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States Providing More Protection for Endangered Kids

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Prompted by high-profile cases of endangered children and chronically overworked caseworkers, many states have taken steps this year to shield children from abuse and neglect, including adding caseworkers, tightening reporting requirements and expanding the definition of “abuse,” [Stateline reports](http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2017/09/20/combating-child-abuse-states-take-action) (<http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2017/09/20/combating-child-abuse-states-take-action>). Some states and cities are pouring more money into child protection agencies. In Texas, where the foster care system was declared unconstitutional by a federal judge in 2015, legislators allocated \$4 billion this year, up 17 percent, to shore up the state’s Department of Family and Protective Services, including hiring more caseworkers.

Tampa, Fl., child welfare agencies got \$4 million more in state funding to hire more social workers. And in New Mexico, after the rape and murder of a 10-year-old girl last year, officials in Albuquerque and Bernalillo counties tripled the funding they’d earmarked for a new child-abuse intervention program for at-risk families, to \$3 million a year. In other states, there is more pressure to act. After the high-profile deaths of several children in state custody, Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback signed a law in June that will form a task force to study the state’s foster care system and make recommendations to overhaul it. In Montana, where the number of child abuse victims jumped from 1,100 in 2011 to 1,900 in 2015, Gov. Steve Bullock signed a law in April to create a commission to study child abuse. In May, he signed a law that requires the state’s Department of Health and Human Services to create a plan to reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect.
