Child Sexual Abuse Prevention

TRANSFORM RESEARCH CENTER

Research Translation Platform

Mt. HOPE family center

Talking Points for Advocates

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Defining Child Sexual Abuse:

Child Sexual abuse **(CSA)** is a preventable public health crisis with devastating personal, social, and economic consequences. While prevention is possible, CSA requires a unique approach compared to physical abuse and neglect prevention. For instance, CSA has a hidden nature and most perpetrators are known to the victim

Why Prevention Matters

- *Child sexual abuse costs the U.S. $9.3 billion annually in health care, lost productivity, child welfare, violent crime, special education, and suicide-related costs*[1]
- *Survivors face lasting harm: 34% lower adult income, almost double the rate of welfare dependence, higher disability rates, unplanned pregnancies, and incomplete education*[2,3]
- *Gold standard child sexual abuse prevention programs create high impact and cost-savings, but require minimal time investment and minimize teacher burden.*

Evidence shows that investing in proven prevention strategies not only protects children but also generates significant cost savings, strengthens communities, and improves the efficiency of government systems.

Research Findings

***CSA is different** than physical abuse and neglect. Most perpetrators are trusted individuals. General abuse prevention programs are not sufficient.*

***Evidence-based prevention works**. Multi-sector programs have the potential to improve the efficiency of child protective service operations.*

In one study (Noll et al., 2025)[4] *conducted in 5 U.S. counties, multi-sector CSA prevention programs **produced substantial savings:***

	Lifetime Public Health Savings ($282,734/case)[1]	Investigations Cost Savings ($37,000/case)[6] **returns yielded within 3 years*	Savings per $1 spent
110 kids spared from abuse	**$31.1 million saved**	**$4.07 million saved**	Abuse Prevention: $11.72 per $1 spent
110 kids spared from abuse	N/A	**$11.84 million saved**	Reduced nuisance reports: $3.95 per $1 spent
110 kids spared from abuse	Total Public Health Savings: **$31.1 million**	Total Investigation Savings: **$15.91 million**	**Grand Total: $47 million → $15.67 per $1 invested**

Additional Findings

Additional benefits *include reduced ER visits, increased school readiness, better mental health, and stronger workforce outcomes.*

Schools are key — programs like Safe Touches[5]:

- *Cost $43/student (less when scaled).*
- *Can be delivered in under an hour by trained Child Advocacy Center staff.*
- *Increase children's knowledge about recognizing and reporting abuse, with long-term retention.*
- *92% of schools voluntarily participated when high-quality programming is offered*
- *Using trained, qualified facilitators (not teachers) reduces burden and mitigates concerns about disclosures during training.*

Policy Examples from Other States:

- *Multiple states have advanced legislation mandating child sexual abuse (CSA) prevention education in schools, with varying approaches to curriculum and implementation.*
- ***Erin's Law*** *has been adopted in 37 states (with 13 still pending) and requires schools to provide age-appropriate CSA prevention education. Early versions, such as the original Illinois statute, took a streamlined approach by mandating instruction but leaving flexibility in delivery.*
- *For the strongest outcomes, any CSA prevention statute could provide curricula that aligns with evidence-based practices or research-informed programs, ensuring states implement approaches proven to reduce abuse and increase system efficiency.*

Messages to Amplify

- *CSA prevention is **cost-effective, bipartisan, and urgent.***
- *Evidence-based programs can increase **government efficiency.***
- ***Minimal classroom time** → Maximum child protection → Serious fiscal impact.*

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References

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