

2021-2022

beyond



Assessing the Well-Being of Children in North Texas

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Times of great challenge have a way of crystallizing what matters most.



Since 1996, Children's Health has proudly published Beyond ABC, a comprehensive report on the quality of life for children in North Texas. With the release of our 17th edition, almost two years into the most devastating and consequential public health challenge in modern history, we can say unequivocally that the work to better understand and to improve the well-being of our community's children has never been more important.

In many ways, our youth have borne the brunt of this unyielding crisis. Whether they have lost loved ones, endured prolonged isolation, missed milestones or experienced economic instability as their families lost jobs and housing, they have been subjected to a protracted state of emergency that has left them mentally and emotionally exhausted. Rapidly rising rates of adolescent anxiety, depression, and suicide – crisis points that already posed

grave concerns in our 2019-2020 report – are accelerating at an alarming pace, far faster than before the emergence of Covid-19.

Our 2021-2022 Beyond ABC report presents a far-reaching view of the state of pediatric health and well-being in our region, but because of how government data are reported and collected, the specter of Covid-19 is only just beginning to become perceptible in the information currently available to us. We have only started to understand the long-term consequences that Covid-19 will have on our children, an impact that could reverberate across generations if we don't take action today.

Our Beyond ABC Advisory Board has identified a strong place to start: Improved access to pediatric behavioral health care. Comprised of more than 40 diverse leaders and innovators from organizations across our six-county reporting region, our Advisory Board members generously contributed their robust experience and insights to provide the context and the recommendations that will maximize our impact on the most critical issues facing North Texas. They have our appreciation and thanks.

This year's report builds upon our 2019-2020 analysis and reinforces the need for improved access to pediatric behavioral health care and the need for collective innovation to improve the mental and physical resilience of our children. Kids are remarkably strong, but they are also extraordinarily vulnerable. They look to us to provide leadership, stability and the resources they need so they can thrive today and in the future.

We have a difficult road ahead of us, but Children's Health is ready to meet the challenges. Our passion for, and commitment to, serving families and our community have never wavered over our 108-year history. Our mission to make life better for children compels us to prepare for the promise and the uncertainty of the future, and we are privileged to help North Texas navigate both of them.

We hope you will join us on this journey.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher J. Durovich". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Christopher J. Durovich
President and Chief Executive Officer
Children's Health

OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATION

Strengthen mental and behavioral health care for Texas children and adolescents. In 2019, the Advisory Board made an overarching recommendation to address children’s mental and behavioral health needs. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic has only worsened the mental health stress on children and youth, who have experienced more social isolation, academic challenges and home stressors than ever before. In 2020, emergency rooms saw a 24 percent increase in mental health-related visits for children ages 5-11 and a 31 percent increase for older children. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also reported a significant increase in emergency department visits for adolescent suicide attempts, especially among adolescent girls. The effects of the pandemic on mental health highlight the need to advance policy solutions now that improve early intervention and prevention while helping kids in crisis. The Advisory Board supports dedicated investment to build mental health capacity across the continuum of care and increase access to behavioral health services.

HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve health coverage for uninsured Texas children and families
- Support greater community health equity

ECONOMIC SECURITY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve housing stability throughout North Texas
- Invest in a stronger, more effective early childhood education and child care system

SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support safe and effective homes and services for kids in the foster care system
- Combat and prevent online threats to children

EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Address unfinished learning and close achievement gaps
- Bridge the digital and technology resource divide



To explore the detailed research and findings that informed the Advisory Board’s recommendations, read the full *Beyond ABC 2021-2022* report at www.childrens.com/beyondabc. To request copies, send an email to beyondabc@childrens.com. Past editions are also available on that webpage.

ABOUT **20%**
of nation's uninsured children
lived in Texas in 2019

133,375

Estimated number of North Texas
children who **suffer from an emotional
disturbance or addictive disorder**

**Cancer rates for
Texas children,
and specifically
North Texas
children, are
MUCH
HIGHER
THAN
NATIONAL
AVERAGE**

COMPARED TO REST OF NATION,
**Texas reports high
immunization rates for
incoming kindergarteners**

AT MORE THAN
95%

North Texas has a
**considerably
greater
percentage**
of **uninsured children**
than rest of U.S.

Teen pregnancies
are declining in
Dallas County:

FROM MORE THAN
1,000
IN 2016 TO
666
IN 2020

NEARLY
1 in 5 children
IN THE COUNTRY IS OBESE

Estimated number
of children with
developmental disabilities
has been **steadily
increasing** across all
North Texas counties **SINCE 2013**

ECONOMIC SECURITY

73%

of children in Dallas County public schools are eligible to receive free or reduced-price school meals

Number of North Texas children in WIC dropped

33 percent

from 2014-2019, while women in program decreased

29 percent

1 in 6

eligible children in U.S. receive subsidized care, compared to **only**

1 in 10

in Texas

Housing Choice Voucher program helped

27,022

North Texas families secure housing; average household served earns only

\$15,781

a year

\$9,324

Average annual cost of infant care in Texas

TEXAS REPORTED

114,055

homeless students in 2019

1 in 4

Black children

&

1 in 5

Hispanic children

LIVE IN POVERTY IN NORTH TEXAS, WHILE

1 in 20

white children do

Number of licensed and registered child care facilities in region  steadily decreased during the past 5 years

251

Texas children died from abuse or neglect in 2020



Gay, lesbian or bisexual high school students are **MORE THAN TWICE AS LIKELY** to attempt suicide and **3X AS LIKELY** to make a plan to commit suicide than their heterosexual peers

Texas lost more than

1,000

available beds for foster children in past 2 years.

MORE THAN

400

Texas children were spending the night in unlicensed foster facilities in June 2021

AT LEAST

1 in 5 high-schoolers

REPORTED USING AN ILLICIT DRUG DURING THE LAST YEAR

NUMBER OF child victims of sexual abuse increased

45%

in the region FROM 2016-2020

38%

of Texas high school students felt hopeless or sad every day for 2 or more weeks at a time

Child homicides increased in Dallas County **FROM 29 IN 2016 TO 43 IN 2020**

Texas students ages 11-21

WERE MORE THAN

2X AS LIKELY



to think about or attempt suicide in early days of pandemic than 1 year earlier

1 in 6

unintentional firearm deaths of children under 13 occur because a child mistakes a real gun for a toy

EDUCATION

Nearly
100,000

North Texas students received special education services during 2019-2020 school year, a number that consistently grew during the past 5 years

College-readiness rates vary across North Texas:

FROM
70 percent
IN COLLIN COUNTY TO
ABOUT
40 percent
IN FANNIN COUNTY

COLLIN, DENTON AND GRAYSON COUNTIES

outperformed

the state average on the 2019 STAAR tests

2020 school

closures resulted in

3.2 months of learning loss

plus

2.5 months of summer break loss



High school completion rates are near

95%

in the suburban and rural counties, but

83%

for Dallas County

MORE THAN

60%

of students were kindergarten-ready in Collin and Dallas counties in 2020

More than

one-third

of all students in Dallas County were English Learners in 2019-2020 school year — more than twice that of other counties in region

MORE THAN

**1.19 MILLION
CHILDREN**

live in the six North Texas counties
featured in the
Beyond ABC report

DALLAS

Youth
population
685,833

COLLIN

Youth
population
255,940

COOKE

Youth
population
9,402

DENTON

Youth
population
208,142

FANNIN

Youth
population
7,316

GRAYSON

Youth
population
31,068



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