four times more likely to experience physical or sexual violence. Displacement, migration, and humanitarian crises further expose children and adolescents to sexual violence. There are currently 79.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, 40% of whom are children. On a global scale, violence against children is estimated to cost as much as \$7 trillion annually, yet the United States spends only about half a percent of overseas development assistance (ODA) on programs that focus on ending violence against children.

To help bring an end to all forms of violence against children, 10 agencies with a long history of galvanizing a consistent, evidence-based approach collaborated to develop [INSPIRE](#), a group of strategies and technical guidance distilled from the best available evidence and with the greatest potential to prevent and respond to physical, sexual, and emotional violence against children. Similarly, a review of global evidence that builds on INSPIRE, the *What Works to Prevent Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents Evidence Review*,⁴³ has identified numerous effective, evidence-based strategies that should be taken to scale globally.

The Biden administration has committed to addressing gender-based violence domestically and globally.⁴⁴ This commitment should include a life-course approach, ensuring that violence against children and adolescents (especially sexual violence) is adequately addressed. Historically, the U.S. government has achieved important results for children through foreign assistance funding and is providing robust funding and support to programs addressing violence against children and adolescents more broadly as well as gender-based violence. This support, however, is highly dispersed and fragmented across multiple entities within USAID, the Department of State, and the Department of Health and Human Services. Building on U.S. initiatives, the administration and Congress should strengthen and expand U.S. leadership to galvanize global action to end sexual violence against children and adolescents by increasing international funding to scale prevention, healing, and justice programs. Ensuring strong, high-level interagency coordination

will also elevate the leadership and influence of the United States in addressing gender-based violence across the lifespan, and in the protection of children and adolescents from violence globally.

We urge President Biden, his administration, and Congress to consider these building blocks for comprehensive prevention-healing-justice executive action and legislation:

BILATERAL PROGRAMS

Appoint a U.S. Global Coordinator with the responsibility to coordinate all investments in the prevention of and response to violence against children and adolescents across interagency partners working on these issues on an international scale.

(Executive; Department of State)

Amend the Assistance for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children in Developing Countries Act of 2005. This legislation needs to be amended to update and strengthen existing U.S. government efforts to end violence against children, improve coordination among agencies addressing this violence, as well as the use of evidence-based strategies and critical information gathering capabilities.

(Legislative; Department of State)

Provide \$35 million for the Vulnerable Children account, which is provided via the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF). This funding is needed to support the care and protection of vulnerable children around the globe. USAID has given particular attention to children who are living outside of family care; have been trafficked; are experiencing violence; are affected by, or are emerging from, armed conflict or humanitarian crises; have disabilities; are orphans; or are otherwise vulnerable. A higher level of investment would allow USAID to fully fund monitoring and evaluation efforts to identify effective and efficient interventions outlined in the implementation plan of the interagency 2019-2023 Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity Strategy (APCCA). This level of investment would also further programming focused on child-safeguarding initiatives, both online and offline, among U.S. government personnel and partners and strengthen social service workforce capacity.

(Note: House FY22 State/Foreign Operations \$30 million for Vulnerable Children, of which \$4 million is for Blind Children; Senate FY22 State/Foreign Ops \$35 million Vulnerable Children, of which \$4 million for Blind Children)

(Legislative or Executive Budget Directive; Department of State)

Provide \$5 million for the Department of State Child Protection Compact (CPC) Partnership. The CPC Partnership is a jointly developed, multi-year plan aimed at bolstering efforts to combat child labor and sex trafficking. The CPC Partnership, with support from the

Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Office, seeks to hold perpetrators of child sex and labor trafficking accountable under the law, provide comprehensive services for child trafficking survivors, and expand child trafficking prevention and awareness.

(Legislative or Executive Budget Directive; Department of State)

Provide \$50 million to support Violence Against Children Surveys and technical assistance on violence prevention and response globally through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys (VACS) are nationally representative household surveys of children and young adults 13-24 years old. The data collected can inform steps already being taken to address violence against children and give insight into where these can be strengthened or expanded. In addition, findings can help raise awareness of the scope of the problem, support outreach and advocacy, and bring in new and diverse stakeholders. National government commitment and the required development of a national action plan to address the findings ensures that evidence will lead to action and increased local technical capacity to address violence against children. The CDC is uniquely positioned to play an important role in supporting global data collection through the VACS, and also through additional technical assistance to national governments and partners to support the implementation of evidence-based programs and policies, as well as sustainable, high-quality violence monitoring systems. (Legislative and/or Executive Budget Directive; Department of State; CDC)

Provide \$30 million for the implementation of a coordinated and comprehensive effort to end child marriage and meet the needs of married girls. The 2013 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) mandates the State Department to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to end child marriage by directing U.S. foreign assistance to programs in countries where child marriage is prevalent. (Legislative and/or Executive Budget Directive; Department of State)

Provide \$125 million for the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB). A report looking at U.S. government spending in Fiscal Year 2015 indicates that ILAB accounts for nearly half (48%) of all U.S. government spending on efforts to prevent and address violence against children. These projects most commonly provide education and life skills to children and youth and give their parents support to allow children to stay in school rather than work. ILAB also reports on consumer products made through forced or child labor. The requested funding would allow ILAB to continue its work to prevent and respond to exploitative child labor by restoring Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015 levels, increase technical assistance for worker rights to countries with which the United States has trade agreement or preference programs to ensure consistency with expanding U.S. trade commitments, and continue the strong evaluation of programs.

(FY 21 Enacted \$96.125 million; President's Fiscal Year 2022 budget request \$121.751 million; House FY22 LHHS \$136 million; Senate FY22 LLHS \$125.751 million)
(Legislative and/or Executive Budget Directive; Department of Labor)

MULTILATERAL PROGRAMS

Provide \$250 million for the End Violence Fund. The [End Violence Fund](#), hosted by the [End Violence Partnership](#), is a flexible funding vehicle that identifies new and emerging challenges to achieve United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.2. It also invests in initiatives that have the potential to replicate and scale. Fund investments typically have both direct impact for children and generate data, evidence, and learning that inform policy and increase the impact of other programs to end violence and sexual abuse against children. The fund has raised \$73 million since 2016, mainly for work to protect children from online sexual abuse and exploitation, and to make sure that children are safe to learn. This funding has come primarily from the governments of the United Kingdom, Japan, Switzerland, and Sweden, and from private foundations. The End Violence Fund has a proven track record and is the only global funding mechanism ready to deliver prevention, healing, and justice programs at scale focused on sexual violence against children and adolescents.

Social norms are rapidly shifting, and movements of survivors and allies are mobilizing to break the conspiracy of silence, end the stigmatization of survivors, and raise broad public awareness so that sexual violence is widely recognized, understood, and seen as a preventable, unacceptable, and criminal act. The End Violence Fund is part of a movement actively advocating for \$1 billion from partner governments, private foundations, and corporations to end sexual violence against children and adolescents. As part of its foreign assistance funding, the United States should contribute its fair share to the fund to 1) support global-scale prevention, healing, and justice programs to end sexual violence against children and 2) support survivor leaders and survivor engagement in collective advocacy. Currently, most programs operating at the community and national levels in countries around the world are underfunded, siloed, and fragmented with respect to implementation of expanded and comprehensive prevention-healing-justice programs and policies.

(Executive Budget Directive, Department of State/USAID; Legislative; Proposed Appropriations from Title 2 Development Assistance, Global Programs)

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