

About CHILDREN AT RISK:

CHILDREN AT RISK was established in 1989 as an action focused research group dedicated to improving the quality of life of Texas' children through strategic research, public policy analysis, innovation, legal action, community education, and collaboration. Our focus is on human trafficking, education, juvenile justice, mental health, children's health and poverty issues. We are the leading source of accurate information through our biennial *Growing Up in Houston* publication and an advocate and catalyst for change concerning the needs of all children in Texas.

CHILDREN AT RISK's foremost recent accomplishments include:

- In 2010, released the 1st annual **Math and Science Rankings** in the Houston Chronicle and the 5th annual **Public School Rankings Report** with the Houston Chronicle, Dallas Morning News, Austin American-Statesman, and San Antonio Express-News to engage more than one million readers in the public evaluation of our education system and the need for drastic change within our schools.
- Provided free health services including immunizations, flu shots, vision and dental screenings, and educational materials, to over 5,000 Latino community members through its 3rd annual **Nuestra Familia, Nuestra Salud Health Fair** in 2009.
- Researched, drafted, and passed key legislation in Texas' 81st Session which established the Texas Anti-Trafficking Task Force in the Office of the Attorney General to coordinate a united force against human trafficking, mandated training of law enforcement to better identify this crime and its countless victims, and increased protections for child victims of domestic human trafficking.
- Spearheaded the collaborative effort to **establish a mental health docket in Harris County** to divert youth with mental health needs from incarceration to community-based treatment, when appropriate. This docket, established in 2009, is expected to result in more effective and comprehensive treatment, reduced recidivism rates and lower costs to treat juvenile offenders.

**SPEAK OUT
and Drive Change
for Children!**

Join our E-Advocacy Network!

Become a part of CHILDREN AT RISK'S online initiative to educate community members and child advocates on pressing issues regarding Texas' children. Members receive informational updates on the prevalent needs of Texas' children and calls-to-action as the Legislative Session progresses. We urge you to join our initiative to improve the quality of life of Texas' children.

Sign up at www.childrenatrisk.org

Letter from the President and CEO

WHO'S WATCHING OUT FOR OUR CHILDREN?

We have a great deal to be thankful for in the state of Texas. We have a state that has seemingly avoided the worst of the recession. We live in cities where economic opportunity seems to be significantly more vibrant than in other cities across the nation. We have a real spirit of entrepreneurship here in Texas; we believe that anything and everything is possible with a little hard work and determination. In short, we have many blessings to count.

This is why for many of us on the staff and board of CHILDREN AT RISK, and amongst our many friends working to improve the quality of life of children, we are a bit perplexed. As we look at all of the data available to us, the question often arises: Why are we not taking care of the next generation here in the great state of Texas?

The facts are really quite clear: High school dropout rates in Texas stand at 38%; in our urban areas the number is closer to 50%. Beyond the critical benchmark of high school graduation, the number of kids who will continue on to a four year education is also dismal. Only 15% of our children will earn a four year degree. In this category, Texas falls near the bottom when compared to other states. How does that affect our future?

In category after category judging the well-being of the children of our state, we seem to fall near the bottom: 1 in 4 children in Texas live in poverty, Texas has the second highest percentage nationwide of uninsured children, and Texas is a national hub for human trafficking. We know that our community cares, we know that parents care, but we also know that as a state we are not doing enough to ensure the success of future generations. We need the political will to stand up and give a voice to the millions of children in our state who have no voice; we need to act to make sure that our future is secure through enhancing the lives of these children.

I hope you will join us in making sure every single child in the state of Texas has the opportunity to succeed, because as it stands today—they don't.

Hug your kids,



Bob Sanborn, Ed.D.

IN THIS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY WE HIGHLIGHT 10 PRIORITIES:

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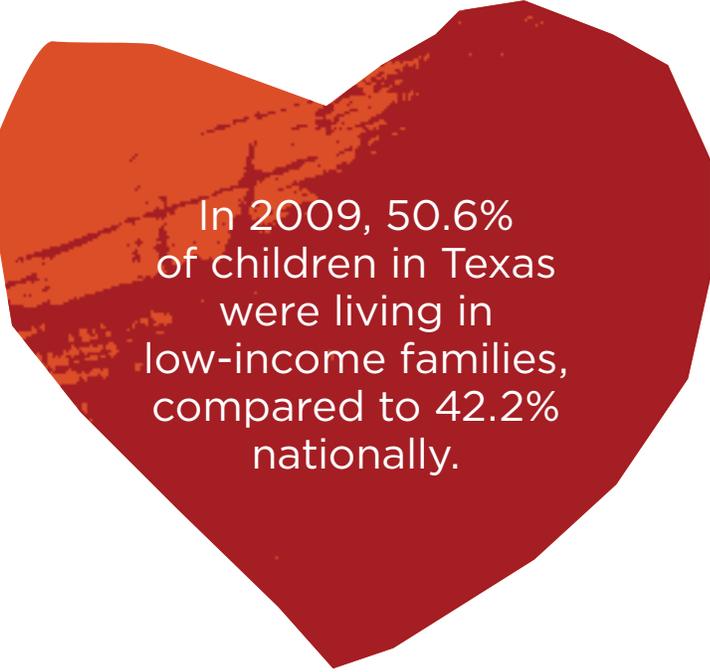
CHILD POVERTY

Poverty is one of the greatest threats to a child's well-being. Families in need of financial resources find it difficult to provide necessities, such as adequate housing and health care, nutritious meals, and other essentials, for children to grow and thrive into healthy and productive adults.

The percentage of Texas' children living in poverty increased from 23.1% in 2008 to 25.6% in 2009, higher than the national percentage of 20.7% among all children in the U.S. in 2009.¹ The Federal Poverty Level (FPL) annual income for a family of four is \$22,050, and families living below the FPL are considered "poor." Unfortunately, the current Federal Poverty Guidelines have not been adjusted for the significant increase in housing costs, child care, health care, and transportation, and most analysts agree that an average family needs an income of about twice the FPL to meet their most basic needs today.² Among poor families in Texas, 11% have at least one parent who is employed full-time, year round, and 52% have at least one parent employed either part-year or part-time.³

Families living on income below 200% or twice the FPL (\$44,100 for a family of four) are considered "low-income," and they also face many of the material hardships and financial pressures as poor families. In 2009, 50.6% of children in Texas were living in low-income families, compared to 42.2% nationally.⁴ Of children in low-income families in Texas, 38% have at least one parent who is employed full-time, year round, and 78% have at least one parent employed either part-year or part-time.⁵

CHILDREN AT RISK's annual Children's Summit brings together public officials and key community stakeholders to discuss the most pressing issues facing Texas' children, including child poverty.



In 2009, 50.6% of children in Texas were living in low-income families, compared to 42.2% nationally.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

There are many long-term risks associated with child poverty, as children living in poverty have a higher risk of dropping out of school, poor adolescent health and adult health, poor employment outcomes, and experiencing poverty as adults. Related issues such as low graduation rates, teen pregnancy, and involvement in the juvenile justice system must be addressed to help reduce these risks.



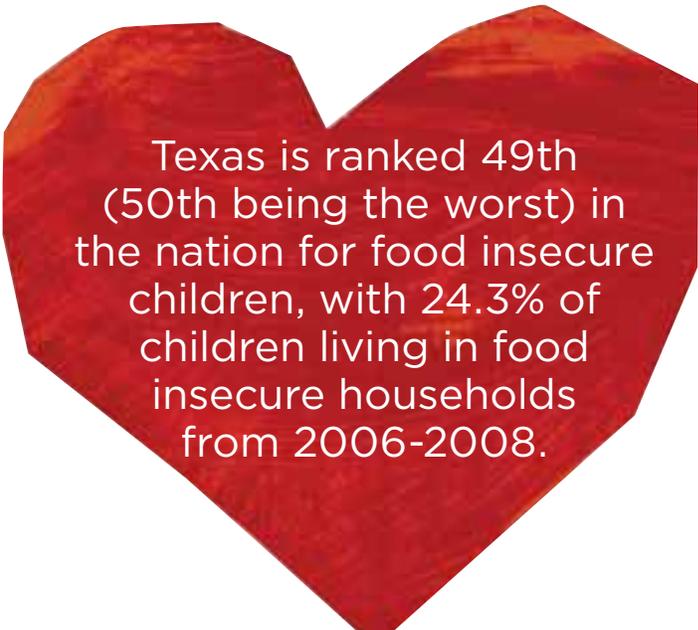
FOOD PROGRAMS

CHILDREN AT RISK's third issue (Fall 2011) of the *Journal of Applied Research on Children: Informing Policy for Children at Risk*, an open-access and peer-reviewed online journal, will focus on food insecurity among our nation's children.

Food security refers to the availability and access to nutritionally adequate and safe foods. Texas is ranked 49th (50th being the worst) in the nation for food insecure children, with 24.3% of children living in food insecure households from 2006-2008, compared to 18.9% of children nationwide.⁶ Food programs that provide free or affordable meals to low-income children reduce hunger, increase academic achievement, lead to improved health and nutrition, and help build lifelong healthy eating habits.

The Texas Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program, and Summer Food Service Program are essential to providing assistance for food-insecure families in Texas. However, participation rates among potentially eligible people for these programs remain low. Due to lengthy application processing times and insufficient outreach to educate communities about available resources, the participation rate in SNAP in 2008 was only 46%.

In Texas, roughly three million public school students live at or below 185% of the federal poverty level and qualify for federally-funded free or reduced-price school meals. Nearly one half of these students attend schools where at least 80% of their peers also qualify for free or reduced-price meals.⁷ However, only 41.6% of students eligible to receive a free or reduced-price breakfast participated in the School Breakfast Program, and only 74.6% of eligible students participated in the free or reduced-price lunch program in the 2009-2010 school year. This means that, on an average day in Texas, more than 1.7 million eligible



Texas is ranked 49th (50th being the worst) in the nation for food insecure children, with 24.3% of children living in food insecure households from 2006-2008.

students did not receive a free or reduced-price breakfast and more than 760,000 did not receive a free or reduced-price lunch.

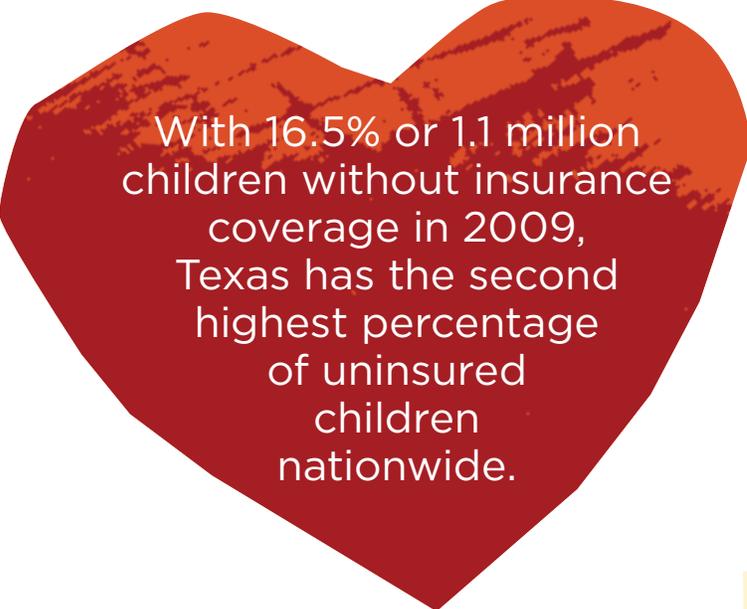
Maintaining access to nutritious foods during the summer months is vital to ensuring that children continue to receive the nutritious meals they need. Texas received over 10% of the nation's Summer Food Service Program federal funds, disbursing \$26.9 million to 1,694 program sites in 2007. Despite these numbers, participation in the summer program for eligible children in 2007 was only 8.2% in Texas, ranking the state 47th in low-income participation. If the Summer Food Service Program reached 40% in Texas, the state would be eligible to receive an additional \$38 million in federal funding and provide access to an additional 637,000 low-income families.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Food programs are being underutilized in Texas, and participation rates must be increased through greater awareness about program availability as well as ease of access. Schools with at least 80% of the student population living at or below 185% of the federal poverty level should provide universal school breakfast. Providing universal school breakfast will increase participation rates at a cost-neutral basis with higher federal reimbursements per student meal at "severe need" schools.

HEALTH COVERAGE

CHILDREN AT RISK's annual *Nuestra Familia, Nuestra Salud* Health Fair provides free health services including immunizations, flu shots, vision and dental screenings, and educational materials to thousands of Latino children and families each year.



With 16.5% or 1.1 million children without insurance coverage in 2009, Texas has the second highest percentage of uninsured children nationwide.

With 16.5% or 1.1 million children without insurance coverage in 2009, Texas has the second highest percentage of uninsured children nationwide.⁸ Furthermore, Texas continues to have the highest uninsured rate in the nation for people of all ages, with 26.1% or 6.4 million uninsured people.⁹

Children represent the majority of Medicaid enrollees in Texas, comprising over 60% of all enrollees in 2009. In 2009, an average of 2,263,482 children in Texas under age 19 were enrolled in Medicaid each month, representing an increase in enrollment from 2008.¹⁰

Texas CHIP is available to children under the age of 19 in families with low incomes up to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) who earn too much to receive Medicaid but cannot afford private health insurance. With the 80th Legislature's extension of CHIP eligibility from six months to one full year, enrollment has steadily increased with an average enrollment of 505,921 for fiscal year 2010. Since its implementation in 2007, CHIP Perinatal enrollment has also steadily increased with an average monthly state caseload of 60,668 for fiscal year 2010.¹¹

There are many children in Texas who are eligible for Medicaid or CHIP but are not enrolled. In 2008, 49.5% of all children in Texas under age 19 were eligible for Medicaid or CHIP, but only 68.1% of these eligible children were enrolled. This means that 1,126,944 eligible children in Texas were not enrolled in 2008.

Medicaid and CHIP play an important role in the well-being of children in Texas. Children who are insured are more likely to be up to date on immunizations, have a regular health care provider, have preventive care visits, fewer emergency room visits, and even miss fewer days of school due to illness than uninsured children. Thus, it is essential that all eligible children receive program services.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Federal funding needs to be maximized in Texas. Medicaid and CHIP are both jointly funded state-federal health care programs, and Texas has forfeited nearly \$1 billion of federal CHIP funding to other states in the past ten years. Sustainable funding and reimbursement streams, including federal Medicaid waivers, for community health workers (CHW) are needed to increase access to care and reduce costs to the state. CHWs work one-on-one with patients to ensure utilization of primary care providers instead of costly emergency rooms, resulting in significant cost savings through preventive care.

CHILDHOOD OBESITY

The increase in the number of children who are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight is an alarming health epidemic of this generation, with one-third of children nationwide overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.

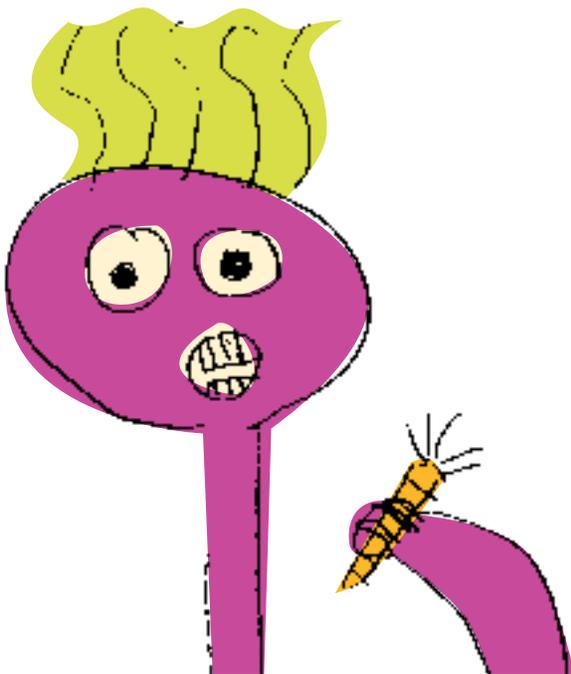
Texas ranks 32nd (50th being the worst) in overall prevalence of childhood obesity, with 32.2% of children considered either overweight or obese.¹² In 2009, 15.6% of Texas high school students were reported to be overweight and 13.6% were obese.¹³ The majority of overweight and obese children are among elementary school-aged children, with 23% of fourth graders in Texas reported as obese and 19% reported as overweight.¹⁴

Being overweight or obese can result in significant health consequences for children. Heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure are just some of the medical consequences that can have a serious impact on a child's quality of life. Research shows that obese children and adolescents are more likely to become obese as adults, so many of these health problems continue into adulthood and compound over time.¹⁵

In addition to the impact on an individual's health, childhood obesity also creates substantial economic consequences for the state. In 2001 alone, the economic costs of overweight and obesity in Texas were an estimated \$10.5 billion, and it is estimated that this cost will reach \$39 billion by 2040 if current trends persist.¹⁶

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CHILDREN AT RISK's policy luncheons provide important policy solutions to issues impacting Texas' children, including childhood obesity.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Lack of access to fresh produce and other nutritious foods, especially in low-income areas, is a major contributing factor to childhood obesity. Increased awareness and utilization of food programs can help to alleviate this problem. In addition, community-based programs to educate parents on the importance of nutrition can help parents to make healthy food choices for their children. Finally, greater access to safe parks is needed to encourage daily physical activity.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

CHILDREN AT RISK founded the Safe House NOW Task Force to establish a safe house for domestic minor sex trafficking victims in Texas.

Human trafficking is the second largest and fastest growing criminal industry in the world, generating billions of dollars in profits for its perpetrators every year. There are two types of human trafficking: (1) domestic trafficking involving U.S. citizens and legal residents who are trafficked within the U.S., and (2) international trafficking involving foreign nationals who are trafficked into the U.S. from abroad.

Texas is a national hub for human trafficking. In 2009, 12% of all calls to the National Human Trafficking Hotline came from Texas and 33% of all calls from Texas were from Houston.¹⁷ Not only is Houston the closest major city to the border with the I-10 corridor passing through it, but it is also home to a large number of sexually oriented businesses. In addition, Houston, Dallas, Austin, and San Antonio host professional sporting events and major conventions that attract many visitors and create a greater demand for the commercial sex industry.

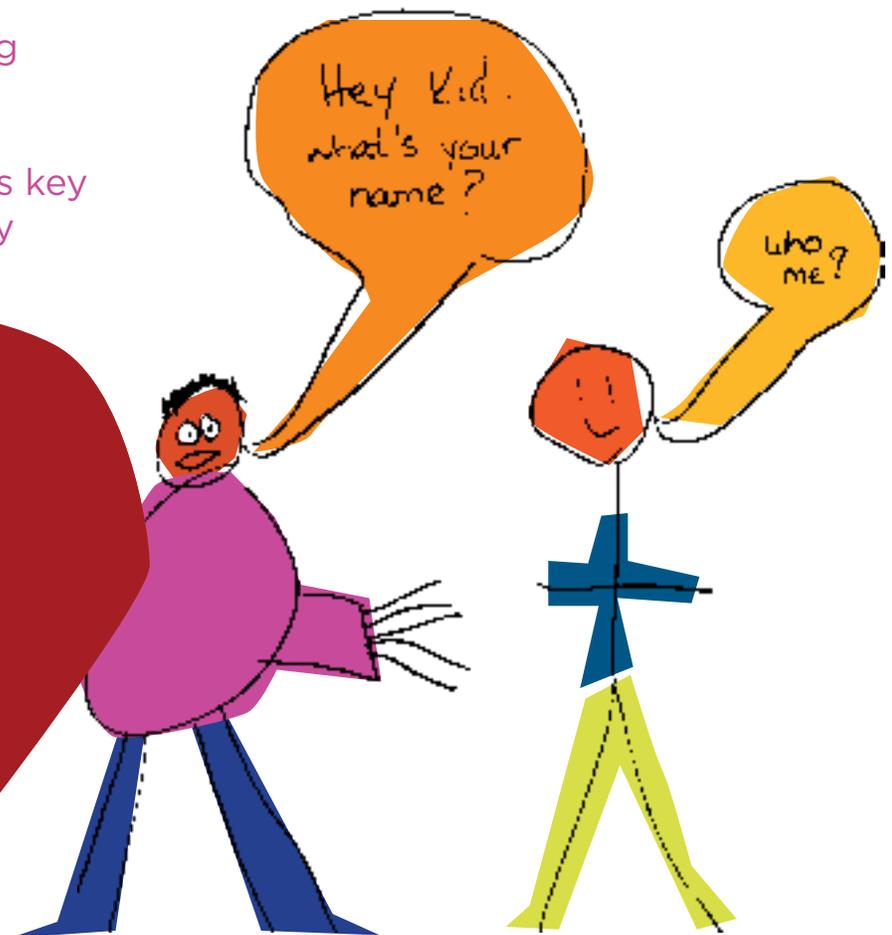
The Polaris Project estimates that more than 200,000 American children are at risk for being lured into sex trafficking each year,¹⁸ and an estimated 1 out of 3 child runaways is lured into sex trafficking within 48 hours of leaving home.¹⁹ Vulnerable youths, particularly runaway and homeless children who are often as young as twelve years old, are particularly targeted by pimps and are at risk for being lured into the sex trade. A 2009 Bureau of Justice Statistics report revealed that forced prostitution and child sex trafficking accounted for 76% of all confirmed human trafficking incidents nationwide.²⁰

In June 2010, the Texas Supreme Court issued its opinion on *In the Matter of B.W.*, holding that children under the age of 14 cannot consent to sex and therefore cannot be charged with the offense of prostitution.²¹ This landmark case emphasizes the need to treat these children as victims, and it also stresses the importance of providing them with the services and programming they need for rehabilitation.



CHILDREN AT RISK's annual Texas Summits on the Trafficking and Exploitation of Children raise awareness about human trafficking in Texas and educates key stakeholders and the community about this horrible crime.

In 2009, 12% of all calls to the National Human Trafficking Hotline came from Texas.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

All children under the age of 18 engaged in prostitution should be treated as victims of sexual exploitation and not as criminals. Under current Texas law, prosecutors must prove that individuals accused of human trafficking knowingly forced the child into prostitution. Removing the requirement to prove "force, fraud, or coercion" of trafficked minors will eliminate barriers to the prosecution of their traffickers. Finally, law enforcement needs a facility with appropriate support services, such as the Child Protective Services Division of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, to place children who have been removed from the control of their traffickers or pimps. Funding for these services can be raised through mandatory restitution from anyone convicted of the trafficking and sexual exploitation of children, as well as liability for third parties who knowingly benefit from the crime of child prostitution.

JUVENILE MENTAL HEALTH

The prevalence of mental health disorders among children and adolescents is alarming. Research shows that at least 1 in 5 children and adolescents in the U.S. has a mental health disorder, and 1 in 10 of these children suffer from an emotional disturbance severe enough to disrupt daily functioning in the home, school, or community.²² In Harris County alone, approximately 229,055 children were living with a mental illness in 2008.

The prevalence of mental health disorders for youths involved in the juvenile justice system is much greater. The National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice estimates that 70% of youth in the juvenile justice system nationwide have at least one mental health disorder, and over 20% of these youths have a mental disorder severe enough to require immediate treatment.²³

An estimated \$247 billion is spent annually nationwide on costs associated with children's mental health issues. Many of these costs can be reduced through prevention programs that are designed to identify and treat mental health issues in children and adolescents before the damaging effects occur. Among the states, Texas ranks 49th in mental health expenditure per capita.²⁴

Throughout Texas, juvenile mental health courts offer qualifying juvenile offenders the opportunity to participate in intensive and individualized community-based treatment for mental illness. In most counties, pre-adjudicated youths are placed on a Deferred Prosecution status upon successful completion of the program, and the original charge is dismissed upon completion of the Deferred Prosecution term without engaging in delinquent conduct. In some counties, the program is available to post-adjudicated youth as an alternative form of probation. Juvenile mental health courts are found in Harris, Travis, Bexar, and El Paso counties, with a juvenile mental health court currently under development in Dallas County.

CHILDREN AT RISK spearheaded the collaborative effort to establish a juvenile mental health docket in Harris County and has conducted a statewide evaluation of all juvenile mental health dockets in Texas.



Among the states, Texas ranks 49th in mental health expenditure per capita.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Statistics show that juvenile mental health courts are effective in rehabilitating youths with mental illness and reducing recidivism. Increased funding is needed to expand current juvenile mental health court program services in addition to expanding successful models to other counties in the state. For many of Texas' youth with mental illness, the juvenile justice system is unfortunately their first opportunity to receive treatment. Funding for community-based mental health services must be maintained, and more community-based prevention efforts are needed so that youths with mental health issues receive the treatment and care they need without having to resort to the juvenile justice system for treatment.

ADULT CERTIFICATION

CHILDREN AT RISK's Continuing Legal Education programs educate the legal community on key issues, including juvenile justice and juvenile mental health.

Juvenile offenders in Texas who commit a qualifying offense can be certified and tried as an adult. Despite recurring research on the detrimental effects of processing juveniles in the adult system, hundreds of juveniles are certified as adults each year in Texas, with 227 certified in 2009 and 245 certified in 2008.²⁵

Juveniles incarcerated in adult prison are eight times more likely to commit suicide, five times more likely to be sexually assaulted, and almost twice as likely to be attacked with a weapon by other inmates, compared to youth detained in juvenile facilities.²⁶ Furthermore, research shows that recidivism rates are higher among certified youths than youths in the juvenile justice system.

Youths certified as adults are treated as adults for all intents and purposes of the criminal law. They are therefore transferred to county jails throughout Texas to await trial. Certified youths convicted of state jail felonies

who are not placed on probation are transferred to state jails to serve their sentences, and all other convicted youths who are not placed on probation are transferred to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ).

While programming is available in TDCJ through the Youthful Offender Program, no programming or treatment is provided to youths in state jails. In addition, isolation of youths is used as a protective measure in county jails, state jails, and TDCJ due to a lack of placement options for youths who may be harmed.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

The juvenile justice system is based upon the premise of rehabilitation, and youths are provided with therapeutic programming and other services to help them rehabilitate and reduce recidivism. Therefore, it is imperative to certify only the most violent offenders and to keep all other youths in the juvenile justice system. In order to accomplish this, nonviolent offenses should be removed from the list of qualifying offenses for certification. In addition, as an alternative to certification, the determinate sentence should be utilized more, enabling juveniles to serve a minimum period of confinement at the Texas Youth Commission with possible transfer to TDCJ if they have not been sufficiently rehabilitated.

Juveniles incarcerated in adult prison are eight times more likely to commit suicide, five times more likely to be sexually assaulted, and almost twice as likely to be attacked with a weapon by other inmates, compared to youth detained in juvenile facilities.

CHILD CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION

A child's healthy development depends on positive and stimulating experiences, especially during the first six years of life. Studies show that quality child care can benefit a child's cognitive, social-emotional, and language development, and the positive correlation between high

In 2009, 26% of children in Texas cared for themselves after school, and only 15% of school-age children were enrolled in after-school care.

quality child care and child development extends to graduation rates, college attendance, math and reading scores, and fewer teen pregnancies.

Child care teachers play an important role in helping children grow and learn in a safe environment. Notwithstanding this important role, child care teachers in Texas are required to have only 8 hours of pre-service training. This requirement is in great disparity with other service jobs in the state; 1500 training hours are required for hairdressers and 600 training hours are required of manicurists.²⁷ Inadequate training and lack of knowledge in child development can increase the risk of harm to children.

In 2009, 26% of children in Texas cared for themselves after school, and only 15% of school-age children were enrolled in after-school care. Research shows that lack of adult supervision and resulting self-care for children and adolescents leads to increased likelihood of accidents, lower social competence, lower GPAs and achievement test scores, and greater likelihood of participation in delinquent or high-risk activities.²⁸

Child care subsidies for Texas' low-income children are provided through the Texas Workforce Commission. Families in Texas utilizing the child care subsidy program usually pay a 9-11% co-payment, but child care providers who participate in the subsidy program often receive payment based upon rates that are 30-40% below the market rate.²⁹ The effects of insufficient reimbursement rates include higher child-to-staff ratios, under-trained staff, lack of equipment, resources, and materials, and limited services to low-income children.

CHILDREN AT RISK raises public awareness and collaborates with stakeholders to ensure children have access to quality child care and early education.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Child care and early education can have significant impacts on the development and overall well-being of the child. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that quality care is provided in Texas through increased training requirements for child care providers. In addition, more efficient reimbursement methods to increase participation by child care providers are needed to increase program availability for families.



GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES

Dropping out of high school correlates with many negative outcomes for the individual and the state. Dropouts in Texas are 75% more likely to be unemployed and far more likely to be living in poverty than graduates,³⁰ and a single cohort of dropouts has been estimated to result in a loss of up to \$9.6 billion for the state.³¹

The TEA removes from the cohort students who leave the public school system through certain “leaver codes,” as well as underreported students for whom the TEA cannot find records in their system. Removing leavers and underreported students from the cohort results in higher graduation and completion rates since the verification methods for students leaving to attend private school, home school, or returning to their home country are minimal, and the TEA is unable to tell how many underreported students are dropouts.

CHILDREN AT RISK calculates its own graduation rate utilizing data from the TEA, and in 2009 developed a new methodology to calculate graduation rates across the state. This methodology is unique in that it tracks first-time freshmen to determine whether the cohort of students graduated from any Texas public school within a specified time frame (typically four or six years), and students who have not been well-documented to have left for home schooling or left the country are not preemptively removed from the calculation. Using this new methodology and data from the TEA, CHILDREN AT RISK’s four-year graduation rate for the class of 2008 was 66%, compared to TEA’s reported graduation rate of 79%.

CHILDREN AT RISK’s annual Education Reform Conference gives an in-depth look at the current state of education in Texas.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

In order to know the true magnitude of the dropout problem in Texas, accurate graduation and dropout data is needed. Greater transparency is needed in the TEA’s leaver code reporting, and school administrators should be required to obtain a written, signed statement from the parent or guardian of a child leaving to be homeschooled to prevent underreported dropout rates.

A single cohort of dropouts has been estimated to result in a loss of up to \$9.6 billion for the state.



SCHOOL RANKINGS

For the fifth Public School Rankings report released in 2010, CHILDREN AT RISK evaluated and ranked 5,864 public school campuses across Texas.

In an effort to raise community awareness about the “dropout crisis” and the need for school reform, CHILDREN AT RISK designed a school ranking system in 2006 to publicly evaluate and rank high schools in the Greater Houston area. In 2009, CHILDREN AT RISK included all eligible high schools in the state of Texas as well as all eligible elementary and middle school campuses. For the fifth Public School Rankings report released in 2010, CHILDREN AT RISK evaluated and ranked 5,864 public school campuses across Texas.

To rank public schools across Texas, CHILDREN AT RISK compiles and analyzes universal data collected by the Texas Education Agency. CHILDREN AT RISK emphasizes utilizing a diverse array of indicators to evaluate campuses to encourage a holistic examination of school quality.

The purpose of the School Rankings is not only to serve as a resource for parents and students regarding the quality of local schools, but also to provide information to campuses and districts on how they perform relative to their peers and on successful models of high-performing public schools.

Among the high performing schools in the 2010 School Rankings, particularly those serving disadvantaged student populations, a number of schools have been observed to implement an extended school day and/or year. For example, many high performing charters, such as KIPP Academy and YES Prep Public Schools, utilize an extended learning time model to foster higher achievement among their students through: increasing time on task, broadening and deepening coverage of curriculum, providing more opportunities for experiential learning, strengthening the ability to work with diverse ability levels simultaneously, and deepening adult-child relationships.

TOP TEN HIGH SCHOOLS IN TEXAS

SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING (DALLAS ISD)

SCHOOL FOR THE TALENTED AND GIFTED (DALLAS ISD)

DEBAKEY HIGH SCHOOL FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONS (HOUSTON ISD)

CARNEGIE VANGUARD HIGH SCHOOL (HOUSTON ISD)

SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS (DALLAS ISD)

HEALTH CAREERS HIGH SCHOOL (NORTHSIDE ISD)

HIGHLAND PARK HIGH SCHOOL (HIGHLAND PARK ISD)

THE SCIENCE ACADEMY OF SOUTH TEXAS (SOUTH TEXAS ISD)

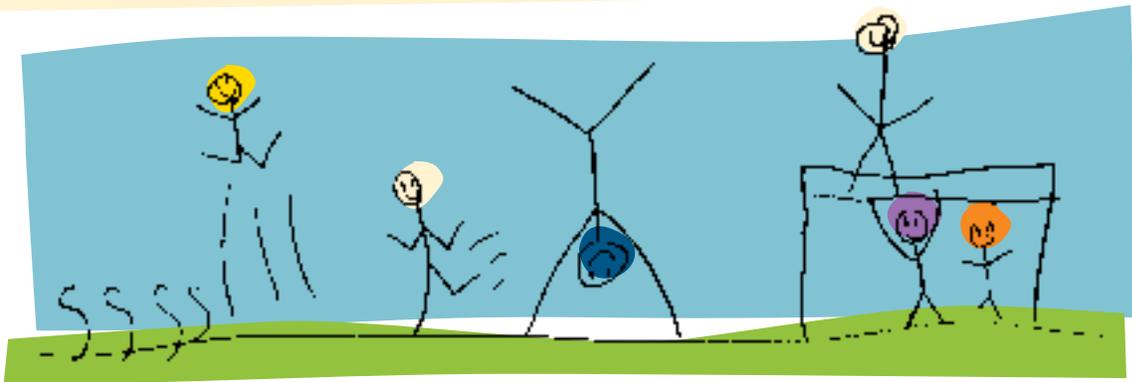
KERR HIGH SCHOOL (ALIEF ISD)

MAGNET CENTER FOR PUBLIC SERVICES (DALLAS ISD)

CHILDREN AT RISK’s 2010 Public School Rankings Report

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

CHILDREN AT RISK's School Rankings aim to serve as a transparent, accessible guide to the public regarding the performance of local schools, and to generate conversation about how schools and districts are performing in creating college-ready students. CHILDREN AT RISK encourages parents to utilize the school rankings as an advocacy tool to better understand the performance of their local schools and demand improvement. Districts are encouraged to use the data to conduct further data analysis, inform teacher and staff professional development, and target school interventions. Children who fall behind academically early on have a higher risk of dropping out of school. Extended learning time should be implemented in Texas to provide these children with the much need additional support to boost their academic performance to prevent them from falling behind.



CONCLUSION

Our children are our future, and it is the responsibility of parents, lawmakers, business people, teachers, and everyone in our community who affect the daily lives of our children to work together to ensure that the needs of our children are met. Unfortunately, many of the obstacles facing our children today are the same problems that are left unsolved year after year. With the heightened difficulties faced by families due to the current economic decline, the most basic needs of even more of Texas' children are left unmet every day. In order to protect our children and to protect our future, it is urgent that we, as a community, address these problems now and bring an end to the recurring issues that affect so many children in our state. CHILDREN AT RISK believes that through awareness, collaboration, and action, substantial change can be made to improve the quality of life of Texas' children.

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82ND TEXAS LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

PROTECT VITAL SERVICES AND ENACT NO-COST SOLUTIONS FOR CHILDREN

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Recognize children who have been prostituted as victims not criminals and redirect them away from the costly criminal justice system

Remove the requirement for prosecutors to prove that a trafficker convinced his minor victim to engage in a commercial sex act through force, fraud, or coercion

Collect revenue for victim services through forfeitures and restitution by pimps

Impound vehicles and impose additional fines on johns who solicit prostitution from minors

Create liability for third parties who benefit from trafficking situations

FOOD INSECURITY

Implement Universal School Breakfast Program for schools that have 80% student populations living at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Line

HEALTH

Increase preventive care and reduce emergency room visits through utilization of community health care workers

Protect and appropriately fund community-based mental health services

EDUCATION

Require written documentation for homeschooling to ensure accurate dropout calculations

Pass a resolution in support of extended learning time and its academic benefits

ENDNOTES

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