

# Center for the Prevention of Child Maltreatment 2026–2028 Strategic Plan

*Strengthening the systems that support children and families.*



CPCM

KNOW | RESPOND | PREVENT

CENTER FOR THE PREVENTION OF CHILD MALTREATMENT

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## OUR STORY

In 2014, the South Dakota Legislature convened the Jolene's Law Task Force to study the prevalence and impact of child sexual abuse in our state. The Task Force, named in honor of Jolene Loetscher, a survivor who became a leading advocate for change, brought together legislators, physicians, law enforcement, tribal community representatives, child advocacy professionals, and state agency leaders to understand the full scope of the problem and recommend solutions.

What they found was sobering. Research from 2016 reflected that at least 4,000 children in South Dakota experience sexual abuse every year. Child sexual abuse occurs in every county in the state, across all socioeconomic and racial groups. The vast majority of cases involve someone known to the child. And the long-term consequences for individual health, family stability, and community well-being are profound and lasting.

The Task Force issued 34 recommendations. Among the most significant: establish a statewide academic center dedicated to preventing and responding to child maltreatment. In 2017, that recommendation became a reality. The Center for the Prevention of Child Maltreatment (CPCM) was established within the University of South Dakota's School of Health Sciences, built on the foundation the Task Force laid, and committed to carrying that work forward.

Since our founding, CPCM has grown alongside the needs of South Dakota's children and families. We have trained tens of thousands of professionals and community members, launched statewide data initiatives, partnered with Tribal Nations, supported foster families, and worked alongside legislators, educators, medical providers, and child advocacy professionals across every corner of the state. The work has evolved, but the commitment has never changed: every child in South Dakota deserves to be safe, supported, and able to thrive.

Nearly a decade in, CPCM remains guided by the same foundational question the Task Force asked in 2015: what does South Dakota need to truly protect its children? The answer continues to shape everything we do – from the training we offer, to the data we analyze, to the partnerships we build. Our vision and mission reflect that ongoing commitment.

## VISION

A South Dakota where families, communities, and systems work together so every child is safe, supported, and able to thrive.

## MISSION

CPCM improves outcomes for children and families by strengthening the capacity of professionals, organizations, and communities to prevent, recognize, and respond to child maltreatment.

## KNOW



Understanding risk is the foundation of effective action. CPCM gathers and analyzes data, promotes awareness, integrates research and evidence-based practices, and supports a shared understanding of how child maltreatment affects South Dakota families and communities, including the specific disparities and considerations that impact Native American children and families.



## RESPOND

When risk or harm is identified, response must be timely, effective, and coordinated. CPCM supports professionals and systems through training, technical assistance, and practical guidance with an emphasis on multidisciplinary approaches and culturally responsive practice.



## PREVENT

Prevention means working upstream, before harm occurs. CPCM strengthens workforce capacity, supports policies and practices that promote safety and whole-child wellbeing, and works to improve the long-term conditions that allow children and families to thrive.

## WHO WE ARE

CPCM is a statewide resource housed at the University of South Dakota. Our primary role is to strengthen the systems, professionals, and communities that support children and families.

Our work spans child welfare, healthcare, education, law enforcement, as well as other fields and it is grounded in the same public health approach the Jolene's Law Task Force called for: coordinated, evidence-based, and oriented toward prevention as well as response.

CPCM approaches child maltreatment as a shared responsibility. One that requires professionals across disciplines working from a common understanding of risk, evidence-based practice, and effective response. CPCM recognizes that improving outcomes for children is closely tied to strengthening families. When families have the support, resources, and skills they need to thrive, children are more likely to remain safe and experience positive long-term outcomes.

## WHAT WE DO

### **Build Workforce Capacity**

We provide high-quality, evidence-based training and technical assistance to current and emerging professionals. This work helps ensure that the people most likely to identify, respond to, or prevent child maltreatment including teachers, nurses, social workers, law enforcement, and others share a common understanding of protective and risk indicators, reporting responsibilities, and best practices for prevention and response.

### **Translate Data Into Action**

CPCM analyzes data, reviews research, and translates complex information into practical insight that supports better decision-making. We serve as a trusted, neutral source of analysis for professionals, agency partners, and policymakers across South Dakota.

### **Support Coordination Across Systems**

Child maltreatment cannot be addressed by any single agency or discipline working alone. CPCM helps child-serving systems work together more effectively by convening partners, identifying gaps, and supporting interdisciplinary collaboration.

### **Partner with Tribal Nations**

CPCM is committed to meaningful collaboration with Tribal Nations to improve outcomes for Native children and families. This means engaging in ongoing partnership, supporting culturally responsive approaches, and respecting Tribal sovereignty in all aspects of our work.

### **Inform Leaders and Policy**

We help policymakers and system leaders understand trends, challenges, and opportunities for improving child safety and family wellbeing across South Dakota. We participate in legislative and policy discussions to ensure that decisions consider their impact on children and families, grounding our contributions in research and non-partisan advocacy.

# STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS: 2026–2028

## 1. Strengthening System Capacity & Coordination

- Build workforce capacity through targeted training and technical assistance
- Advance evidence-based practices across child-serving systems
- Promote interdisciplinary collaboration and strengthen coordination between agencies and partners
- Advance prevention efforts by improving how systems work together

## 2. Data, Insight, and Continuous Improvement

- Establish CPCM's role as a trusted source of data and analysis
- Translate data into actionable insight for partners and decision-makers
- Support system-level quality improvement efforts

## 3. Policy Education and Legislative Engagement

- Provide research-informed, neutral information to policymakers
- Develop policy briefs, reports, and educational materials
- Participate in discussions to ensure decisions consider impacts on children and families



## WHAT GUIDES US

Everything CPCM does is shaped by a consistent set of principles rooted in the original vision of the Jolene's Law Task Force:

- Support families and enhance protective capacities to keep families together, and children safe
- Strengthen and support child-serving systems
- Prioritize prevention and upstream impact
- Maintain a neutral, evidence-based position
- Promote coordinated, interdisciplinary approaches that reflect best practices
- Respect Tribal sovereignty and support meaningful collaboration with Tribal Nations

## LOOKING AHEAD

As we enter our second decade of work, CPCM is focused on deepening its role as a trusted statewide partner, increasing the visibility and clarity of our impact, and continuing to build the infrastructure South Dakota needs to keep children safe and allow families to thrive.

In 2027, we will publish a comprehensive 10-year impact report examining progress against the original Jolene's Law Task Force recommendations; a milestone that reflects both how far we've come and how much more this work demands.

Visit [SDCPCM.com](https://SDCPCM.com) to learn more, connect with our team, or explore partnership opportunities.



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