



# COALITION HANDBOOK

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WELCOME

2026

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## **This handbook will help you understand:**

- Why this coalition was created
- How it is structured for long-term systems change
- What role you can play in strengthening child protection across North Carolina

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# WELCOME LETTER

**Dear Member,**

As the Co-Leads of Prevent First North Carolina, representing the statewide chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America and North Carolina's nationally accredited Children's Advocacy Center network, we are honored to welcome you to this first-of-its-kind statewide coalition dedicated to preventing child sexual abuse!

Prevent First NC was formed because child sexual abuse prevention is urgent, under-resourced, and fragmented. *But it does not have to be this way.*

Across North Carolina, committed professionals and community members like you are working every day to protect children. Yet this work often occurs in isolation, without shared goals, coordinated data, or the infrastructure needed to drive impact at scale. Prevent First NC exists to bring partners together, strengthen alignment, and build a unified, statewide prevention strategy.

We encourage you to get involved, share your ideas, access available resources, and connect with fellow members across the state. Together, we can build a stronger, more coordinated prevention network.

If we can support you in any way, please don't hesitate to reach out. Thank you for joining us in this important work to ensure all children in North Carolina are safe, healthy, and free from abuse.

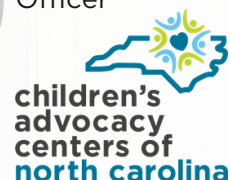
With gratitude,



*Kelly Baxter*  
Child Sexual Abuse  
Prevention Manager



*Brandi Reagan*  
Chief Operations  
Officer



# CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE (CSA) LANDSCAPE



## The National Landscape

At a national level, the picture is clear. Child sexual abuse is widespread.



About one in ten children will experience it. Most of it happens out of sight. An estimated 70 to 90 percent goes unreported, meaning millions of children are never identified or reached. Despite this reality, less than half of one percent of child welfare funding is dedicated to prevention, and only a fraction of that addresses sexual abuse specifically.

To understand how prepared states are to prevent this harm, many look to the Out of the Shadows Index, which measures whether states have the basic infrastructure needed for prevention.

Nationally, the average score is **49.9 out of 100**, a FAILING grade.

This confirms what many prevention professionals already know:

**Prevention is not consistently valued, prioritized, or supported.**



Darkness to Light, Department of Health and Human Services, 2022; Downing, 2021, Evidence-to-Impact Collaborative, Penn State University, 2018; Prendergast et al., 2018, Massachusetts Legislative Task Force on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention, 2017; Finkelhor, 2009 Economist Impact & World Childhood Foundation USA, Out of the Shadows Index, 2025

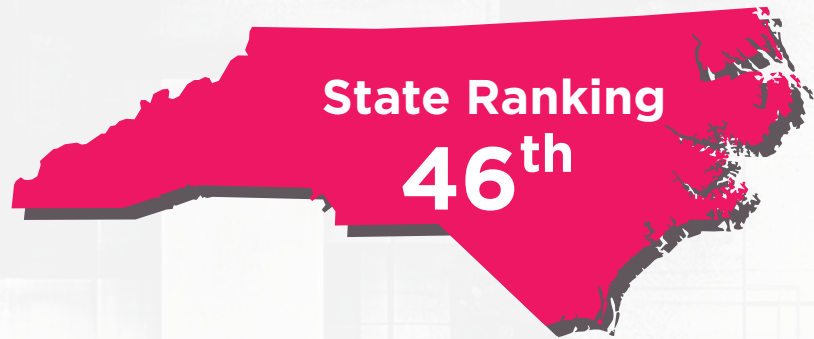
# CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE (CSA) LANDSCAPE



## The North Carolina Landscape

When we look specifically at North Carolina, the gaps become even clearer.

Our state ranks **46th out of 51**. That ranking reflects the realities many people are navigating every day.



## What this means :

- ✗ **No** statewide CSA **prevention action plan**
- ✗ **No** **mandate for youth education** on CSA prevention
- ✗ **No** **prevention training requirement** for YSOs
- ✗ **No** **prevalence** baseline or shared impact data
- ✗ **No** clear picture of **prevention investment**

*These gaps have real consequences.*

- Prevention efforts are often **siloed** and **underfunded**.
- Organizations **compete for limited resources** instead of building toward shared goals.
- And without shared data, it becomes extremely **difficult to advocate** for sustained funding, policy change, or prevention-focused legislation.

# COALITION PURPOSE

## Our Purpose

To coordinate, strengthen, and scale child sexual abuse prevention across the state by aligning people, systems, and resources around what works.

We aim to move prevention from isolated efforts to coordinated, statewide action, creating the conditions for lasting impact.

Prevent First NC **LEADs** these efforts by:



## Prevent First Meaning

“Prevent First” means **prioritizing efforts** that protect children **BEFORE** harm occurs, while also strengthening the systems that respond, protect, and support healing when harm does happen.

Prevent first does **NOT** mean:

- Prevention-only
- Reduced investment in intervention
- Devaluing the lifesaving work of intervention professionals

## Unifying Belief

At the core of Prevent First NC is a unifying belief.

We **reject** a system that asks us to choose which child is more worthy of investment:

- the child who has **already** been harmed or
- the child who has **not yet** been harmed.

This belief statement reflects a both-and approach to child protection. It affirms that prevention and intervention are **NOT** competing priorities; they are essential, interconnected parts of a system that protects children.

*Because **EVERY** child deserves safety, dignity, and the support they need to thrive.*

# SHARED COMMITMENTS

By participating in this coalition, members agree to abide by the following partnership principles to ensure a respectful, inclusive, and collaborative environment:

## 1. **Commitment to Child Safety and Well-Being**

Members prioritize the safety, dignity, and well-being of all children and youth in all coalition activities and decisions.

## 2. **Adherence to Mandated Reporting Laws**

Members are responsible for complying with all applicable mandated reporting laws and ethical obligations related to child abuse and neglect.

## 3. **Respect, Equity, and Inclusion**

Members engage professionally and with respect, contributing to inclusive, harassment-free spaces that honor diverse perspectives and lived experiences.

## 4. **Commitment to a Shared Vision**

Members align around a common prevention-first agenda and work collaboratively to advance shared goals while respecting organizational differences.

## 5. **Embracing Collaboration and Accountability**

Members participate in transparent, cooperative practices that reinforce shared responsibility and collective impact.

## 6. **Commitment to Shared Learning and Continuous Improvement**

Members engage in ongoing learning and reflection, valuing both lived experience and evidence-informed prevention strategies.

## 7. **Use of Data and Shared Measurement**

Members support data-informed decision-making by contributing to and using shared measurement to strengthen prevention efforts.

## 8. **Stewardship of a Safe and Productive Coalition Environment**

Members help maintain a respectful, communicative environment where concerns are addressed constructively and all voices are valued.

Members of Prevent First NC affirm their shared responsibility to create safe communities and build a unified, survivor-centered, and systems-informed approach to prevention.

*Violations of these shared commitments may be reviewed by the coalition's leadership and may result in appropriate corrective action, including removal from coalition activities.*

# COALITION DESIGN

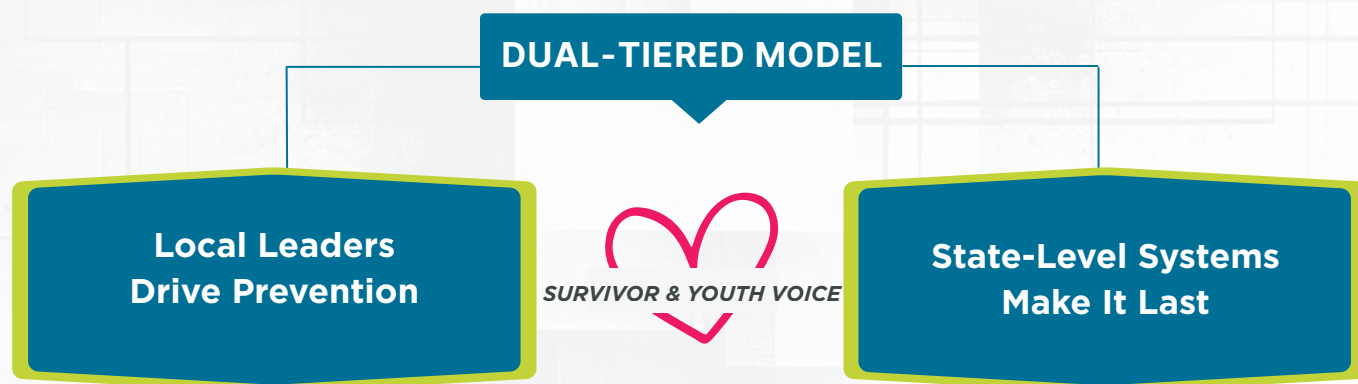
Prevent First NC is designed to support both local prevention action and statewide systems change.

## A Dual-Tiered Coalition Design

Prevent First NC uses a dual-tiered structure because effective prevention requires both:

- Local leaders implement prevention strategies that reflect community needs.
- State-level systems to provide shared infrastructure, alignment, and pathways to scale and sustain what works.

Survivor and youth voice is central to this structure to ensure our prevention efforts are informed by lived experience in trauma-informed and respectful ways.



## Coalition Co-Leads

### *Backbone Coordination and Infrastructure Support*

Prevent First NC is co-led by two organizations that jointly serve as the coalition's neutral backbone: Positive Childhood Alliance North Carolina and Children's Advocacy Centers of North Carolina.

The Co-Leads role is to:

- Facilitate coalition meetings and communication
- Provide fiscal and administrative infrastructure support
- Coordinate across leadership bodies and working groups
- Support shared measurement, learning, and accountability
- Ensure progress aligns with the coalition's prevention-first purpose



The Co-Leads hold final decision-making responsibility for the coalition, informed by guidance and input from coalition leadership bodies and members.

## COALITION DESIGN CONTINUED...

### Founding Advisory Council (FAC)

*Strategic and Ambassadorial Leadership*

The Founding Advisory Council is a strategic leadership body made up of influential system and sector leaders from across North Carolina.

The FAC's role is to:

- Provide strategic guidance and system-level perspective
- Strengthen statewide alignment across sectors and agencies
- Support long-term coalition sustainability and growth
- Serve as ambassadors for prevention-first systems change

**Responsible for elevating the Coalition's visibility, credibility, and alignment at the systems level.**

### Steering Committee

*Shared Leadership and Priority Coordination*

The Steering Committee supports coordinated action across the coalition.

The Steering Committee's role is to:

- Set coalition priorities and focus areas
- Facilitate and guide projects within Working Groups
- Support shared leadership and collaboration
- Collaborate with the Founding Advisory Council for annual strategic planning






**Responsible for operationalizing the coalition's priorities by aligning partners, guiding working groups, and ensuring coordinated progress toward measurable impact.**

### Working Groups

*Advancing Prevention Strategies on the Ground*

Working Groups are where much of the coalition's work takes place. They bring together members with interest or expertise in specific prevention service areas to advance aligned strategies.

Working Groups include:

				
<b>Prevention Education</b>	<b>Awareness Activities</b>	<b>Legislative Advocacy</b>	<b>Child Safeguarding Policies</b>	<b>Perpetration Prevention</b>
Training for youth and adults that builds knowledge and skills to prevent child sexual abuse.	Campaigns, events, and messaging that elevate prevention as a shared community responsibility.	Engagement with policymakers to inform laws and policies that protect children and advance prevention.	Development and support of safeguarding policies for youth-serving organizations, including guidance and tools.	Resources, referrals, and strategies for youth and adults at risk of causing harm, including programs addressing problematic sexual behavior.

**Participation in Working Groups is encouraged but flexible, based on members' interests and capacity.**

## COALITION DESIGN CONTINUED...

### How the Structure Works Together

Each part of the coalition supports the others:

- The Co-Leads provide backbone coordination and infrastructure
- The FAC offers statewide influence and strategic, system-level guidance
- The Steering Committee supports priority alignment and deliverables
- Working Groups advance prevention strategies in practice

Together, this structure supports coordinated, prevention-first action that is both locally grounded and statewide in impact.



# DECISION-MAKING & ACCOUNTABILITY

Prevent First NC balances clear leadership with shared input to ensure decisions are aligned, transparent, and mission-focused.

## **Decision Authority**

The Coalition Co-Leads hold final decision-making responsibility to maintain clarity, momentum, and alignment with the coalition's prevention-first purpose.

While authority is centralized for efficiency, decisions are informed by structured input from coalition leadership bodies and members.

## **How Input Is Integrated**

Input is gathered through:

- Founding Advisory Council (FAC) - Strategic, system-level guidance
- Steering Committee - Priority alignment and coordination
- Working Groups - Practice-based insight and implementation feedback

*This ensures decisions reflect both a statewide systems perspective and on-the-ground experience.*

## **Guiding Principles for Decisions**

All decisions prioritize:

- Alignment with the coalition's mission and unifying belief
- Equity and statewide impact
- Sustainability and responsible stewardship of shared resources
- Transparency and clear communication

## **Accountability & Learning**

Prevent First NC commits to:

- Communicating decisions and rationale clearly
- Inviting ongoing feedback
- Using shared data and evaluation to adjust and improve over time

*Clear authority, informed input, and transparent communication allow the coalition to move forward with both integrity and impact.*

# MEMBERSHIP

Prevent First NC welcomes participation from individuals and organizations in the following roles:

## State Leaders

Individuals working within state agencies, systems, or policy-setting bodies who influence funding, policy, or statewide strategy.

## Local Professionals

Prevention, intervention, advocacy, or service professionals working directly in communities or regions across North Carolina.


## Community Supporters

Community members, caregivers, advocates, survivors, volunteers, and partners who bring lived experience, perspective, and support for prevention efforts.

Each role brings valuable insight, and all are essential to building a prevention-first system.

## Participation

Prevent First NC welcomes broad participation while also offering deeper engagement for those who choose formal coalition membership.

Activities	All Participants	Members
Attend Bi-Monthly Coalition Meetings		
Stay Informed About Coalition Priorities and Projects		
Participate in a Working Group		
Join the Steering Committee		
Access Prevention Funding Opportunities		

*Coalition Members are encouraged to engage in ways that align with their role, experience, and capacity, while all participants remain valued contributors to a coordinated, prevention-first movement.*

## MEMBERSHIP CONTINUED...

### Requirements of Membership

To become a Prevent First NC coalition member, individuals must complete a short Membership Commitment Form (located on the coalition's website).

This form confirms:

- Receipt and acknowledgment of the Membership Handbook
- A good-faith commitment to prevention-first collaboration
- Agreement to abide by the coalition's Shared Commitments

There are:

**NO FEES**

**NO FORMAL MOU**

**NO FIXED PARTICIPATION**

### Member Benefits

Coalition membership unlocks tools, influence, and infrastructure designed to strengthen and scale prevention impact across North Carolina.

Members gain access to:



#### Education & Capacity Building

Prevention resources, training, and technical assistance to strengthen practice.



#### Funding Opportunities

Access to prevention-focused funding opportunities and microgrants.



#### Shared Data & Infrastructure

Digital tools and shared measurement systems to track impact and strengthen advocacy.



#### Statewide Connection & Influence

Peer learning, cross-sector collaboration, and a unified voice shaping prevention strategy.

Benefits and opportunities will continue to expand as the coalition grows and strengthens statewide alignment.

# APPENDIX

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## **Supporting Materials**

- A. Terminology
- B. Origins & Foundation
- C. Founding Advisory Council (FAC) Member List
- D. Infrastructure

# TERMINOLOGY



## Language Guidance for CSA Prevention Coalitions

### Purpose

This guide supports coalition members in using consistent, trauma-informed, person-centered, and prevention-oriented language.

Language shapes how communities understand, respond to, and engage in child sexual abuse prevention. The words we choose can either reinforce stigma and misinformation or promote healing, accountability, and evidence-based prevention.

Terminology reflects guidance from WHO, NIH, NSVRC, NCMEC, NCSBY, and peer-reviewed research to promote trauma-informed, person-first, and prevention-oriented communication.

As research continues to evolve, so too should our language.

### Why Language Matters

Using precise, person-first, and behavior-based terminology:

- Reduces stigma
- Encourages early intervention and treatment
- Promotes accountability without sensationalism
- Strengthens prevention messaging
- Aligns with trauma-informed practice
- Supports systems-level change

Language is not about minimizing harm. It is about communicating in ways that increase clarity, reduce barriers to prevention, and strengthen long-term impact.

### Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)

To ensure consistency, clarity, and alignment with leading public health authorities, Prevent First NC has adopted the following definition from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH):

*Child sexual abuse (CSA) involves engaging a child in sexual activities that they do not fully understand, cannot consent to, or are not developmentally prepared for, and that violate legal or social norms.*

*This includes acts committed by individuals or groups, whether in person or online, and whether or not the child recognizes that they are being exploited.*

## TERMINOLOGY CONTINUED...

### Youth with Problematic Sexual Behavior (PSB)

When referring to children or adolescents who have engaged in harmful sexual behavior, use person-first, behavior-based language.

<b>Problematic Term</b>	<b>Recommended Alternative</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
Abuser (for youth)	Youth with problematic sexual behavior	Fixed labels increase stigma and discourage treatment. Person-first, behavior-based language reduces harm and supports intervention (Letourneau, 2022; Fix et al., 2023).
Mutual or consensual (youth behavior)	Youth with problematic sexual behavior	Youth may lack developmental capacity for consent; “mutual” can downplay harm (NCSBY).
Juvenile sex offender	Youth with problematic sexual behavior	Implies a permanent, criminal identity. Person-first language reflects evidence that most youth respond well to treatment and do not reoffend (Letourneau, 2022; Fix et al., 2023).
Teen rapist / teen molester	Youth with problematic sexual behavior	Sensational and stigmatizing. Misrepresents adolescent development and reduces the likelihood of effective intervention (Letourneau, 2022).

### Misused Descriptors

Certain commonly used terms are inaccurate, stigmatizing, or misleading and can undermine prevention, accountability, and survivor-centered communication.

<b>Problematic Term</b>	<b>Recommended Alternative</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
Pedophile	An individual with a sexual attraction to children	Clinical diagnosis refers to attraction, not behavior. Using it interchangeably with terms that describe offending behavior is misleading and may discourage help-seeking or prevention efforts. Use behavior-specific language unless referring to clinical research or diagnosis (Terminology Guidelines).
Predator	Perpetrator (generalized) Sex Offender (post conviction)	A non-specified individual who engaged in sexually harmful behavior. An individual convicted of a sexual offense against a child.
Child Pornography	Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM)	Pornography implies consent; CSAM accurately frames the material as abuse evidence (NCMEC).

## TERMINOLOGY CONTINUED...

<b>Problematic Term</b>	<b>Recommended Alternative</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
Child Prostitute / Child Sex Worker	Child victim of trafficking or an exploited child	These terms imply choice or consent. Children cannot consent to commercial sexual exploitation; framing as a 'prostitute' places blame on the victim (NSVRC, Terminology Guidelines).
Child Sex Tourism	Sexual exploitation of children in the context of travel and tourism	Replaces language that normalizes abuse with a focus on the exploitative act (Terminology Guidelines).
Children Selling Sex	Children subjected to sexual exploitation	Avoids implying agency or choice. Focuses on exploitation (Terminology Guidelines).
Inappropriate Relationship (adult-child)	Sexual abuse or exploitation	Minimizes harm and obscures the abusive nature of the behavior (NSVRC)
Sextortion (as a standalone term)	Sexual extortion of children	Clarifies the coercive, abusive nature of the crime (Terminology Guidelines).

# ORIGINS & FOUNDATION

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## **Why Prevent First NC Was Created**

Across North Carolina, child sexual abuse prevention is powered by commitment, expertise, and deep care for children. The challenge is not dedication. The challenge is isolation.

Prevention efforts often operate in silos, disconnected from shared infrastructure, data, and coordinated strategy.

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## **The Problem We Are Solving**

When prevention efforts are fragmented:

- Organizations duplicate work that already exists elsewhere
- Limited resources are stretched thinner than necessary
- Prevention professionals experience burnout from carrying too much alone

Siloed systems slow progress and make it harder to protect children consistently across communities.

Over time, fragmentation limits impact:

- Successful strategies are not shared or scaled
- Data is scattered or unavailable to demonstrate effectiveness
- Funding and policy decisions are made without a clear picture of what works

The result is a system dependent on short-term funding and individual endurance rather than sustainable, coordinated infrastructure.

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## **The Human Cost**

When prevention is fragmented, children and families bear the consequences.

Dedicated professionals show up every day, doing everything they can with the resources available. But a system that relies on heroic endurance is not sustainable and ultimately fails the children it is meant to protect.

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## **The Opportunity for Collective Impact**

Stronger coordination creates a different future.

With shared infrastructure, aligned goals, and clear communication, individual efforts can become collective, statewide impact. Coordination allows us to:

- Reduce duplication and strengthen what already works
- Support prevention professionals rather than overburden them
- Move from reacting to harm toward preventing it

Prevent First NC was created to help make this shift by transforming isolated efforts into a connected system that protects more children, more effectively, across North Carolina.

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### **What This Coalition Is Built On**

Prevent First NC was not built from scratch. It was intentionally designed using national best practices and shaped by North Carolina voices to ensure credibility, practicality, and sustainability.

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#### **Built on National Best Practices**

Prevent First NC is built using the Coalition-Led CSA Prevention (CSAP) Model. Developed by kNot Today, it is the only statewide coalition model designed specifically to prevent child sexual abuse.

The CSAP Model integrates two nationally recognized frameworks:

- The National Plan to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation - Defines what effective prevention requires, including evidence-informed and culturally responsive strategies.
- The Collective Impact Framework - Defines how cross-sector systems coordinate to create lasting change.

Together, these frameworks ensure prevention efforts are aligned, coordinated, and scalable beyond siloed programs.

Prevent First NC publicly commits to advancing all Six Pillars of the National Plan at a systems level, while working groups focus on implementing research-supported strategies on the ground to achieve collective impact.

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#### **Shaped by North Carolina Voices**

While grounded in national best practices, Prevent First NC was intentionally shaped by the realities of North Carolina's systems and communities.

In partnership with the Rural Opportunity Institute, we conducted the state's first CSA-specific systems mapping process, including:

- 54 statewide survey responses
- 13 in-depth interviews across prevention, intervention, advocacy, and systems

The resulting systems map illustrates how child safety is shaped by interconnected risks and protective factors. It highlights strengths, gaps, and opportunities for stronger alignment.

These insights directly informed the coalition's structure, priorities, and early focus areas. The systems map is designed to be updated regularly and used to guide decision-making—not sit on a shelf.

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#### **A Clear Way of Working Together**

Turning vision into impact requires structure.

Prevent First NC uses a Collective Impact approach that includes:

- Strong backbone coordination by the Coalition Co-Leads
- A shared, statewide prevention agenda
- Consistent data and shared measurement
- Reinforcing activities across coordinated working groups
- Ongoing communication and learning loops

This structure allows prevention efforts to scale successfully across North Carolina.

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#### **Accountability, Data, and Learning**

From the beginning, Prevent First NC has prioritized transparency and evaluation.

In partnership with the Center for Violence Prevention Research, coalition activities will be analyzed to support:

- Shared learning and continuous improvement
- Accountability to members and stakeholders
- Evidence-informed advocacy and decision-making

Prevent First NC is grounded in data, collaboration, and long-term systems change, not short-term initiative cycles.

# FOUNDING ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS



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**Michael Silver**  
Chief Justice's Task Force on ACES-Informed Courts



**Rebecca Swofford**  
NC Coalition Against Domestic Violence

# INFRASTRUCTURE



## **The Systems That Support Prevention**

Prevent First NC strengthens prevention by building shared infrastructure, not by creating new programs or duplicating existing services.

*The coalition exists to connect, align, and sustain the work already happening across North Carolina.*

## **Infrastructure, Not Direct Service**

Prevent First NC is an infrastructure-building coalition. It does not deliver direct services.

Through the Coalition-Led CSA Prevention (CSAP) Model, kNot Today serves as a behind-the-scenes infrastructure partner by providing:

- Coalition coordination and technical assistance
- Shared tools and prevention resources
- Common approaches to measurement and learning
- Opportunities to align and leverage prevention funding

This infrastructure ensures prevention efforts remain connected, supported, and sustainable rather than isolated or competing.

The goal is long-term systems strength—not short-term programming.

## **Shared Systems & Access Points**

Prevent First NC maintains shared access points that make engagement simple and consistent, including:

- A centralized coalition landing page with meeting and engagement information
- Shared access to tools, updates, and prevention resources

These systems reduce duplication and make it easier for members to find what they need.

## **Shared Data, Metrics, and Learning**

The Bridge is a digital data and resource hub designed to support child sexual abuse prevention efforts across North Carolina. It provides:

- A shared space for prevention tools and resources
- Infrastructure for shared data, reporting, and learning
- Aggregated insights to strengthen advocacy and funding strategy

Data is used to support learning, coordination, and systems-level advocacy, not to evaluate or rank individual organizations.

Shared data may be used to:

- Understand statewide prevention trends
- Identify gaps and opportunities
- Support continuous improvement
- Strengthen the case for sustainable funding and policy change

*Data collection and use are designed to be transparent, respectful, and aligned with best practices.*

## INFRASTRUCTURE CONTINUED...



### **Strengthening Measurement Over Time**

Prevent First NC is committed to improving how child sexual abuse prevention is measured at a systems level.

This includes:

- Exploring statewide prevalence research
- Developing shared prevention indicators
- Tracking progress across sectors over time

These efforts strengthen strategy and sustainability without placing additional burden on individual organizations

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### **Why Infrastructure Matters**

Together, shared systems, tools, and data:

- Reduce duplication
- Strengthen coordination
- Support continuous learning
- Elevate prevention as a statewide priority

Infrastructure makes prevention easier to sustain and scale, so the people doing the work can focus on what matters most - protecting children.

