

Child Safety in Custody: National & Oregon Statistics, with Reform Resources

Purpose: Provide legislators and stakeholders with credible data showing systemic gaps in CPS and Family Court, plus resources on practice standards and recent reforms.

National Statistics

- Lifetime exposure to CPS investigation: ~37% of U.S. children will experience a CPS investigation by age 18. [1]
- False allegation rates: Deliberately false child abuse allegations occur in about 4% of cases; higher (~12%) only within custody disputes. [2][3]
- Custody litigation discredits abuse disclosures: In a national NIJ-funded study, courts credited child sexual-abuse claims at ~15%. When the other parent alleged 'alienation,' the rate dropped to ~2%, with custody losses for mothers nearly doubling. [4]

Oregon Statistics

- 2023: 93,486 reports received; 45,447 assigned for CPS assessment; 38,397 completed. [5]
- 2023: 7,861 founded assessments (~20.5% of completed), involving 11,191 child victims; most common category: 'Threat of Harm'. [5]
- 2022–2024: Similar proportions; roughly 1 in 5 assessments result in a founded disposition. [6]

Interpretation

- High investigation exposure + low substantiation ≠ children lying. 'Unfounded' often reflects evidentiary limits, not falsity.
- Custody contexts show systematic discrediting of abuse disclosures when 'alienation' is alleged.
- Oregon's ~20% founded rate mirrors national issues, underscoring the need for trauma-informed practice and CPS–court coordination.

Practice Standards & Reform Resources

- APSAC Guidelines: Forensic Interviewing of Children (2023). [7]
- AFCC Guidelines for Parenting Coordination (2019). [8]
- California SB 331 (Piqui's Law, 2023): Limits coercive 'reunification' programs; requires qualified experts. [9]
- Pennsylvania Kayden's Law (Act 8 of 2024): Child-safety priority in custody cases. [10]
- Federal VAWA 2022: Embedded Kayden's Law provisions encouraging states to adopt reforms. [11]

References

- [1] Kim et al. (2017). Lifetime Prevalence of Investigating Child Maltreatment. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5227926/>
- [2] Trocmé & Bala (2005). False allegations when parents separate. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16293307/>
- [3] Trocmé summary (Leadership Council). <https://leadershipcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Trocme.pdf>
- [4] Meier (2020). U.S. child custody outcomes involving alienation & abuse. https://scholarship.law.gwu.edu/faculty_publications/2712
- [5] Oregon DHS. 2023 Child Welfare Data Book. <https://www.oregon.gov/odhs/data/cwdata/cw-data-book-2023.pdf>
- [6] Oregon DHS Child Welfare Transformation Report (2023). <https://www.oregon.gov/odhs/child-welfare-transformation/progressreports/cw-progress-report-2023-06.pdf>
- [7] APSAC Forensic Interviewing Guidelines (2023). <https://apsac.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/FI-Guidelines-Updated-V2.pdf>
- [8] AFCC Parenting Coordination Guidelines (2019). <https://www.afccnet.org/Portals/0/Committees/Guidelines%20for%20Parenting%20Coordination%202019.pdf>
- [9] California SB 331 (2023, Piqui's Law). <https://legiscan.com/CA/text/SB331/id/2845939>
- [10] Pennsylvania Act 8 of 2024 (Kayden's Law). <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/li/uconsCheck.cfm?act=8&sessInd;=0&yr;=2024>
- [11] VAWA 2022 – Kayden's Law provisions summary. <https://abpp.org/newsletter-post/significant-changes-in-child-custody-laws-for-forensic-psychologists/>