



Introduction

The [State Child Abuse and Neglect \(SCAN\) Policies Database](#) compiles data on the definitions and policies states use in their surveillance of child maltreatment, along with data on associated risk and protective factors. The SCAN Policies Database is funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in collaboration with the Children’s Bureau in the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Mathematica leads this project in partnership with Child Trends.

Although federal law is the foundation of the child welfare system, states drive much of the structure of their own systems. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) (42 U.S.C.A. § 5106g), as amended in 2010, identifies certain acts or behaviors as child maltreatment. States must comply with the broader CAPTA definitions, but within those parameters, states have their own legal definitions. State laws—and the policies states set to enforce these laws—have different definitions of child abuse and neglect and different policies for reporting and responding to child maltreatment.

Purpose

The project’s purpose is to maintain, enhance, and update the SCAN Policies Database by continuing to review and compile information about selected definitions and policies of child abuse and neglect in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The project aims to sustain and improve the SCAN Policies Database’s ability to support researchers, analysts, policymakers, child welfare agencies, and others in broadening their understanding of how differences in states’ definitions and policies may influence rates of child maltreatment. A primary benefit of these data is to allow researchers and other users to link the analytic files to other data sources, such as the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), other federal and state administrative data, and survey data. When data from the SCAN Policies Database are linked with other data sources, researchers and others can use the linked data to answer important questions about how variations in states’ definitions and policies are associated with the incidence of child maltreatment, the child welfare system response, and, ultimately, the safety and well-being of children.

Current highlights

The project will build on the two rounds of data currently available for the SCAN Policies Database—specifically, the SCAN Policies Database 2019 and the SCAN Policies Database 2021, which reflect the state definitions and policies in effect for the calendar years of 2019 and 2021, respectively. The current scope of the topics in the SCAN Policies Database encompasses states’ definitions of child abuse and neglect as well as information about policies related to reporting, screening, and investigating child maltreatment. Key aspects of the child

welfare systems' response and context are included. Users can download and explore the data on the SCAN Policies Database website, which provides resources including data use documentation, state profiles summarizing data for each state, fact sheets that explore key aspects of states' child abuse and neglect definitions and policies, and text of state statutes for definitions of child maltreatment.

Access to the SCAN Policies Database

The SCAN Policies Database and data use resources can be accessed via the following sources:

- The SCAN Policies Database website at <https://www.scanpoliciesdatabase.com>
This website provides an interactive tool to view and filter data by state and topic. Users can download the full data file in comma-delimited format and access data use resources.
- The National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN) at <https://www.ndacan.acf.hhs.gov>
NDACAN provides access to the full data file in a variety of formats, including commonly used statistical packages. NDACAN can also provide technical or analytic support for users who access the data from NDACAN.

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