

OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATION

Strengthen mental and behavioral health care for Texas children and adolescents

In the past two Beyond ABC reports, the Advisory Board made overarching recommendations that applied to all four of the report's pillars: Health, Economic Security, Education and Safety. The Advisory Board continues that approach with the 2023-2024 report, reiterating the importance of addressing children's mental and behavioral health needs. Data indicates that more children than ever are dealing with increased anxiety caused by factors such as gun violence in schools, continued Covid-19 pandemic repercussions and the potentially damaging effects of social media.

Mental health issues affect all races, ethnicities and cultures, yet often indicators are ignored or minimized because of inherent stigmas and misunderstandings. The Advisory Board advocates for access to mental health care and education that are culturally relevant and available in multiple languages. While gains have been made in the past few years, there is still much to do to increase access to quality mental and behavioral health care for children.

HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve health coverage for uninsured Texas children and families
- Remove barriers to high-quality, culturally competent care

ECONOMIC SECURITY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase access to affordable housing throughout North Texas
- Mitigate the impact of inflation on children's health and well-being

SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Combat substance use and abuse in children and youth
- Improve student safety and strengthen protections for children against online threats

EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide mental health support and training for teachers and school staff members
- Prioritize social and emotional learning

To explore the detailed research and findings that informed the Advisory Board's recommendations, read the full Beyond ABC 2023-2024 report at childrens.com/beyondabc. To request copies, send an email to beyondabc@childrens.com. Past editions are also available on that webpage.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Welcome to the 18th edition of Beyond ABC, a comprehensive report on the quality of life for children in North Texas.



Children's Health is proud to have published this report since 1996. With each edition, Beyond ABC seeks to identify and better understand the complex factors that impact the health and welfare of our children today. Through this analysis, we hope to spark dialogue among community stakeholders to effect resource allocation and policy and program changes.

As our report shows through the analysis of health, economic security, safety and education metrics, children today continue to confront the lasting effects of the global Covid pandemic. Loneliness during key developmental years, loss of loved ones and economic insecurities continue to affect our children. Fear of gun violence, weather

extremes and the effects of living an open life through social media have also added to the state of their mental health.

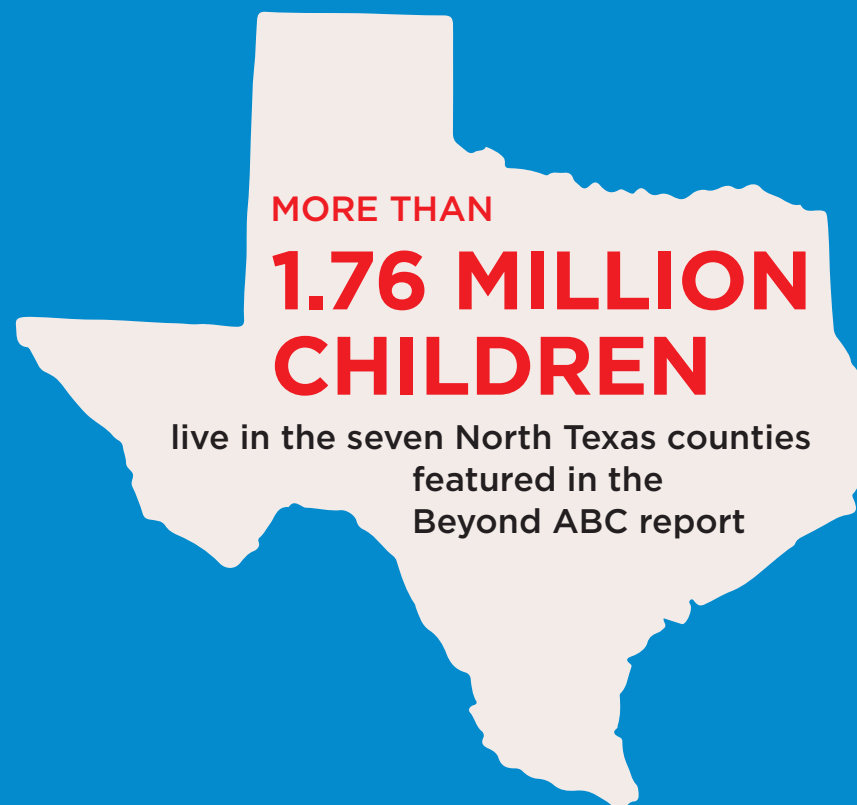
In addition, many of our community's children experience other extreme hardships including living with generational poverty, food insecurity and poor nutrition, unstable housing, domestic violence, physical and mental abuse, and interruptions to their education. These hardships directly impact their overall health.

Building on recommendations outlined in previous editions, this year's Beyond ABC report provides a diverse set of recommendations from experts, community advocates and other thought leaders who serve on our Beyond ABC Advisory Board, which may point to a potential path forward for addressing these persistent challenges. The Advisory Board's foremost recommendation is to improve access to quality mental health care and to remove barriers to vital health care services that may exist based on a child's family's race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or ZIP code.

New to this year's report is the inclusion of data from Tarrant County. Expanding our view into Tarrant County helps provide a broader comprehensive look into our interconnected growing North Texas region.

The challenges before us are real, but not insurmountable. While vulnerable, our children are strong and resilient. For 110 years Children's Health has helped lead the charge to ensure the next generation of children is healthier than the last. It is a privilege and a responsibility that we do not take lightly, and it is one that we remain committed to today. Together, we will make life better for children.

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



DALLAS	COLLIN	COOKE	DENTON	FANNIN	GRAYSON	TARRANT
Youth population 680,444	Youth population 268,898	Youth population 9,863	Youth population 216,685	Youth population 7,563	Youth population 32,139	Youth population 549,926

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Scan QR code to read the full Beyond ABC 2023-2024 report



beyond **A B C**

Assessing the Well-Being of
Children in North Texas
2023-2024

HEALTH

Percentage of Texas children without health insurance (12.7%)
IS MORE THAN
DOUBLE
the national average (5.4%)

85%
of eligible Texas children participate in Medicaid or CHIP
WHILE 92% OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN NATIONALLY PARTICIPATE

40.1%
OF NORTH TEXAS STUDENTS WERE OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE IN 2022,
UP FROM 34.4% in 2017.
In addition to medical issues, CDC* says obesity can lead to mental health problems for youth
*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

THE NUMBER OF **childhood vaccinations given**
declined
in all 7 counties
FROM 2017 TO 2022

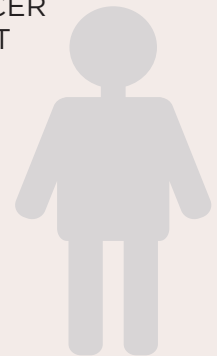
The Texas infant mortality rate
dropped over 8%
FROM 2009 TO 2019

UNHEALTHY AIR: ONLY
1 of 10
air-monitoring sites in North Texas met the EPA standard in 2022 for healthy ground-level ozone

ABOUT
22%
of middle and high school students across the country contemplated suicide in 2021

Mental health struggles
EXPOSE CHILDREN TO HIGHER RISKS OF DRUG ABUSE, CONTRACTING STIs AND HIV, AND BECOMING PREGNANT

MORE CHILDREN WITH CANCER ARE SURVIVING:
THE 5-YEAR SURVIVAL RATE FOR CHILDREN WITH CANCER HAS RISEN BY ALMOST
30 PERCENTAGE POINTS
SINCE THE 1970S



ECONOMIC SECURITY

Dallas County has the highest rate of single-parent households
40.1%
while Collin County has the lowest
19.3%

FROM 2018-2022, almost **50,000 fewer children were getting SNAP benefits**, a **12.5% DROP**
SINGLE-MOTHER HOUSEHOLDS IN NORTH TEXAS HAVE
median incomes LESS THAN HALF
that of married-couple households

Number of licensed/registered child care operations has **DROPPED 17%**
ACROSS NORTH TEXAS SINCE 2018

66%
of North Texas children in 2021 had parents who were employed or serving in the armed forces

North Texas has a child poverty rate (16%) lower than the Texas rate (20%)

At 22%, Texas had one of the **highest rates of childhood food insecurity** in the U.S., affecting almost **1.6 million children**

73%
of Dallas County public school students are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals

SAFETY

Dallas and Tarrant counties have seen
child homicides increase
since 2018

UNDERAGE DRINKING
can bring increased risk of suicide, adverse changes in brain development, memory problems and social development issues,
ACCORDING TO THE CDC*
*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Texas Health and Human Services Commission:
Rate of youth suicides has been steadily rising since 1999



While decreasing across the region, **childhood traumatic injury hospitalizations INCREASED** in Dallas and Collin counties from 2017 to 2021

ALL 7 NORTH TEXAS COUNTIES HAD REDUCTIONS IN CHILD DEATHS FROM ABUSE AND NEGLECT
FROM 2018 TO 2022

In 2022, Department of Family and Protective Services had legal responsibility for **more than 6,000 NORTH TEXAS CHILDREN** BUT HAD A **SHORTAGE OF FOSTER HOMES**



TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY:
17,445 young people DON'T HAVE A HOME
IN NORTH TEXAS

EDUCATION

10%
of students in Texas receive **special education services**, while 14% of students nationally do

Number of students learning to speak English HAS STEADILY INCREASED in all 7 counties for the past 5 years

More than half
OF NORTH TEXAS THIRD GRADERS **demonstrated reading capabilities below that grade level in 2022**
(A child's ability to read at grade level by third grade is the single greatest predictor of future success in school)

Covid-19 pandemic wiped out years of improving STAAR tests results across North Texas – only Fannin County has **surpassed** test results from **BEFORE THE PANDEMIC**

Head Start enrollment across North Texas **dropped during the Covid-19 pandemic**, but recovered in 2022
(Head Start is a predictor of later academic success)



Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board reports that **TEXAS LAGS BEHIND** other states' post-secondary education readiness rates