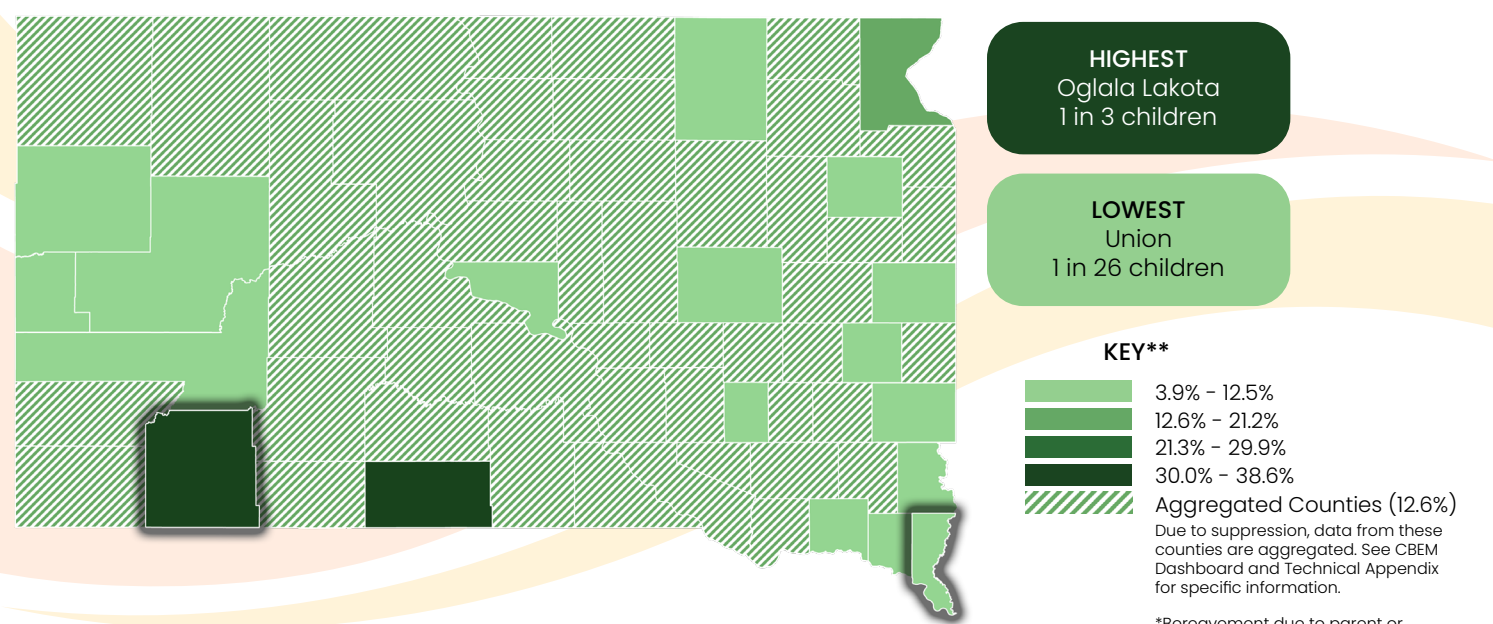


Childhood bereavement is a critical issue and an increasingly important national priority.

The Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model® (CBEM) approximates bereavement rates for U.S. youth¹ using vital statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.² The 2025 CBEM Key Topic reports explore bereavement in each U.S. county using data from 2019 to 2023, the five most recent years available.

CBEM Projected Results by County*



*Bereavement due to parent or sibling death before age 18.

**Bereavement ranges are state-specific. County-level comparisons across states should not be made.

CBEM Model Type

CBEM Analyses yield multiple types of estimates. This report focuses on **Projected** and **Current** bereavement estimates related to the death of parent or sibling before age 18. These tables compare Projected and Current estimates in Oglala Lakota and Union counties in South Dakota.

CBEM Projected results (map above) include both children who are already bereaved and those expected to experience the death of a parent or sibling by age 18. In Oglala Lakota County, an estimated 38.6% or 1 in 3 children, will grieve the death of a parent or sibling in childhood.

CBEM Current results reflect the number of children who have already experienced such a loss. For example, in Oglala Lakota County, 23.4% or 1 in 4 children under 18 are currently grieving the death of parent or sibling.

Geography	% of children bereaved		# of children bereaved		1 in X children	
Oglala Lakota County	38.6%	23.4%	1,919	1,161	1 in 3	1 in 4
Union County	3.9%	2.2%	151	84	1 in 26	1 in 45
South Dakota	9.7%	5.1%	21K	11K	1 in 10	1 in 20
United States	8.9%	4.5%	6.4M	3.3M	1 in 11	1 in 22

Projected Model Current Model

Call to Action

New CBEM county-level estimates reveal striking disparities in childhood bereavement prevalence across counties, often reflecting broader inequities in health, income, and access to care. These data offer a vital opportunity for local leaders, educators, health providers, and policymakers to take informed action—directing resources where they are needed most. Every child deserves space to grieve, heal, thrive, no matter where they live.



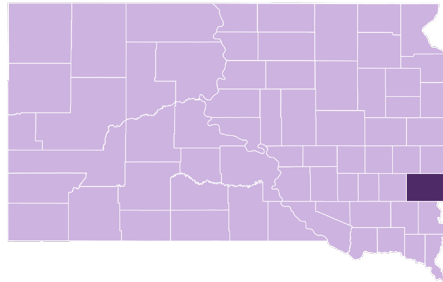
Find Your Local
CBEM Data

Social Security Survivor Benefits³ for Children

According to 2025 CBEM Current results, an estimated 2,614,000 children in the U.S. are **already bereaved** due to **parent** death. Approximately 8,554 of these children live in South Dakota and 1,609 in Minnehaha County.

Social Security Administration survivor benefits (SSA) can provide vital financial support to South Dakota children who have lost a working parent. Averaging \$1,100 monthly, SSA benefits help pay for essentials like housing, food, clothing, and education, offering stability during a time of financial and emotional upheaval.

Data show SSA benefits are significantly underutilized.^{4,5} Nationally, 55% of bereaved children do not receive the benefit. Approximately 10% do not qualify, leaving an estimated 45% of eligible bereaved children without critical financial support.



CBEM Current results show MINNEHAHA COUNTY has the highest number of children already bereaved.

Nationally, an estimated \$15.5B in SSA benefits go unclaimed each year by families with children who have lost a parent.

Estimated Annual Unclaimed SSA Benefits for South Dakota Children[†]

**MINNEHAHA
COUNTY**
Bereaved Children

\$10M
ANNUALLY



SOUTH DAKOTA
Bereaved Children

\$51M
ANNUALLY

[†] Calculated as: current number of bereaved children × 45% eligibility rate × \$1,100 monthly SSA benefit × 12 months.

Closing the Gap

Social Security Administration (SSA) benefits provide stability for children after the death of a parent or caregiver—but often, that support never reaches those who need it most. Addressing barriers like limited public awareness, burdensome requirements, and adverse impacts on other federal or state benefits (e.g., housing, food, healthcare) would aid access to this financial lifeline.

States like Utah have taken promising steps by identifying bereaved youth and mobilizing resources for bereaved families statewide.⁶ The following actions can close the gap.

- **Bereaved families:** Call SSA at 1-800-772-1213 as soon as possible to initiate benefits access
- **Grief centers and schools:** Identify eligible children and families to facilitate SSA benefits access
- **Advocates & Policymakers:** Work together to advance policy changes and reduce barriers to SSA benefits access



Judi's House/JAG Institute supports the recommendations provided in the 2025 SSI report by the Social Security Advisory Board.⁷ Now is the time for bold, coordinated action to remove administrative hurdles and safeguard access to essential supports. Grief is already heavy enough—families should not also bear the weight of financial hardship. Together, we can ensure every eligible child receives the support they deserve.

For more info about the CBEM and additional national, state, and local data, visit: cbem.judishouse.org

Sources

1. Burns, M., et al. (2023). Frontiers in Pediatrics, 11.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, CDC WONDER Online Database.
3. Social Security Administration (2024).
4. Weaver, D. (2025, June 16) Real Clear Markets.
5. Weaver, D. (2019). Population Review, 58(2).
6. Children's Collaborative (2023). Utah Children's Collaborative.
7. Social Security Advisory Board (2025).