

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



beyond



Assessing the Well-Being of Children in North Texas

2019-2020

# NORTH TEXAS IS FACING AN INFLECTION POINT.

Reading the 2019-2020 *Beyond ABC* report, the 16th comprehensive analysis on the well-being of North Texas children that Children's Health has published, forced me to reckon with difficult questions.



Will we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by the challenges facing our youth? Will we become complacent and reluctantly accept the status quo? Or will we give a voice to those who cannot speak for themselves, and transform into a community where all children can reach their full potential?

For Children's Health, the answer is clear.

We are privileged to care for our region's children, a sacred obligation that has emboldened us to disavow the notion that any problem is too big, too complicated, too widespread. Our team fights every single day to prove that positive change is possible, and the data in this report proves it, too.

But it also shows that we have a long way to go.

The robust research presented in this year's report gained form and focus from the expertise, experience and enthusiasm of our *Beyond ABC* Advisory Board – visionaries from North Texas' public, private and philanthropic sectors who generously contribute their time and insights to determine how we can better serve the children who will lead us into tomorrow. In a sea of diverse perspectives, one was stunningly clear to all: We must radically change how we support the behavioral health of our children.

Consider just a few of our findings. More than 130,000 North Texas children suffer from an emotional disturbance or addictive disorder. Of the Texas youth incarcerated in 2018, 44 percent had a moderate or severe mental health issue – more than double the rate from only three years earlier. And most alarming and tragic of all, suicide is the second leading cause of death among U.S. adolescents ages 15 to 24.

In recognition of what has become a true public health crisis, we are taking an unprecedented step in this year's report – presenting an overarching recommendation on mental health that spans all four focus areas. While we appreciate that transformational change will not happen overnight, we are confident that through a sustained effort by many, we can achieve an integrated behavioral health care system that serves every North Texas child.

The challenges we face will evolve and change, our mission will not. Children's Health has worked to make life better for children for more than 100 years, and we will continue for centuries more.

Will you join us?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher J. Durovich". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

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



## **OVERARCHING** Recommendation

Address mental health needs of children and adolescents and increase access to school- and community-based mental health services.

Mental and behavioral health is critical to a child's development and overall well-being. Despite rising youth suicide rates and growing threats to mental health like social media and online bullying, Texas ranks near last in the nation for child and adolescent access to mental health services. The 86th Texas Legislature made significant investments and improvements in pediatric mental health care, including passing legislation to establish mental health policy and training guidelines for school districts and legislation to create a child mental health care consortium and increase children's access to mental health care via consultation services and telemedicine. The Advisory Board supports legislative efforts to address child and adolescent mental health care needs and recommends the state, as well as school districts, leverage new resources and innovative strategies to improve access to mental and behavioral health services.

To see the detailed research and findings that informed the Advisory Board's recommendations, read the full 2019-2020 *Beyond ABC* report at [www.childrens.com/beyondabc](http://www.childrens.com/beyondabc). On this webpage, you can also request copies of the report and explore past editions.

# HEALTH

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase the number of insured children and safeguard access to CHIP and Medicaid
- Promote strategies to increase child immunization rates and combat vaccine hesitancy

# 14.3%

of Dallas County children have  
no health insurance coverage

To qualify for Medicaid, a family of 4  
must earn less than

# \$34,248

annually

In 2018,  
Fannin County  
reported the

## HIGHEST RATE

# 13.2%

of premature  
newborns in  
North Texas

An estimated

# 130,226

North Texas children  
suffer from an **emotional disturbance**  
or **addictive disorder**

North Texas had

# 256

new diagnoses  
of **childhood**  
**cancer** in 2016

# 2,400

number of  
North Texas children

## DIAGNOSED WITH DIABETES

in 2017,

an increase of

# 21%

from the year before

# 127%

the rate that

## SYPHILIS INFECTIONS

have grown among North Texas  
young people since 2013



Dallas County saw

## ADOLESCENT SUICIDES INCREASE 27%

in 2016

# ECONOMIC SECURITY

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure that all working Texas parents have access to affordable, safe and quality child care
- Expand viable transportation options to connect more people with jobs

**22.5%**  
**OF DALLAS COUNTY**  
**CHILDREN**  
live in poverty



**25,000**  
**FEWER**

North Texas  
children are  
living in **single-**  
**parent households**



Number of  
Fannin County  
children receiving  
subsidized child  
care **has increased**

**60%**



**27%** of Texas children are  
from families receiving  
public assistance

higher than the national average  
of **25%**

**1,034**

the number of  
Collin County families  
using **housing vouchers**

**\$835 A MONTH**

the **cost of pre- and after-school care**  
for 2 children in the Dallas area

**115,676 TEXAS STUDENTS**

were **homeless** during the  
2016-2017 school year

**LBGTQ YOUTH**

are **twice as likely** to be homeless as their peers

Drop in number  
of **North Texas**  
**infants and**  
**children** in WIC

**26%**

# SAFETY

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expand trauma-informed care education, training and intervention throughout the child welfare system
- Strengthen resources for child abuse prevention programs to keep children safe at home

An African American child in Texas is

# 6X MORE LIKELY

to die from homicide  
as a white child



# ONE- QUARTER

of Texas  
7th-12th-  
graders

reported using  
**marijuana**

in the past month

# 44%

of the **youth incarcerated**  
in the Texas Juvenile  
Justice Department  
system in 2018 had a  
**moderate or severe**  
**mental health issue**

MORE THAN  
**DOUBLE THE RATE**  
3 years earlier

# 666

Texas children died of  
**unintentional injuries** in 2017



IN 2017

Texas Department of  
Family and Protective  
Services cared for

# 50,293 CHILDREN

OF THE

# 22,000

**Child Protective Services**  
**investigations** in North Texas in 2018

# 14,000

WERE IN DALLAS COUNTY

BOYS ARE

# 4 TIMES MORE LIKELY

to die from suicide

—  
GIRLS ARE  
more likely to

# ATTEMPT SUICIDE

# EDUCATION

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase education and training opportunities for teachers, particularly in cultural diversity and mental health
- Strengthen the quality of early childhood education and care

North Texas high school graduation rates have remained

**ABOUT 90%**  
since 2013



**FEWER THAN HALF**

of North Texas third-graders can read at their grade level

**51% OF NORTH TEXAS KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS** demonstrated readiness for kindergarten in 2018

**78% OF NORTH TEXAS STUDENTS** met the “approaches grade level” standard on STAAR tests  
**HIGHER THAN THE STATE AVERAGE OF 75.4%**

The percentage of English Language Learners (ELLs) in Texas is

**ALMOST DOUBLE**  
the national rate

In 2017

**37%**

of North Texas high school graduates were college ready – down from **42%** in 2016

Since 2016, the number of students receiving special education services

**HAS INCREASED**  
**ACROSS NORTH TEXAS**

MORE THAN

**1.17 MILLION  
CHILDREN**

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

**DALLAS**

Youth  
population  
681,537

**COLLIN**

Youth  
population  
245,631

**COOKE**

Youth  
population  
9,260

**DENTON**

Youth  
population  
200,061

**FANNIN**

Youth  
population  
7,127

**GRAYSON**

Youth  
population  
29,999

