SCAN

Policies Database

State Child Abuse & Neglect (SCAN) Policies Database

DATA USER'S GUIDE

April 2021

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

State Child Abuse & Neglect (SCAN) Policies Database
DATA USER'S GUIDE

April 2021

Elizabeth Weigensberg, Nuzhat Islam, Jean Knab, Mary Grider, Jeremy Page, and Sarah Bardin

Weigensberg, E., Islam, N., Knab, J. Grider, M., Page, J., & Bardin S. (2021). *State Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) Policies Database Data User's Guide*. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

DISCLAIMER
The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This report and other reports sponsored by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation are available at www.acf.hhs.gov/opre.

Sign-up for OPRE News

Follow OPRE on Twitter @OPRE_ACF

Like OPRE's page on Facebook OPRE.ACF

Follow OPRE on Instagram @opre_acf

Connect on LinkedIn company/opreacf

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

Overview

Introduction

The State Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) Policies Database compiles data on the definitions and policies that different 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 (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The project team is led by Mathematica 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.

Data on the definitions and related policies for child abuse and neglect—state by state and over time—can help researchers, analysts, policymakers, child welfare agencies, and others broaden their understanding of differences between states and how these differences may influence rates of child maltreatment.

Purpose

The project's purpose is to review and compile information from selected child abuse and neglect definitions and related policies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, to create a database of those definitions and policies that can be used for analysis.

The database is a resource for researchers, analysts, and others who are interested in examining differences between states in their definitions and policies on child maltreatment. A primary benefit of these data is to allow researchers 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, the linked data can be used 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.

Highlights

The scope of the SCAN Policies Database includes information about state definitions and policies related to child abuse and neglect for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. This information represents data collected, reviewed, and

verified between May 2019 and July 2020. The data reflect the state definitions and policies for the calendar year 2019. The scope of the topics in the SCAN Policies Database includes 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 also included.

Access to database

The SCAN Policies Database can be accessed via https://www.scanpoliciesdatabase.com or the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect at https://www.ndacan.acf.hhs.gov/.

Contents

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

Introduction to the SCAN Policies Database

The State Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) Policies Database compiles data on the definitions and policies that different 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 (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The project team is led by Mathematica in partnership with Child Trends.

Background

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.

Data on the definitions and related policies for child abuse and neglect—state by state and over time—can help researchers, analysts, policymakers, child welfare agencies, and others broaden their understanding of differences between states and how these differences may influence rates of child maltreatment.

Purpose

The project's purpose is to review and compile information from selected definitions and policies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (referred to throughout as states), to create a database of those definitions and policies (the SCAN Policies Database) that can be used for analysis. The SCAN Policies Database has information about state's definitions of child abuse and neglect, plus information about related policies on reporting, screening, and investigating child maltreatment. The database also includes selected information about the child welfare system's responses to child maltreatment plus information about the context of the child welfare system. More detailed information about the content is provided below.

The database is a resource for researchers, analysts, and others who are interested in examining differences between states in their definitions and policies on child maltreatment. A primary benefit of these data is to allow researchers 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, the linked data can be used 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.

Data access

Given the utility of the SCAN Policies Database when merged with datasets available through the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN), the SCAN Policies Database team and NDACAN have both agreed to disseminate the data. The SCAN Policies Database can be accessed in the following ways: (1) using an interactive data feature to explore data on the SCAN Policies Database website, (2) downloading the full data file in comma-delimited format from the SCAN Policies Database website, or (3) downloading the full dataset from NDACAN in one of several formats compatible with common statistical software, including SAS, SPSS, Stata, and a tab-delimited format for import into spreadsheet programs and R. The contents of the full data files and data use documentation are identical across both sources.

Data use resources

This data user's guide has detailed information about the data set, including the process used to collect and review the data; the scope of information included in the data set; guidance on using the data, such as how to link the data with other data sources; and notes about specific topics. This data user's guide also has two appendices. Appendix A provides a glossary of key terms. Appendix B summarizes the decisions made on the scope and variables to include in the SCAN Policies Database after a data quality assessment.

Several additional data use resources are available to support users of the SCAN Policies Database:

- **Codebook:** The codebook provides information about each variable in the data set, including variable names, labels, definitions, protocol number, variable type, and frequencies. The codebook has three appendices. Appendix A provides a glossary of key terms. Appendix B contains supplemental notes that are important for accurately interpreting and using the data. Appendix C is a comprehensive list of all state statutes and policy documentation sources used to collect data for the SCAN Policies Database for each state, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

- **Data collection protocol:** The protocol has the questions used to collect information about states' statutes and policies as part of the data review and coding process. Appendix A provides a glossary of key terms.

This data user's guide, along with the other data use resources, can be found on the SCAN Policies Database website (https://www.scanpoliciesdatabase.com/data-use-resources) or from NDACAN (https://www.ndacan.acf.hhs.gov/).

Technical assistance

Users with general inquiries and those who access the SCAN Policies Database from the SCAN Policies Database website (https://www.scanpoliciesdatabase.com) who need technical assistance can submit a request to SCANPoliciesDatabase@mathematica-mpr.com.

Other data users who access the SCAN Policies Database from NDACAN (https://www.ndacan.acf.hhs.gov/) can receive technical assistance by submitting a request to

NDACANsupport@cornell.edu. NDACAN staff provide free user support for the data sets that they distribute. They can address issues such as importing data to an analysis program, clarifying variable labels, or solving problems with the data as delivered. NDACAN staff cannot, however, replace the role of a statistical analyst or a faculty advisor. Before writing to NDACANsupport@cornell.edu for assistance with the data, please review the support resources provided on the User Support page of NDACAN's website (https://www.ndacan.acf.hhs.gov/user-support/user-support.cfm).

Acknowledgement of source

Authors should acknowledge NDACAN and the original collector of the data when they publish manuscripts that use data provided by NDACAN. Users of these data are requested to include the following statement or an adaptation of it:

> The data used in this publication were made available by the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN) at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, and have been used with permission. The State Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) Policies Database was prepared by Elizabeth Weigensberg, Nuzhat Islam, Jean Knab, Mary Grider, Jeremy Page, and Sarah Bardin. Funding for the project was provided by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in collaboration with the Children's Bureau in the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Award Number: HHSP233201500035I/HHSP23337023T). The collector of the original data, the funder, NDACAN, Cornell University and their agents or employees bear no responsibility for the analyses or interpretations presented here.

The bibliographic citation for this data collection is as follows:

Weigensberg, E., Islam, N., Knab, J. Grider, M., Page, J., & Bardin S. (2020). *State Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) Policies Database* [Data set]. National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect. https://doi.org/10.34681/14t8-8730

A link to the collection of bibliographic citations for this data set can be found at the Child Abuse and Neglect Digital Library (canDL) at https://www.zotero.org/groups/421939/candl/library.

Publication submission requirement

Users of the SCAN Policy Database who obtain the data from NDACAN are required, in accordance with the terms of the data license for this data set, to notify NDACAN of any published work or report based wholly or in part on these data. A copy of any completed manuscript, thesis abstract, or reprint should be emailed to NDACANsupport@cornell.edu. Such copies will be used to provide NDACAN's funding agency with essential information about the use of NDACAN resources and to facilitate the exchange of information about research activities among data users and contributors.

Content of the SCAN Policies Database

This section describes the scope of the SCAN Policies Database and provides a description of the six content domains and their variables. The section concludes with a summary of several considerations and decisions made on what information to include in the scope of the database.

Scope

The scope of the SCAN Policies Database includes information about state definitions and policies related to child abuse and neglect for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. This information represents data collected, reviewed, and verified between May 2019 and July 2020. The scope of the topics in the SCAN Policies Database includes 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 also included. These topics were included based on their relevance to help inform improved understanding of states' child maltreatment incidence and related risk and protective factors. Topics were selected based on input from research experts and stakeholders from federal, state, and local agencies and were informed by a pilot data collection and review process.

Description of domains and variables

The content in the SCAN Policies Database is organized by six domains. The codebook, data collection protocol, and data file are also organized by these domains. Short descriptions of the variables within each domain are also provided.

1. **Definitions of child maltreatment**

This domain includes variables that capture nuances in how states define child abuse and neglect. Specific types of child maltreatment are identified as distinct variables, which indicate whether or not a state has this type of child maltreatment included as part of its documented definition of child abuse or neglect. State definitions of child maltreatment primarily come from state statutes. Selected sections of the state statues, which were used to code these variables, can be found on the SCAN Policies Database website (https://www.scanpoliciesdatabase.com/definitions).

Three variables (Def_Subtype_Abuse, Def_Subtype_Neglect, and Def_Subtype_Other) provide qualitative information that specifies whether any of the subtypes of maltreatment are considered part of the statutory definition for a broader category of child abuse, neglect, or other type of maltreatment. For example, a state's definition of child neglect may include subtypes of maltreatment, such as inadequate clothing, inadequate shelter, inadequate food, medical neglect, educational neglect, or abandonment. This gives more detail on how states may categorize subtypes of child maltreatment.

This domain also includes variables that specify what other information is included in states' definitions of child maltreatment, including the extent or type of harm, whether the perpetrator is identified, and the child's age. Qualitative variables describe where this information may vary by type of child maltreatment for each state.

Additional variables identify whether each state has any documented exceptions to definitions of child maltreatment and, if the state has a safe haven exemption, the conditions for this exemption.

2. **Laws or policies related to reporting child maltreatment**

This domain includes variables for the laws and policies related to the reporting of child maltreatment. Variables describe the context of states' reporting systems, specifically whether states have centralized reporting or, if not, how they are decentralized. Additional variables specify the statutory standard for reporting child maltreatment and whether a state has universal mandated reporting.

There are also series of variables that capture the type of individuals specified in states' definitions for mandated reporters, whether training is required for mandated reporters, and whether mandated reporters are subject to penalties for failing to report child abuse and neglect. There are also a few variables describing whether the state has penalties for false reporting of child abuse and neglect and if the state allows immunity for reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect.

In addition, this domain includes variables that describe what information is requested when the suspected child abuse and neglect is reported, including whether the reporter can remain anonymous. The domain also includes a variable specifying whether tribes are involved in accepting reports of tribal cases.

3. **Laws or policies related to screening reports of child maltreatment**

This domain provides information about state laws and policies related to screening reports of child maltreatment. Variables describe the context of states' screening processes, including whether states have a centralized screening unit or whether their screening is decentralized. Several variables describe the information required to "screen-in" a report of suspected child abuse or neglect as well as what decision process, activities, or information is used as part of the screening process. The domain also includes variables regarding who conducts screening of reports, including their qualifications, and whether tribes are involved in the screening of tribal cases.

4. **Laws or policies related to investigation of child maltreatment reports**

This domain describes information about state laws and policies related to the investigation of alleged child abuse and neglect. Variables provide information about what activities or information are required as part of the investigation process. The domain also includes variables for who conducts investigations of reports, including their qualifications. Variables in this domain also capture information on whether investigations can lead to criminal penalties as well as what level of evidence is required for substantiation of child maltreatment.

5. **Laws or policies related to child welfare response**

This domain provides information about laws and policies related to the response of child welfare systems to child maltreatment reports. Several variables provide information about the states' use of differential or alternative response, including eligibility for such a response, and when referrals are provided for community services for these families.

Variables in this domain also provide information about (1) whether the child welfare system provides in-home services, specifically for unsubstantiated cases or for families after reunification; (2) foster care services, including whether tribes provide foster care for tribal cases and whether a state extends foster care for youth older than age 18; (3) permanency options, specifically kinship guardianship, subsidized guardianship, and subsidized adoption; and (4) staff who conduct foster care case management and the qualifications of foster care case managers.

6. **Context information regarding child welfare system**

This domain has information about whether states' child welfare systems are administered by the state or county, and whether states operate under a legal consent decree or other court-ordered monitoring.

Considerations of scope

The geographic scope of the SCAN Policies Database covers the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Because child welfare policies can vary within states, especially for states with county-administered child welfare systems, consideration was given to determine whether county-level policy information would be feasible to include in the scope of the database. Ultimately, the decision to focus on state-level data instead of county-level data was based on recommendations from experts and the results of a pilot test, which assessed the feasibility of collecting and reviewing county-level statutes and policies. The SCAN Policies Database team's pilot test found that most counties had limited documentation and that their documentation did not show meaningful variation from state policies and definitions. Focusing the scope of the SCAN Policies Database at the state level also made it consistent with the geographic scope of unrestricted NCANDS and AFCARS data, which could be linked with the new database to address key questions about the incidence of child maltreatment.

Because states' definitions and policies on child abuse and neglect can change over time, the SCAN Policies Database team considered whether effective start dates could be collected for the current definitions and policies. When we collected, reviewed, and verified data, we included effective start dates. However, there were high levels of missing data and when we contacted states to verify the data, we encountered uncertainty about the start dates. Thus, the decision was made to not include effective start dates in the database. More details about this decision can be found in Appendix B.

The intent of the SCAN Policies Database is to periodically update the data to reflect changes in states' definitions and policies over time. Future updates of the data may also include additional topics, such other policies or associated risk and protective factors related to the incidence of child abuse and neglect.

Data Collection Procedures

This section describes the sample, data sources, data collection, and coding of state definitions and policies for the SCAN Policies Database.

Sample

All 50 states, plus the District of Columbia and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Data sources and data collection

The data collection process was designed to collect publicly available documents that describe a state's definitions and policies related to the incidence of child abuse and neglect. The resources collected included state laws and regulations that provided definitions of child maltreatment as well as policy documents or training manuals that covered the topics included in the scope of the database—specifically, mandated reporting, screening, investigations, and the child welfare response. A full list of topics is available in the data collection protocol (https://www.scanpoliciesdatabase.com/data-use-resources).

To collect the resources, the SCAN Policies Database team began with a search for documents on state child welfare agency websites and the Child Welfare Information Gateway, a website sponsored by the Children's Bureau at ACF. The SCAN Polices Database team also downloaded state laws and regulations from LexisNexis. Publicly available, centralized resources of information on certain topics such as whether states had child welfare systems that were state- or county-administered[1] or that operated under a consent decree or other legal agreement[2] were also used.

To confirm that the most current and complete set of statutes and policies documentation were collected, the SCAN Policies Database team reached out to child welfare agency representatives from each state. These state contacts were identified by soliciting recommendations from the Director of Regional Program, ACYF at ACF regional offices, and existing contacts of the SCAN Policies Database team, as well as by conducting Internet searches of states' child welfare agency websites. The SCAN Policies Database team provided state contacts with a list of the topics included in the scope of the data collection protocol along with a list of the identified state statutes and policy documentation that were collected from publicly available sources. Each state contact was then asked if there were any outdated documents that should be excluded or other documents that should be included. Of the 52 states in the sample, 50 states participated in the document confirmation process. One variable

---

[1] The Child Welfare Information Gateway (https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/services/) was used to identify whether states had state- or county-administered child welfare systems.
[2] Several resources were used to identify whether states had consent decrees and other legal agreements, including resources from Casey Family Programs (https://www.casey.org/consent-decree-summary/), the National Center for Youth Law (https://youthlaw.org/strategies/foster-care-docket/), Children's Rights (https://www.childrensrights.org/our-campaigns/class-actions/), and the Child Welfare Information Gateway (https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/reform/litigation/).

in the data file (DocumentsConfirmed) allows data users to determine whether a state participated in the documentation confirmation process. The set of documents that were ultimately used to code information in the data collection protocol for each state are listed in Appendix B of the codebook (https://www.scanpoliciesdatabase.com/data-use-resources).

The state resources were collected between May 2019 and June 2020. Most of the resources were collected in summer 2019; some state contacts provided additional resources up through June 2020.

Data collection protocol and coding process

To ensure the systematic coding of state definitions and policies, the SCAN Policies Database team created a structured data collection protocol for the document reviewers and coders (https://www.scanpoliciesdatabase.com/data-use-resources). The protocol was organized into six domains:

1. **Definitions:** Definitions of child maltreatment
2. **Reporting:** Laws or policies related to the reporting child maltreatment
3. **Screening:** Laws or policies related to the screening reports of child maltreatment
4. **Investigation:** Laws or policies related to the investigation of child maltreatment reports
5. **Child welfare response:** Laws or policies related to the child welfare response
6. **Child welfare system context:** Context information regarding child welfare system

Each domain of the protocol included a series of questions about a state's definitions or policies. The SCAN Policies Database team searched the state documents through a combination of manual searching and use of the cross-document searching capabilities of the NVivo 12 coding software. Using these methods to review the documents, the team tagged and annotated the documents in NVivo to capture and save information provided within the documentation to support answers to each question in the protocol.

The SCAN Policies Database team used multiple strategies to ensure the quality of the coded data. The coders, who were Mathematica and Child Trends employees, were trained on the data collection process, the coding protocol, and key child welfare policies. In addition to the coders, the coding team included five child welfare experts from Mathematica and Child Trends. The child welfare experts conducted a quality assurance review of the information coded for each state to ensure its accuracy. All coders and child welfare experts were required to meet a minimum coding proficiency of 80 percent agreement with a review of a state that had been coded previously and verified by the state child welfare agency. Finally, the SCAN Policies Database team sent a copy of the coded information to the identified state child welfare agency contacts for them to verify and provide any corrections. The data were verified by the states between December 2019 and July 2020. Of the 52 states contacted, 47 states provided verification. A field (Verified) in the data file allows data users to determine whether a state's coding was verified by the state.

Data File

This section describes how the data were prepared, the structure of the data file, and key information about the variables in the data file.

Data preparation

The data was largely derived from the original coding by the SCAN Policies Database team, which was verified by the states. In some cases, the team created more categorical or dichotomous variables from open-ended responses, or more response categories for existing variables, after the data were verified by the state. In those cases, the team did not rely solely on coders' open-ended text. Instead, they went back to the source materials to ensure that the variables or responses were coded systematically across states. The data collection protocol was then updated to include the new questions or response categories.

Data structure

The data file includes 52 records, one for each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The data reflect the state definitions and policies for the calendar year 2019.

Variables

There are several different types of variables in the data set: (1) variables taken directly from protocol questions, (2) paradata that indicate the process by which the data were collected, and (3) key identifiers. Each is described in more detail below.

1.   Variables from protocol questions

Variables taken directly from protocol questions reflect the coded responses to the questions in the data collection protocol. These variables are listed in the codebook with an accompanying protocol number that maps to the corresponding question in the protocol. In the protocol, each question is named with a prefix that identifies its associated domain. The six domains are listed below, with the identifying prefix in parentheses:

- Definitions of child maltreatment (D)
- Reporting (R)
- Screening (S)
- Investigations (I)
- Child welfare response (W)
- Child welfare context (C)

2.   Paradata

Paradata provide information about the process by which the data were collected. The following variables represent the paradata included in the SCAN Policies Database:

- **DocumentsConfirmed** is a variable that equals 1 if the state confirmed the documents used as sources for coding information for the SCAN Policies Database and 0 if the state did not.

- **Verified** is a variable that equals 1 if representatives of the state child welfare agency confirmed the coding of the state policies and definitions for the SCAN Policies Database and 0 if the agency did not confirm the coding.

- **Year** is a variable that is 2019 for all records to reflect the year that the definitions and policies were in place.

3.   Key identifiers

There are several key identifiers that can be used to identify a particular state and to merge the data with other common data sets:

- **State** is a string variable with the state's two-letter postal abbreviation.

- **StateFIPS** is a string variable with the state's FIPS code.

- **RegionCode** is a numeric variable with the Census Bureau's region code for all states except Puerto Rico, which is given a unique identifier of 999 because it is not part of a census region.

Variable characteristics

The codebook has the following detailed information about each variable in the SCAN Policies Database:

- **Variable name:** Used to identify the data element in the data set.

- **Variable label:** A brief description of the variable.

- **Definition:** A more detailed description of the variable.

- **Protocol number:** Identifies the question in the data collection protocol that was used to review documentation on states' definitions and policies.

- **Variable type:** Either numeric or string.

- **Universe:** The total number of cases possible for each variable in the data set. The universe for all variables is 52, which represents each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

- **N:** The total number of cases with valid values for the variable.

- **Frequencies:** The frequencies for each value are presented for all numeric variables.

Variable responses

Most of the variable response categories were pre-established. As noted, in some cases the SCAN Policies Database team added categories when a critical mass of open-ended responses across states suggested we should include more options. The data collection protocol reflects these updates.

In some cases, there was not enough information to code a particular response, even with a state representative reviewing the data. In those cases, the response was coded as unknown (88). Logical skips, which are reflected in the data as 66, were used when a question was not applicable to a particular state given a related response on a preceding question.

Open-ended responses

A substantial number of variables in the data file allow for open-ended responses. As noted, the SCAN Policies Database team created new variables or response categories when they could easily be categorized for the data user. The team retained many open-ended responses from the coders to give data users more information. Data users can consider whether and how to incorporate this information in their analyses.

Instructions for Use

The SCAN Policies Database is available from both the SCAN Policies Database website and the NDACAN website.

Data formats

Although the data available on each site are the same, the data formats and tools for exploring the data are different.

Data formats or tools	SCAN Policies Database website	NDACAN
Online tools for exploring or subsetting the data	X	
Comma-delimited data file	X	
Tab-delimited data file		X
Text data file		X
Code for importing and labeling a text data file in Stata, SAS, and SPSS		X
Data file formats with labeling for Stata, SAS, and SPSS		X
Instructions and code for importing SPSS and tab-delimited files into R		X

Importing data to common statistical packages

The comma-delimited (.csv) data file provided by the SCAN Policies Database website may be imported into the user's preferred statistical package by using the import function for that package. Users who wish to work with the data in Excel may open the comma-delimited file in Excel and select "File" from the main menu, then select "Save As" to save the file in Excel (.xlsx) format. Because labels are not included in .csv files, users should refer to the codebook. The codebook may be used to obtain the definition of each variable and the meaning of the numeric codes.

NDACAN provides the SCAN Policies Database in a variety of data file formats. A tab-delimited (.tab) data file is available for use in spreadsheet programs. NDACAN also provides text data files along with code that can be used to import data in Stata (.do), SAS (.sas), and SPSS(.sps). Data in file formats native to Stata (.dta), SAS (.sas7bdat), and SPSS (.sav) as provided by NDACAN can be opened directly in these statistical packages, with variable labels as well as value labels and formats. Guidance for using the import programs as well as instructions for importing the data into R can be found on the NDACAN User Support webpage.

Merging with other data

The SCAN Policies Database can be merged with other data sets by using one of the following geographic identifiers:

- State: Two-letter state abbreviation
- StateFIPS: Two-digit state Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) code
- RegionCode: Census region code

For example, the NCANDS Child File, which is available via a restricted data license from NDACAN, contains the two-letter state abbreviation in the variable StaTerr. Variables from the SCAN Policies Database can be merged by using the variables State and StaTerr.

Similarly, the AFCARS Foster Care File contains the two-letter state abbreviation in the variable St, but also contains the State FIPS code in the variable State. Therefore, the SCAN Policies Database can be merged with this file by using either of the following combinations of linking variables:

- State (from SCAN Policies): St (from AFCARS)
- StateFIPS (from SCAN Policies): State (from AFCARS)

The SCAN Policies Database can also be merged with state administrative data or survey data that contain state or census region codes. See the NDACAN User Support page for examples of merging data using different statistical packages.

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

APPENDIX A

Glossary of Key Terms

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

Appendix A: Glossary of Key Terms

This glossary defines several key terms used in the SCAN Policies Database. The terms are organized alphabetically within each of the six topic domains, which reflect the organizational structure of the data file, codebook, and data collection protocol. This glossary is not an exhaustive list of all terms used in the database. Instead, it highlights several terms that may be unfamiliar to data users.

The SCAN Policies Database codebook (https://www.scanpoliciesdatabase.com/data-use-resources) also provides a resource for users to understand the definitions of specific variables. For more information about these or other child welfare terms, please refer to the glossary produced by the Child Welfare Information Gateway (https://www.childwelfare.gov/glossary/).

Alternative or differential response: An approach used by some child protection or child welfare agencies to provide different options to respond to reports of child abuse and neglect, other than an investigation to assess whether child maltreatment occurred. This response can be referred to as an alternative response, a differential response, or a dual-track or multiple-track response system. Different factors are used to determine eligibility for alternative or differential response. Such factors often include assessment of the level of risk for the child and the family's need for support services.

Centralized reporting: A child maltreatment reporting method, usually a hotline, designed to facilitate reporting to one entity that will accept reports of suspected child abuse and neglect from all locations across a state (see *reporting*).

Consent decree: A legal order that results from a lawsuit against the child welfare agency. Consent decrees often have requirements for the child welfare agency to implement corrective actions and monitor improvements related to the reason for the lawsuit.

Factitious disorder by proxy: A type of child maltreatment, also known as Munchausen by proxy or medical child abuse, that results when a parent or caretaker misrepresents information, simulates an illness, or seeks medical treatment for a child who is not really sick with the alleged illness.

Failure to thrive: A type of child maltreatment that is a medically diagnosed condition in which a child fails to develop physically. Also referred to as nonorganic failure to thrive. This condition is typically indicated by a child's weight, height, and motor development falling significantly below age-appropriate ranges with no medical or organic cause.

Guardianship: A legal permanency option granted by the court when the parental rights of the child are transferred to an adult nonparent to serve as the child's caretaker.

In-home services: Services provided to children and families who were reported for alleged child maltreatment and determined as needing supports to address the children's safety needs. The children are not in foster care or in the custody of the child welfare agency. These services can be provided to children who are able to remain at home, without needing out-of-home or foster care, or to children who have been reunified with their families and returned home from being in out-of-home or foster care. In-home services can be provided directly by the child welfare agency or by another service provider on behalf of a child welfare agency.

Institutional abuse or neglect: A type of child maltreatment that occurs while the child is in an institution, facility, or agency that is responsible for the child's welfare, such as foster care, out-of-home care, or any public or private residential home.

Investigation: A response by the child protection or child welfare agency that gathers information to determine whether the reported child maltreatment occurred. The investigation assesses whether child maltreatment occurred or whether the child is at risk of child maltreatment and results in a formal determination or disposition, such as whether or not the report of child maltreatment was substantiated (see *substantiation*).

Kinship guardianship: State laws and policies that allow for a family member, or "kin", to become the legal permanent guardian for a child who has been placed in out-of-home or foster care (see *guardianship*).

Mandated reporting: A state law requiring certain people to report known or suspected child abuse and neglect. Some states require all people to report child maltreatment (see *universal mandated reporting*), while other states identify specific professionals as mandated reporters (see *reporting*).

Reporting: The process in which a person who knows of or suspects child abuse or neglect notifies authorities, such as child protection or child welfare agencies, of the alleged child maltreatment and provides information that is known about the alleged child victim, perpetrator, and child maltreatment.

Safe haven: A policy where a parent can voluntarily relinquish a child, usually a newborn, to lawfully designated locations, such as hospitals, fire stations, or other safe settings. When a child is safely surrendered in this way, the parent is protected from criminal prosecution. The voluntary relinquishment of a child that follows the safe haven policy requirements may be exempt from the state's definitions of child maltreatment.

Screening: The process in which child protection or child welfare agency staff review information received from a report of child maltreatment to determine whether there is sufficient information to "screen-in" a report to pursue next steps, such as opening an investigation or referring the case for an alternative response. The screening process typically considers whether there is sufficient information about a variety of factors, including whether the report provides enough information to identify the alleged child victim and whether the alleged child maltreatment meets the state's definitions for child abuse or neglect.

Shaken baby syndrome: A type of child maltreatment that involves a serious head or brain injury resulting from violent shaking or impacting of the head of an infant or small child, which can result in death or permanent neurologic disability. Also known as abusive head trauma or shaking impact syndrome.

State- and county-administered child welfare systems: The framework for administration of child welfare services and programs, which can be administered at the state or county levels. State- administered systems are more centralized, while county-administered systems are decentralized and can have more variability across counties.

Subsidized adoption: State program that provides financial assistance or subsidies for caregivers to adopt children from foster care who have special needs.

Subsidized guardianship: State program that provides financial assistance or subsidies for caregivers who take legal guardianship of children (see *guardianship*).

Substantiation: A decision made at the conclusion of an investigation of a report of alleged child maltreatment, when there is sufficient and credible evidence that the child maltreatment occurred or that there is risk of child maltreatment. The term for a substantiated investigation decision can vary by jurisdiction. It can also be referred to as a founded, indicated, or confirmed report of child maltreatment (see *investigation*).

Tribes: The original or first inhabitants of North America and their communities, including Indigenous, First Nation, American Indian, Indian, Native American, Native, and Alaska Native communities. The project did not limit this definition to only federally recognized tribes, so it is inclusive of all tribes based on each states' definitions and policies.

Universal mandated reporting: A state law that requires all people, regardless of profession, to report known or suspected child maltreatment (see *reporting*).

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

APPENDIX B

**Summary of Scope and Variable Decisions
Based on Data Quality Assessment**

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

Appendix B: Summary of Scope and Variable Decisions Based on Data Quality Assessment

After concluding data collection, the SCAN Policies Database team reviewed and assessed the quality of the data collected for all variables. The team refined the scope of the variables included in the data set and modified a few variables during the data quality review efforts.

The team revised several variables based on the quality assessment. Specifically, several categorical variables were created based on information that was originally collected with open-text responses. In some cases, a few variables were condensed or combined if the collected information overlapped in content.

Some variables were dropped from the scope of the data set because they did not capture responses (N = 0) or they did not capture information on variability from one state to another. For example, a large number of unknown response categories were included in the original scope of the data collection protocol, but were ultimately dropped because the variables did not yield any responses or clarify why the information was unknown.

The effective start dates of the child maltreatment definitions and policies were also dropped from the scope of the data set. The team collected and coded effective start dates to the best of its ability and solicited targeted input from the states through the verification process to review or correct the dates. However, throughout the data collection, review, and verification process, there were uncertainties both within the SCAN Policies Database team about coding the correct data and from the state agency contacts who verified the data. During the data verification process, the state contacts provided minimal feedback on the date variables, often saying that this information was not known. The limited feedback from the state contacts on the date variables suggested that either they did not closely review the dates or they did not know this information. In addition, after reviewing the quality of the data collected on the effective start dates, the team found a high percentage of missing data for these variables. Further, the date range across these variables greatly varied, which lead to uncertainty about whether the dates reflected initial implementation dates of laws or policies or if they depicted dates of recent amendments. The team decided to omit the date variables, given the concerns about the reliability of these data.

To capture changes in state laws and policies across time, the current data set and any subsequent round of data collection will contain the date of data collection, which can be used as the time point of reference. As a supplementary resource, the SCAN Policies Database website provides data users with state statutes that contain statutory text on definitions of child maltreatment. These documents contain the full legislative history of changes in the state laws, with corresponding dates for all states.

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.