

Active Projects Overview

The Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living has a robust portfolio of active research projects that are fueled by our faculty members' varied interests. At each project's core is a strong motivation to positively impact infant and child health behaviors and outcomes via evidence-based interventions.



Brighter Bites

Dr. Shreela Sharma

Routinely distributes fresh produce and nutritional education to predominantly low-income families, aiming to change eating habits and ultimately curb childhood obesity.



Central Texas Healthy Adolescent Project Evaluation

Dr. Andrew Springer

Evaluates Central Texas Healthy Adolescent Project, which is aimed at promoting optimal health and reducing teen pregnancy & sexually transmitted infections in middle and high school students.



Coordinated Approach To Child Health

Drs. Steven Kelder, Deanna Hoelscher, Shreela Sharma, and Andrew Springer

School-based health program that promotes physical activity and healthy food choices, and prevents tobacco use, with outreach managed under the CATCH Global Foundation.



CATCH Healthy Smiles

Dr. Shreela Sharma

Hands-on curriculum that teaches students how brushing, flossing, dentist visits, and healthy dietary choices impact oral health.



CATCH My Breath

Dr. Steven Kelder

E-cigarette prevention program for middle schoolers, developed as a rapid response to emerging vaping trends among teens.



Coordinated State Evaluation for Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting

Dr. Dorothy Mandell

Evaluates federally funded home visiting programs in Texas to understand the impact of mental health screenings and referrals by home visitors on families.



Co-CREATE

Dr. Deanna Hoelscher

Prevents adolescent overweight and obesity through information and policy infrastructure that promotes the healthiest choices as the preferred ones.



Community Health Workers for COVID Response: Evaluation of the HEART ATX Project

Drs. Andrew Springer and Sandra van den Berg

Evaluates HEART ATX, a CHW-led and Austin Public Health-hosted initiative addressing disparities in COVID-19 impacts through vaccination outreach and financial/health living programming.



Depressive Symptoms and Tobacco Use Trajectories Across Young Adulthood

Dr. Anna Wilkinson

Studies if and how the role, strength, and/or direction of depressive symptoms in tobacco use trajectories and transitions vary among age subgroups across young adulthood (ages 18-34).



Developmental Outcomes for Children with Critical Congenital Heart Defects

Dr. Dorothy Mandell

Assesses data matched between the birth defects registry, vital records, and Medicaid to lessen negative developmental outcomes seen in children with developmental delays and disorders.



School-Based Health Programs



Physical Activity



Nutrition, Food Access, Obesity



Family & Child Health



Tobacco & Alcohol Abuse Prevention



Health Policy



Community Development





Digital Physical Activity and Diet (dPAD) Collaborative

Dr. Deanna Hoelscher

Unites researchers interested in addressing obesity, diet, and physical activity through research that is based in technology.



Double Up Food Bucks (DUFb) Texas Expansion Project

Dr. Sandra van den Berg

Measures customer attitudes/behaviors and management/staff practices to evaluate DUFb statewide expansion's impact on nutritious food consumption and healthy food access.



Economic Evaluation of Austin Public Health Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment (DSRIP) Projects

Dr. Shelton Brown

Determines the cost-benefit and/or cost-effectiveness of DSRIP projects in which Austin Public Health has participated.



Effect of E-cigarette and Hookah Use on Age of Asthma Onset in the USA

Dr. Adriana Pérez

Studies the association between tobacco use and asthma onset age within the contemporary tobacco product landscape.



ENDS Use Trajectories, Adolescence through Young Adulthood: A Longitudinal Study of Risk Factors and Profiles (TATAMS 2.0)

Dr. Melissa Harrell



Studies if and how the role, strength, and/or direction of depressive symptoms in tobacco use trajectories and transitions vary among subgroups across young adulthood.



Engaging Young People in Action Planning to Advance Vision Zero

Dr. Andrew Springer

Informs intervention planning to reduce fatal and serious injuries on roadways in partnership with young adult leaders from the Montopolis community and a community planning group.



Evaluating a Pilot of Developmental Screening and Referral by Community Health Workers

Dr. Dorothy Mandell

Assesses the practicality and impact of Community Health Workers on the provision of developmental screening and service navigation support to families.



Evaluation of the Healthy Corner Store Initiative in Low-Income Communities

Dr. Sandra van den Berg

Assesses the communication and key outcomes of the Healthy Corner Store Initiative being implemented in the 78744 and 78745 ZIP codes in Austin and Travis County.



Evaluation of the Preschool Development Grant, Birth to Five

Dr. Dorothy Mandell

Strengthens the early childhood system in Texas by assessing needs and evaluating activities across five state agencies.



Healthy Behaviors for a Healthy Planet

Drs. Kevin Lanza and Sandra van den Berg

Development and validation of a theory-based survey that assesses behaviors (meat reduction, active transportation) conducive to planetary health.



Healthy Mujeres

Dr. Divya Patel

Provides pregnancy-related and preventive healthcare services to women in Texas' Rio Grande Valley through a mobile clinic model.



Landscape Assessment of Needs, Assets & Opportunities for Physical Activity Promotion in Travis County

Dr. Andrew Springer

Identifies needs, assets, and opportunities for physical activity promotion in Travis County in partnership with M.D. Anderson's Cancer Prevention and Control Platform.



Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Training Program

Dr. Courtney Byrd-Williams

Addresses geographic disparities in access to training for rural MCH professionals in the target areas of HRSA Region VI (TX, NM, OK, AR, and LA) and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.



Nourish

Drs. Deanna Hoelscher and Shreela Sharma

Encourages lifelong health with hands-on, evidence-based classes taught across its garden, kitchen, clinic, and community.

nourish



Nourishing the Community Through Culinary Medicine

Dr. Natalia Heredia

Supports healthy eating through culinary medicine education.



Teaching Kitchen Multisite Trial

Drs. Deanna Hoelscher and Natalia Heredia

Implements a teaching kitchen intervention for adults with obesity.



Pediatric Cardiovascular Health: Improving Prediction & Causal Inference Models

Dr. Augusto César Ferreira De Moraes

Uses data from the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development Study to assess the impact of social determinants on trajectories of various cardiovascular health components across adolescence.



Perinatal Quality Collaborative CDC Grant

Dr. Divya Patel

Strengthens the capacity of the Texas Collaborative for Healthy Mothers and Babies to substantially impact perinatal health in Texas and the United States.



Routes to Environmental Justice

Dr. Kevin Lanza

Studies the relationship between built environment changes from national program Safe Routes to School, children's heat stress, and their active commuting to school behaviors.



Safe Babies

Dr. Dorothy Mandell

Supports positive parenting through evidence-based tools, including the Father's Playbook App, Parenting Action Plan, Family CARE Portfolio, and Pediatric Brain Health Network.



Safe TRavel Environment Evaluation in Texas Schools (STREETS)

Dr. Deanna Hoelscher

Evaluates the Safe Routes to School Program implemented by the City of Austin to determine health and safety effects of infrastructure changes.





Social Media, Acculturation, and E-cigarette Use Among Mexican-American College Students in Texas (Project VAMOS)

Dr. Anna Wilkinson

Examines social media related to e-cigarettes and the subsequent use of these devices among Mexican-American college students while considering the explanatory and modifying factors.



South American Youth/Child Cardiovascular and Environmental (SAYCARE) Study

Dr. Augusto César Ferreira De Moraes

Provides higher accuracy regarding cardiovascular disease risk factors in children and adolescents from ages 3 to 17.



Texas Collaborative for Healthy Mothers & Babies (TCHMB)

Dr. Deanna Hoelscher

Improves birth outcomes in Texas through collaboration with providers, scientists, birthing hospitals, and other community stakeholders seeking to advance healthcare quality, equity, and patient safety.



Texas Collaborative for
Healthy Mothers & Babies



Texas Mother-Friendly Worksite Technical Assistance and Support Program

Dr. Courtney Byrd-Williams

Provides Texas workplaces with the support and infrastructure needed to become a designated Texas Mother-Friendly Worksite.



Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration (TX RPC) Project

Dr. Deanna Hoelscher

Optimizes the use of Texas research, data, and resources to assist legislators in developing effective health policies.



Texas Research-to-Policy
Collaboration Project



Texas School Physical Activity (Texas SPAN) Project

Dr. Deanna Hoelscher

Monitors health trends (diet, physical activity and sedentary behavior, oral health) in Texas school children at statewide, border county, and non-border county levels.



Texas SNAP-Ed Evaluation

Drs. Deanna Hoelscher and Nalini Ranjit

Evaluates the effectiveness of SNAP-ed nutrition education and obesity prevention programming activities in Texas.



Transforming Health Through Reimbursements for Community-Based Interventions

Dr. Deanna Hoelscher

Establishes interventions to increase the purchase, preparation, and consumption of fruits and vegetables by families with elementary students in Austin/Elgin afterschool programs.



Using Machine Learning to Develop Just-In-Time Adaptive Interventions for Smoking Cessation

Dr. Emily Hébert

Evaluates feasibility and effectiveness of delivering a personalized, just-in-time adaptive intervention when machine learning predicts a risk of lapse in smoking cessation.



Young Adult and Midlife Transitions in Physical Activity and Sedentary Behavior with Heart Failure Risk and Progression: Coronary Artery Risk Development in Young Adults (CARDIA)

Dr. Emily Hébert

Assesses the relationship between changes in reported physical activity from young adulthood to midlife and the prevalence of heart failure risk during midlife.