



# State Child Abuse & Neglect (SCAN) Policies Database

## Data User's Training

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

April 2021



# Training overview

- **Introduction to the SCAN Policies Database**
- **Content of the SCAN Policies Database**
- **Data collection procedures**
- **Data file**
- **Instructions for use**
- **Technical assistance**



# Introduction to the SCAN Policies Database



# Background

- **Although federal law is the foundation of the child welfare system, state laws and policies drive the structure of states' own systems**
  - 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**

# Overview

- **SCAN Policies Database compiles data on states' definitions of child maltreatment and related policies that relate to the surveillance of child maltreatment incidence and associated risk and protective factors**
- **Project is funded 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**
- **Project team is led by Mathematica in partnership with Child Trends**

# Purpose

- The purpose of the SCAN Policies Database project is to gather and review information from statutes and policy documentation to develop a database to broaden our understanding of differences between states and how these difference may influence rates of child maltreatment.
- The database is a resource for researchers, analysts, and others who are interested in examining differences between states in their definitions and policies
- A primary objective is to create the SCAN Policies Database so it can be linked at the state level with other data sources to answer key research questions

# Understanding variability of child maltreatment definitions and policies across states

- **SCAN Policies Database can be used to answer questions about the variations in states' definitions and policies**
  - What are the variations across states in the definitions of specific types of child maltreatment?
  - How do states vary regarding having universal mandated reporting?
  - What are the variations across states in the definition of mandated reporters?
  - How do states vary in their requirements for screening reports of child maltreatment?
  - How do states vary regarding availability of extended foster care beyond age 18?

# How state variability relates to child maltreatment incidence and outcomes

- **SCAN Policies Database can be used to answer 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**
  - How are states' definition and policy variations associated with the incidence and prevalence of reported cases of child abuse and neglect?
  - How are states' variations associated with risk and protective factors of child maltreatment at the child, family, or community level?
  - To what extent do these variations relate to child welfare processes (e.g., intake, screening, substantiation decisions), service provision, and ultimately the safety and well-being of children?





# Content of the SCAN Policies Database



# Scope

- **Includes data for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico**
- **SCAN Policies Database 2019**
  - Represents data collected, reviewed, and verified between May 2019 and July 2020
  - Future updates to the database will allow tracking changes over time

# Topics

The database is organized by six topic domains:

1. Definitions of child maltreatment
2. Reporting child maltreatment
3. Screening reports of child maltreatment
4. Investigation of child maltreatment reports
5. Child welfare system response
6. Context of the child welfare system

# Topic selection factors

- **Relevance to inform improved understanding of states' child maltreatment incidence and related risk and protective factors**
- **Based on input from experts and stakeholders**
- **Informed by a pilot data collection and review process**

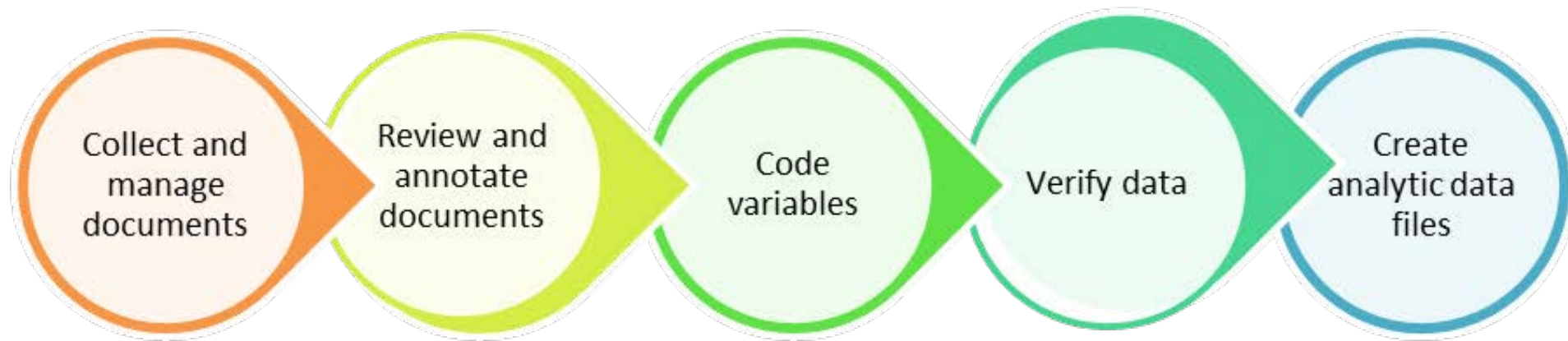


# Data collection procedures



# Data collection procedures

- **Multistep process from document collection to creation of data files**



# Data sources

- **Primarily rely on publicly available documents that describe states' definitions and policies**
- **Data sources**
  - State statutes and administrative codes
  - State agencies' policy documentation or training manuals

# Data collection

- 1. Search for policy documents on state child welfare agency website**
- 2. Search for state statutes using LexisNexis**
- 3. Identify other sources with publicly available information**
  - Child Welfare Information Gateway
  - Other sources with aggregate information about consent decrees



# Document confirmation

- **Identified contact person from each state's child welfare agency**
- **Asked state contacts to confirm the documents and share any additional documents that may be needed**
  - 96% (50 states) participated in document confirmation
- **Documents collected between May 2019 and June 2020**
  - Most documents collected during summer 2019
  - Some state contacts provided documents through June 2020
- **All sources listed in Appendix B of the codebook**

# Review and coding process

- **Systematic coding of state definitions and policies using a structured data collection protocol**
  - Each topic domain included questions to capture detailed information about states' definitions and policies
  - Mostly categorical questions, plus some open-text fields
- **SCAN Policies Database team reviewed state documents with a combination of manual searching and the cross-document searching capabilities of NVivo 12 qualitative coding software**
- **Information to answer the data collection protocol questions was identified and annotated using NVivo**

# Verification

- **Multistep quality assurance and verification process**
- **Internal quality assurance with project team**
  - Trained staff conducted the reviews
  - Senior researchers with substantive child welfare expertise and peer-staff reviewers conducted quality assurance for each state
- **External verification with state contacts**
  - Coded data compiled in state profiles and verified by state contacts
  - State contacts verified data and provided clarifying information or documents between December 2019 and July 2020
  - 90% (47 states) participated in verifying the data



## Data file



# Data preparation

- **Reviewed data to identify and implement any needed revisions**
  - Created additional categorical variables or response categories based on open-text responses
  - Conducted additional quality and consistency checks

# Data file

- **Sample size: 52**
  - Row for each state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico
- **Types of variables**
  - Variables depicting data collection protocol questions
  - Paradata regarding the process
    - Documents confirmed, state verification
  - Key identifiers
    - State (two-letter abbreviation)
    - State FIPS code
    - Census region code

# Data use resources

- **Data user's guide**

- Provides background and detailed information about the data set
  - Describes the process used to collect and review the data; the scope of information included in the data set; guidance on using the data, including how to link the data with other data sources; and notes about specific topics
  - Appendices provide a glossary of key terms and a summary of decisions regarding the scope of and variables included in the database

- **Codebook**

- Provides information about each variable in the data set
  - Variable names, labels, definitions, protocol number, variable type, and frequencies
  - Appendices provide supplemental notes and list of all state statutes and policy documentation sources

- **Data collection protocol**

- Provides questions used to collect information about states' statutes and policies as part of the review and coding process



# Instructions for use





# Accessing the data

## 1. SCAN Policies Database website

- <https://www.scanpoliciesdatabase.com>
- Use interactive tool to view and filter data by state and topic domain
- Download full data file (comma-delimited format)
- Obtain data use resources
- Access state profiles and state statutes for definitions of child maltreatment

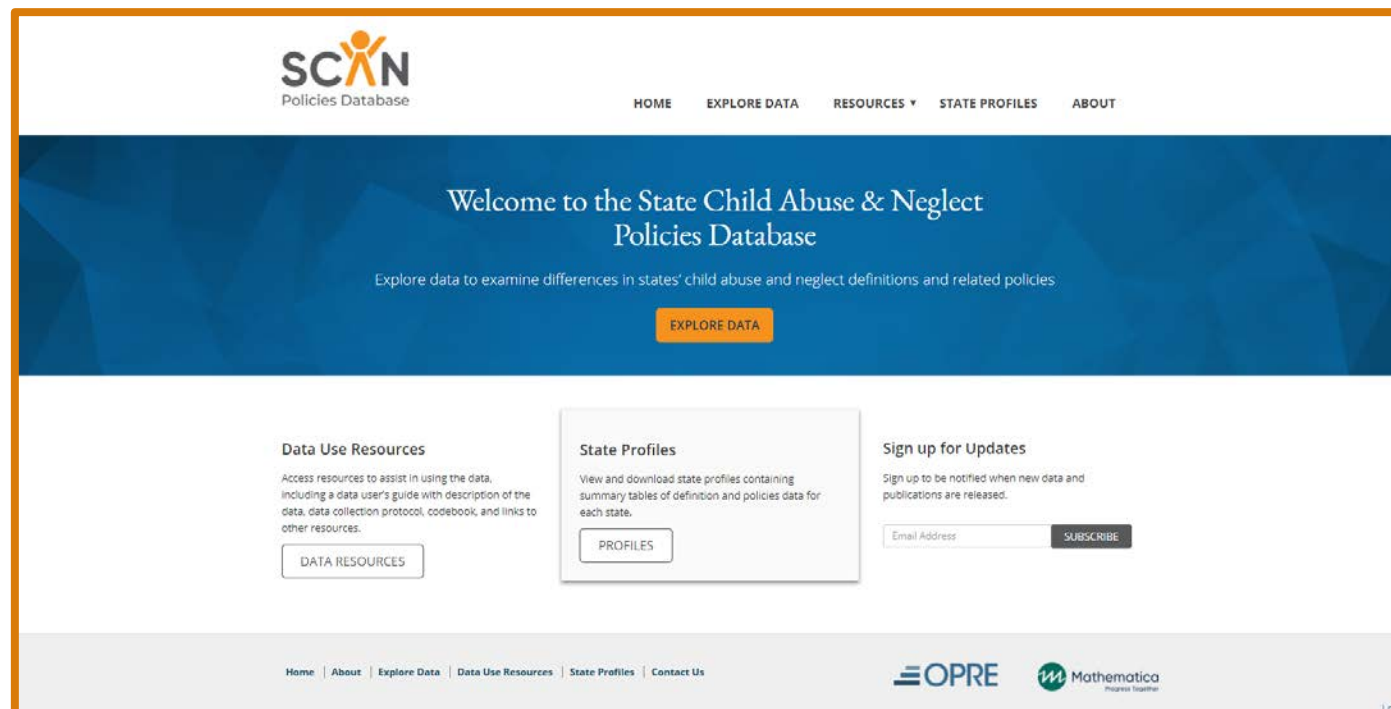
## 2. National Data Archive for Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN)

- <https://www.ndacan.acf.hhs.gov/>
- Access full data file (variety of formats)
- Obtain data use resources

- **Note: The content of the SCAN Policies Database documentation and data files will be identical across both sources.**

# SCAN Policies Database website

- <https://www.scanpoliciesdatabase.com>



# Data formats

- **SCAN Policies Database is available from two sources, which have different data formats available**

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

## SCAN Policies Database website

- The website provides comma-delimited (.csv) data file
- Users who want to work with data in Excel may open the .csv file in Excel
  - Select “File” from the main menu, then select “Save As” to save the file in Excel (.xlsx) format
- Users can also import the .csv file into their preferred statistical package by using the import function for that package
- Because labels are not included in .csv files, users should refer to the codebook to obtain the definition of each variable and the meaning of the numeric codes

# Accessing and importing data for common statistical packages

## NDACAN data

- Native data file formats with labeling for Stata (.dta), SAS (.sas7bdat), and SPSS (.sav)
- Provides tab-delimited (.tab) file
- Provides text data file (.txt)
- Code to import and label in Stata, SAS, and SPSS formats
- Instructions and code to importing SPSS and tab-delimited data file into R

# Merging with other data

- **SCAN Policies Database can be merged with other data using the following identifiers**
  - **State:** Two-letter state abbreviation
  - **StateFIPS:** Two-digit state Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) code
  - **RegionCode:** Census region code
- **Examples**
  - The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) can be merged using two-letter state abbreviation
  - The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) can be merged using two-letter state abbreviation or FIPS code

# Examples of possible research questions

- **SCAN Policies Database can be merged with NCANDS to answer key research questions**
  - How are variations in states' definitions of child maltreatment associated with the incidence of reported cases of child abuse and neglect?
  - How are variations in states' mandated reporter policies associated with the incidence of reported cases of child abuse and neglect?
  - How are variations in states' screening policies associated with the incidence of reported cases of child abuse and neglect?



# Technical assistance





# Technical assistance

- 1. General inquiries from those who access data from the SCAN Policies Database website (<https://www.scanpoliciesdatabase.com>)**
  - Please submit a request to:  
[SCANPoliciesDatabase@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:SCANPoliciesDatabase@mathematica-mpr.com)
- 2. Technical or analytic support for those who access data from NDACAN (<https://www.ndacan.acf.hhs.gov/>)**
  - Please submit a request to:  
[NDACANsupport@cornell.edu](mailto:NDACANsupport@cornell.edu)
  - NDACAN staff provide free user support for the data sets that they distribute, including addressing issues such as importing data to an analysis program, clarifying variable labels, or solving other problems