

# A Youth and Survivor-Inspired Promotive Action Plan: Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in Oregon and Siskiyou County, California



UNIVERSITY OF  
OREGON

Center for Childhood  
Safety and Wellbeing

## Executive Summary

***“Do as much as you can with the information in every way that you can.”***

OCAPS pilot student participant



**Content Acknowledgment – A message from Protect Our Children:** We’re a survivor-centered, equity-rooted approach. We want to let you know that although we will not be sharing stories of abuse, the content of this report and our work is child sexual abuse prevention. We encourage you to take care of yourself in any way that makes sense to you, and we are here to support you should the topic cause you distress and/or discomfort. Protect Our Children can be reached [here](https://protectourchildren.org). ([protectourchildren.org](https://protectourchildren.org))

This report, an Executive Summary<sup>1</sup> of the 75-page comprehensive promotive action plan, aims to answer a question that is often asked but rarely met with clarity and confidence: How do you prevent child sexual abuse? The report was developed by Protect Our Children sites, in partnership with the Center for Childhood Safety and Wellbeing, and dozens of community partners, and draws directly from youth and child sexual abuse survivors’ insights. The Protect Our Children Initiative, a statewide, cross-sector effort launched by The Ford Family Foundation in 2015, has demonstrated the value of collaboration and the impact of building prevention systems and shared learning communities. This is

evidenced in multiple publications and evaluation reports, including a [7-year impact retrospective](#). More information about Protect Our Children and participating sites can be found at <https://protectourchildren.org>.

Over its first seven years, Protect Our Children engaged more than 50,000 adults in child sexual abuse (CSA) prevention education. This report builds on that work and sharpens a next-steps focus via a cohesive, promotive-factor-driven strategy that emphasizes aligned messaging, youth leadership, antidotes to the culture of silence, and practical tools to support help-seeking, coordination, and continuous improvement.

<sup>1</sup> Preferred citation: Todahl, J., Piper, S., Ratliff, M., & Mendoza, B. (2026). A youth and survivor-inspired promotive action plan executive summary: Preventing child sexual abuse in Oregon and Siskiyou County, California. Center for Childhood Safety and Wellbeing, University of Oregon.

# A Central Role for Protect Our Children Sites and Community Building

Protect Our Children sites play a critical role in translating this promotive framework into meaningful local action. As rural, place-based hubs, Protect Our Children sites bring together cross-sector partners, including schools, businesses, child welfare, health care, youth-serving organizations, faith communities, and community leaders, to build shared understanding, align messaging, and coordinate prevention strategies.

The promotive factors bring focus to these efforts, ensuring that prevention action taking precisely targets conditions that are unique to CSA. Protect Our Children sites are catalysts and leaders in promoting conditions that reduce CSA and promote child wellbeing.

| Protect Our Children Sites                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ABC House, Albany, Oregon                                               |
| Amani Center, St. Helens, Oregon                                        |
| Building Health Families, Enterprise, Oregon                            |
| CARES Northwest, Portland, Oregon                                       |
| CASA for Children of Klamath County<br>Klamath Falls, Oregon            |
| Children’s Advocacy Center of Jackson County<br>Medford, Oregon         |
| Children’s Advocacy Center of Lincoln County<br>Newport, Oregon         |
| Children’s Center of Clackamas<br>Oregon City, Oregon                   |
| Family Development Center, Roseburg, Oregon                             |
| First 5 Siskiyou, Mt. Shasta, Calif.                                    |
| Juliette’s House, McMinnville, Oregon                                   |
| KIDS Center, Bend, Oregon                                               |
| Kids FIRST - a Children’s Advocacy Center<br>Lane County                |
| Liberty House, Salem, Oregon                                            |
| SafeSpace Children’s Advocacy Center of the Gorge<br>Hood River, Oregon |
| Siskiyou Family YMCA, Yreka, Calif.                                     |
| Wally’s House, Gold Beach, Oregon                                       |

# CSA Definition and Prevalence

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines CSA as the involvement of a person (<18 y.o.) in sexual activity that violates the laws or social taboos of society and that a) the child does not fully comprehend, b) does not consent to or is unable to grant informed consent, and/or c) is not developmentally prepared for and cannot give consent. It is often divided into 2 categories: 1) contact CSA, 2) non-contact CSA.

## Contact sexual abuse

- **Fondling or groping**  
*Touching a child’s genitals, breasts, or buttocks for sexual purposes*
- **Oral-genital contact**  
*Forcing or coercing a child to perform or receive oral sex*
- **Penetration (vaginal or anal)**  
*Rape or any form of sexual penetration involving a child, including with objects*
- **Forcing a child to touch another person’s genitals**  
*Coercing or manipulating a child into engaging in sexual touching of another person*
- **Sexualized physical play masked as games**  
*Using games or play (e.g., “tickle fights,” “doctor games”) as a cover to initiate inappropriate sexual contact*

## Non-contact sexual abuse

- **Exposing a child to pornography**  
*Showing sexually explicit materials (videos, images, or literature) to a child*
- **Sexualized verbal comments**  
*Making sexually suggestive or explicit remarks to or about a child (e.g., comments about a child’s body or future sexual behavior)*
- **Exhibitionism (indecent exposure)**  
*Deliberately exposing one’s genitals to a child for sexual gratification*
- **Online sexual exploitation**  
*Engaging a child in sexually explicit conversations, sending sexual content via text or social media, or coercing a child to send sexual images (e.g., sextortion)*
- **Voyeurism**  
*Secretly watching or recording a child in private settings (e.g., in the bathroom or while changing clothes) without their knowledge or consent*



***62% of teens had not shared their CSA harm with anyone at any time.***

## Prevalence and disclosure

UNICEF estimates that over 150 million children under 18 living today have been sexually assaulted (2023). In the United States, conservative estimates suggest at least one in four girls<sup>2</sup> and one in 20 boys experience CSA (Finkelhor et al., 2014; Finkelhor et al., 2024; Gewirtz-Meydan & Finkelhor, 2020). CSA is also common in Oregon and Siskiyou County, CA. Among Oregon high school students who participated in the Oregon Child Abuse Prevalence Study (OCAPS), 29% experienced at least one type of CSA, and 14% experienced three or more types (Todahl, Barkhurst, & Schnabler, 2019).

In a mid-study report of Oregon youth (Todahl, Piper, Bronson-Cook, Amezcua, & Marie, 2025), 46% reported experiencing at least one type of sexual violence (and often experienced it repeatedly). Moreover, among 10,000+ Protect Our Children adult participants representing Oregonians from nearly every region and including Siskiyou County, California, 33% identified as CSA survivors (Todahl, Piper, et al., 2022). Finally, although overwhelming evidence suggests CSA remains highly prevalent, research teams in recent years are detecting an encouraging downward prevalence trend (e.g., Finkelhor, Saito, & Jones, 2022; Lucier-Greer et al., 2024; Rezey & DiMeglio, 2024).

Current CSA estimates likely underreport actual prevalence. According to the Fourth National Incidence Study, at least three times as many children experience abuse and neglect are reported to Child Protective Services agencies (Sedlak et al., 2010). In one study, 66% of sexual assault episodes were not reported to any adult by 10-17-year-old participants (Gewirtz-Meydan & Finkelhor, 2020). Oregon's mid-study report found that 62% of teens had not shared their CSA harm with anyone at any time.

These data reflect social norms that dampen healing and foster isolation. Consequently, as it stands today, many Oregon and Siskiyou CSA survivors silently endure their trauma and its aftermath. Under these circumstances, our children and youth are left to sense-make on their own. Naturally, they often draw conclusions that compound trauma's impact, i.e., the violence is their fault, their involvement is shameful, and disclosure will be met with denial and disbelief. This takes a toll. Oregon youth reporting three or more types of sexual abuse are 2.1 times more likely to be persistently sad or hopeless, miss many more days of school, contemplate suicide, and endure higher rates of negative health and school outcomes than Oregon students with no CSA harm (Todahl, Barkhurst, & Schnabler, 2019).

## Signals That Silence Children and Youth How anticipated adult responses shape disclosure

Oregon youth have shared overwhelmingly that they receive a clear cultural message: Child sexual abuse is unspeakable. If it happens to you, we (adults) may not notice. If you tell, we may not believe you, know what to do, or help in time. You are largely on your own. Moreover, fear and shame remain central barriers to prevention: fear of retaliation, fear of not being believed, fear of judgment, fear of making things worse, and fear of the unknown. Some shared that they had internalized harmful experiences as normal or, due to their age, had not recognized what was happening as abuse.

As it stands today, when many of our children/youth realize they are being harmed, they face an untenable calculation: Is it worth it to say something? In those moments, they assess their perception of likely response. If they believe the response will be useful, supportive, and non-judgmental, they are naturally much more likely to disclose their experience. In this way, anticipating a helpful response is fundamentally connected to primary prevention, i.e., many of the conditions that encourage help-seeking mimic the fundamental upstream conditions that make harm much less likely.

2 These data define gender as a binary construct.



## Promotive Factors Signal Safety and Support

Oregon youth are calling for a different kind of message from adults, from taboo signaling to this: Your safety and health is our priority. We want to know what is going on for you. If something feels uncomfortable or not ok, you can talk to us. We will listen, take you seriously, and act with care. You are never alone – we’ve got you. Outside of that condition, the advantage is almost fully with would-be-harmers. Shifting that advantage is well within reach. The promotive factors are designed to shift these conditions in particular, among others.

*When trustworthy adults are commonplace, when conversations about harm and consent are normalized, when responses are predictable and helpful, and when youth feel protected rather than punished for speaking up, safety becomes a shared and achievable goal.*

### The Promotive Factors

The promotive factors are not a replacement for existing child maltreatment prevention models. They stand alongside, complement and can nest within established frameworks such as Prevent Child Abuse America’s [Blueprint for Family Well-Being](#), Prevent Together’s [Six Pillars](#), To Zero’s [A Vision to Zero](#), Colorado’s [Illuminate, kNot Today](#) – and more.<sup>3</sup> By addressing the precise conditions that sustain CSA, promotive factors serve as accelerants, selected to advance shared goals within and across coalitions.

Promotive factors are proactive and strategic; they create and sustain the positive social norms, relational dynamics, and cultural cues that promote safety, disclosure, healing, and accountability. Where protective factors shield against harm, promotive factors help build environments that naturally resist abuse by fostering adult trustworthiness, cultural openness about sexuality and consent, and reliable pathways to action. They are targeted, active, teachable, and culture-shifting.

Implementation of the promotive factors will require significant investment and public-private partnerships. Some of the factors are immediately actionable and underway (e.g., PF1 PF2, PF4), some require legislative engagement with multiple sectors (e.g., PF9), some are about how we do the work (e.g., PF5, PF7, PF8), and others require generational commitment (e.g., PF3, PF6)

### The 10 Promotive Factors and Associated ‘Action Levers,’ At-A-Glance

**Taken together, promotive actions send a clear message to Oregon and Siskiyou youth:**

*Your safety and health is our priority. We want to know what is going on for you. If something feels uncomfortable or not ok, you can talk to us. We will listen, take you seriously, and act with care. You are never alone – we’ve got you*

### The 10 Promotive Factors At-a-Glance

The promotive factors address four broad categories: 1) individual and relational supports, 2) cultural and social norms change, 3) youth and survivor leadership, and 4) systems and infrastructure improvements.

*Promoting –*

1. Trustworthy Adults
2. Belonging and Connection<sup>4</sup>
3. Multi-Generational Prevention Education
4. Prevention and Wellbeing Messaging
5. Streamlined Resources
6. Healing: Acknowledgement and Repair of Individual, Historical, and Collective Harm
7. Youth & Survivor Leadership
8. Systems Alignment
9. Advocacy: Strategic Policy Investment
10. Measurement

<sup>3</sup> These are listed as prominent national examples; many additional excellent examples exist.

<sup>4</sup> Promotive Action 2 assumes that ‘disconnection’ at individual and community levels is a central Lever of CSA perpetuation, along with many other forms of child maltreatment.

## PROMOTIVE FACTOR/ACTION 1

**Trustworthy Adults – Confidential, Accessible, and Responsive Adults and Near-Peers.** *Promoting access to abundantly available, trustworthy adults and peers – ready, willing, and able to discuss sensitive conversations, including health, wellness, and CSA.*

### Promotive Factor At-a-Glance:

- Confidential adults youth can turn to – abundantly available, well-known, highly-regarded
- Consistent, trustworthy adult relationships
- Recognition and training for high-trust professionals
- Peers and near-peers trained in supportive response and referral
- Individual supportive responses are matched by helpful systems responses, e.g., child welfare, health care, school climate

### Promotive Actions At-a-Glance:

- Significantly increase #'s of privileged/confidential advocates and revise mandatory reporting mandates (Todahl, Piper, Metcalfe, et al., 2023)
- Embed safe adults and near-peers in naturally occurring school and community settings (e.g., libraries, sports programs)
- Implement recognition programs that elevate adults praised by youth for relational, trauma-informed support

## PROMOTIVE FACTOR/ACTION 2

**Belonging and Connection<sup>5</sup>. Connection is protection.** *Promoting everyday signals of care so every Oregon and Siskiyou child and youth feels welcomed, understood, and valued; centering relational culture for CSA prevention.*

### Promotive Factor At-a-Glance:

- Emotional safety and identity-affirming environments
- Trauma-informed school and community practices
- Everyday signals of care and belonging

## Promotive Actions At-a-Glance:

- Normalize non-judgmental adult-youth connection (e.g., lunchtime check-ins, morning greetings)
- Encourage broad implementation of trauma-informed, [restorative justice](#), and SEL school climate values and practices in Oregon and Siskiyou schools
- Encourage affirming school-based curriculum and training opportunities, e.g., antibullying activities infused in school climate, materials like [Indigenous Children's Survivance in Public Schools](#) (Sabzalian, 2019), Oregon's Tribal History/Shared History – and similar.
- Promote 'third spaces' for children and youth
- For strategies and a literature review focused on promoting inclusion and belongingness in schools for students with disabilities, see the [HEDCO Institute](#)

## PROMOTIVE FACTOR/ACTION 3

**Multi-Generational Prevention Education.** *Building communities where children and youth thrive. Promoting early, multi-generational open conversations about safety, consent, and healthy relationships as a normal part of growing up.*

### Promotive Factor At-a-Glance:

- Normalized conversations about safety and consent
- Age-adapted, culturally responsive curricula alongside complementary adult CSA prevention education
- Youth leadership in peer education

### Promotive Actions At-a-Glance:

- [Protect Our Children](#) – in partnership with [Childhelp](#), [Connect to Protect Kids](#), [Center for Violence Prevention Research](#), [Illuminate Colorado](#), and [Georgia Center for Child Advocacy](#), offers CSA prevention education modules for adults, available via *The Guide*, that complement Pre-K through 12th grade education
- At the local level, build foundational support for high-fidelity pre-K through 12 sex education as instrumental in child safety, prevention, and lifelong well-being (see [Speak Up Be Safe](#) and [Wildhaven Tales](#))
- Use near-peer models to elevate credibility and relatability
- Integrate CSA-specific lessons into broader relationship and sexuality education; normalized, not siloed

<sup>5</sup> Promotive Action 2 assumes that 'disconnection' at individual and community levels is a central Lever of CSA perpetuation, along with many other forms of child maltreatment.



## PROMOTIVE FACTOR/ACTION 4

### **Prevention and Wellbeing Messaging. Hopeful, action-based. I see myself in the solution.**

*Promoting shared language, mindsets, and skills for safety, care, and respect so every sector and community member is prepared to talk effectively about harm and help.*

#### **Promotive Factor At-a-Glance:**

- Shared understanding of factors that contribute to CSA and other forms of child maltreatment
- Shared vocabulary and mindsets r.e. harm, help-seeking, health, and healing
- Culturally attuned, developmentally responsive communication
- Counter silencing norms

#### **Promotive Actions At-a-Glance:**

- Launch a shared statewide CSA prevention messaging campaign (e.g., “Listen, Oregon,” “Listen, Siskiyou”)
- Draw from [The FrameWorks Institute’s](#) child sexual abuse messaging recommendations
- Draw from the [Prevention Mindset Institute](#) for framing recommendations (FRIENDS)
- Use libraries, DMV offices, health clinics, and community boards for messaging reach
- Partner with trusted community messengers (e.g., barbers, pastors, youth leaders)
- Consider partnering with [What’s OK](#) and [Help Wanted](#) as one element of a full prevention system
- Partner with local youth-engaged communications expertise and storytelling technical support, e.g., The Journalistic Learning Initiative
- Leverage ‘*The Guide*’ as a central communication hub

## PROMOTIVE FACTOR/ACTION 5

### **Streamlined Resources – Effective Community Navigation Systems and Trustworthy Help-Giving.**

*Promoting clear, simple ways for children, youth, families, and supporters to find effective help when, where, and how they need it.*

#### **Promotive Factor At-a-Glance:**

- Clear, accessible help-seeking tools
- Systems for rapid, culturally competent response
- Real-time service mapping and resource awareness
- Pro help-seeking messaging; widely recognized, trustworthy

#### **Promotive Actions At-a-Glance:**

- Implement *The Guide* digital platform statewide and in Siskiyou County to centralize and democratize prevention tools, safe adult directories, and trauma response pathways
- Embed effective navigation systems, including models like Safe and Sound’s [Mandatory Supporting/Family Well-being System](#), 15th Night’s [Rapid Access Network](#), the [National Family Support Network](#), [What’s OK](#), and the [Moore Center](#)
- Place QR-code-enabled posters in every school, clinic, youth center, and bus shelter
- Include Guide access in school orientation, family onboarding, and teacher professional development
- Training and Q&A embedded in *The Guide* for responsiveness best practice
- Warm Lines, e.g., Oregon Family Support Network, [Reach Out Oregon](#)

## PROMOTIVE FACTOR/ACTION 6

### **Healing – Acknowledgement and Repair of Individual, Historical, and Collective Harm.**

*Promoting opportunities for survivors, families, and communities to be heard, believed, and supported in healing from historical and ongoing harm.*

### Promotive Factor At-a-Glance:

- Community and institutional accountability for past harms
- Access to healing and restorative justice opportunities
- Public storytelling by survivors and those impacted by systems

### Promotive Actions At-a-Glance:

- Create community-based restorative circles ([ODE resources](#)) for survivors and families to safely share and be heard
- Ensure prevention programs acknowledge the role of colonialism, racism, and ableism in historical harm and current vulnerability
- Develop public memorials, listening projects, and healing spaces in partnership with tribal and marginalized communities, e.g., [The Learning Policy Institute](#) and [Improving Student Outcomes through Restorative Practices](#)
- Oregon Department of Human Services Child Welfare reform advocacy and practice, e.g., [Oregon's Equity North Star](#) and [Vision for Transformation](#)
- *The Guide* provides responsive listening best practices and healing resources and can embed existing healing and storytelling practices, e.g., [Our Wave](#), [Survivor Space](#), [OAASIS](#), the [Trauma Healing Project](#), and [Trauma Informed Oregon](#)

## PROMOTIVE FACTOR/ACTION 7

### Youth & Survivor Leadership.

*Promoting youth and survivors in CSA prevention design, decision-making, implementation, and continuous improvement.*

### Promotive Factor At-a-Glance:

- Prevention strategies co-created with those directly impacted
- Youth agency and participatory design
- Survivor-informed practices and tools
- Clear integration of feedback loops and understanding of how youth perspective is embedded in design and continuous improvement

### Promotive Actions At-a-Glance:

- Youth Advisory Council (YAC) investments; compensate youth and survivors for advisory and leadership roles
- Youth co-authorship in any statewide prevention curriculum revisions
- Vet all prevention materials through panels of youth and survivor stakeholders
- Youth serving in advocacy roles, e.g., policy promotion with Our Children Oregon and curriculum design and evaluation with Protect Our Children
- Youth in design and communication dissemination roles in support of shared messaging activities

## PROMOTIVE FACTOR/ACTION 8

### Systems Alignment.

*Promoting safety, belonging, and healing through a united and CSA-precise system of prevention.*

### Promotive Factor At-a-Glance:

- Skilled, trauma-informed, and culturally competent professionals
- Clear accountability pathways across systems
- Collaboration over fragmentation – shared understanding, shared messaging, shared strategies

### Promotive Actions At-a-Glance:

- Standardize MicroPDs (Micro Professional Development), like those in *The Guide*, across youth-facing sectors: education, pediatric care, law enforcement, recreation, and faith institutions
- Build inter-agency prevention collaboratives at the county or regional level
- Leverage the Protect Our Children learning community and *The Guide* as a central backbone tool to foster multidisciplinary promotive factor alignment
- Center 'Mandatory Supporting' models, [Family Strengthening](#) principles, or their equivalent
- Embed [Collective Impact](#) principles and practices and the Oregon SATF [Comprehensive Prevention Toolkit](#)



## PROMOTIVE FACTOR/ACTION 9

### **Advocacy – Strategic Policy Investment.**

*Promoting sustained investment in prevention infrastructure, policy-making, education, and youth/survivor leadership.*

#### **Promotive Factor At-a-Glance:**

- Systems-level funding for prevention infrastructure
- Sustained education and training mandates
- Policy mechanisms for youth and survivor inclusion

#### **Promotive Actions At-a-Glance:**

- Fully fund statewide implementation of comprehensive Pre-K–12 healthy sexuality and abuse prevention education, with accountability systems to assure implementation fidelity (e.g., additional funding for SB 856 best practice implementation)
- Allocate dedicated funding to expand access to trained confidential advocates embedded in schools, community centers, and youth organizations (e.g., expansion of ORS 147.600)
- Collaboration on legislative advocacy and lobbying around Our Child Oregon Children’s Agenda to promote child and survivor centered policies
- Create a legislative youth/survivor prevention council to shape child protection policy in Oregon and Siskiyou County (e.g., expansion of ODHS and ODE Youth Advisory Councils (YAC) to include CSA-specific promotive factor YAC advocacy and leadership)
- Support for expansion of existing pro-prevention efforts, e.g., , ODHS Equity North Star, ODHS Vision for Transformation, and DELC’s multi-sector Raise Up Oregon
- Ongoing advocacy for emerging harm-based strategies (e.g., HB 2299)
- Urge and secure CSA promotive factor advocacy and implementation as a funding priority for Oregon and Siskiyou philanthropy and government
- Streamlined systems with CACs and law enforcement so that survivors are only asked to share stories once, to a trained interviewer, during a criminal investigation



## PROMOTIVE FACTOR/ACTION 10

### **Measurement.**

*Promoting continuous improvement and hope through shared metrics, transparent data collection, and public storytelling.*

#### **Promotive Factor At-a-Glance:**

- Transparent tracking of prevention implementation and outcomes
- Shared metrics and public accountability
- Celebration of progress and storytelling of change

#### **Promotive Actions At-a-Glance:**

- Use OCAPS longitudinal data to evaluate impact and guide course correction
- Develop a public-facing Prevention Progress Dashboard per county, featuring a centralized data hub with standardized metrics, layered data to support state and county level prevention initiatives, gap summary analysis to identify underserved areas and regional needs, and a centralized resource library to share community driven resources with partners/ collaborators
- Spotlight communities making change – profile success, lessons learned

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*The full promotive factor report is available upon request. Please contact Mary Ratliff (Protect Our Children) or Simone Piper (The Center for Childhood Safety and Wellbeing).*