

PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS & UPDATES

TEXAS RESEARCH-TO-POLICY COLLABORATION PROJECT

April 2024

National Public Health Week

Protecting, Connecting and Thriving: We Are All Public Health



National Public Health Week



Join us in celebrating the 2024 National Public Health Week, **April 1-7!** Register for the free and live [events](#) hosted by the American Public Health Association.

Space is limited for some live events, but all events will be recorded and freely available to the public.

Texas Fruit and Vegetable Day: 4/5/24



Get ready for the first Texas Fruit and Vegetable Day on **Friday, April 5!** The 2023 Texas Legislature designated the first Friday in April as Texas Fruit and Vegetable Day in public schools. The event promotes awareness of the health benefits of eating fruits and vegetables at school and the impact healthy foods have on student success. School nutrition teams can use Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) resources and their own creativity as they encourage students to eat their fruits and vegetables! Explore TDA materials [here](#).

World Physical Activity Day: 4/6/24



Active Texas 2030: A Plan for Physical Activity as a Public Health Priority

Let's get moving on World Physical Activity Day, **Saturday, April 6!**

The U.S. National Physical Activity Plan provides a societal sector roadmap for improving physical activity in the United States.

The past Active Texas 2030 webinar series led

by Dr. Harold W. (Bill) Kohl III for the Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living highlighted each societal sector's recommended strategies and tactics and provided contexts for adapting the U.S. National Physical Activity Plan to create Active Texas 2030, a state plan for all Texans.

- [Community Recreation, Fitness & Parks Sector](#)
- [Faith-Based Sector](#)
- [Public Health Sector](#)
- [Media & Communications Sector](#)

- [Healthcare Sector](#)
- [Business and Industry Sector](#)
- [Education Sector](#)
- [Military Populations Sector](#)

Center for Healthy Living Webinars

APRIL

2

Tucker's Law & Best Practices in Youth Substance Misuse Prevention

Steven Kelder, PhD, MPH

Professor, Epidemiology, Human Genetics & Environmental Sciences Beth Toby Grossman Distinguished Professor of Spirituality and Healing, UTHealth Houston School of Public Health in Austin

Marcella Bianco

Director of Government Partnerships, CATCH Global Foundation®

REGISTER →

[Tucker's Law & Best Practices in Youth Substance Misuse Prevention](#)

April 2, 2024

1-2 PM CT

Texas and other states have recently enacted legislation mandating substance misuse prevention education in schools, due to the dangerous rise of fentanyl and other substance use among youth. This webinar will cover:

- The provisions of Tucker's Law in Texas
- Resources offered by CATCH Global Foundation to meet its requirements
- Best practices in youth substance misuse prevention drawn from behavioral theory and practice

This webinar is co-hosted by the Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living at the UTHealth Houston School of Public Health in Austin and CATCH Global Foundation.

APRIL

16

Best Practices in Youth Nutrition Education

Deanna Hoelscher, PhD, RDN, LD, CNS, FISBNPA

John P. McGovern Professor in Health Promotion Austin Campus Dean, Health Promotion & Behavioral Sciences and Director, Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living at the UTHealth Houston School of Public Health in Austin

Jenni Klufa, RD

Associate Extension Specialist, Oklahoma State University

Rose Carlson, MS, RD, LDN

Director of Nutrition & Compliance, Quest Food Management Services

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[Best Practices in Youth Nutrition Education](#)

April 16, 2024

12-1 PM CT

Join CATCH Global Foundation for a panel discussion with Dr. Deanna Hoelscher, a youth nutrition education expert who has led multiple CATCH scientific studies. Participants will learn about current and emerging trends and best practices shaping youth nutrition education.

This webinar is co-hosted by the Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living at the UTHealth Houston School of Public Health in Austin and CATCH Global Foundation. This webinar is sponsored by Quest Food Management Services.

TX RPC Project Health Policy Resources

[Maternal & Child Health](#)

Released March 8, 2024

[Non-Medical Drivers of Health](#)

Released March 8, 2024

Maternal & Child Health

March 8, 2024

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. The quality of a mother's health before, during, and after pregnancy has lifelong impacts on the health and well-being of both mother and baby.
2. The national maternal mortality crisis is compounded in Texas by maternity care deserts across the state.
3. The best approach for preventing maternal death is ensuring adequate health care services before, during, and after pregnancy.
4. Midwives, doulas, home health nurses, and community health workers can help bolster the maternal care workforce, especially in rural communities.
5. Ensuring adequate and timely data collection and analysis of state maternal and infant morbidity and mortality is important to monitor trends.

PROBLEM

The quality of a mother's pregnancy determines the well-being of her infant and lays the foundation for a child's lifelong health trajectory. (1)

- Prenatal experiences like maternal malnutrition, elevated levels of stress hormones, or exposure to toxins are linked to disease outcomes later in life through: (a) physiologic changes that can impact either the developing fetus directly or (b) the health of the mother, which in turn affects fetal development. (2,3)

Pregnancy can also impact the health of the mother beyond the birth of her child.

- Some women will develop medical issues like pre-eclampsia or gestational diabetes during pregnancy, which can lead to higher lifelong risks for conditions like cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and stroke. (4, 5)
- Pre-eclampsia, a serious form of high blood pressure during pregnancy, is linked to hemorrhaging, one of Texas's leading causes of pregnancy-associated deaths. (6,7)



THE U.S. CONSISTENTLY HAS THE HIGHEST MATERNAL MORTALITY RATES OF ANY OTHER HIGH-INCOME COUNTRY

The maternal mortality crisis in the U.S. is well documented.

- The most recent data published in 2023 by the National Center for Health Statistics show 32.9 maternal deaths for every 100,000 live births in 2021, up 64% in just two years from 20.1 per 100,000 in 2019. (8)
- Racial disparities in maternal mortality have persisted for years. (10) Black women in the U.S. are over 2.5 times as likely to die from pregnancy complications than white women are, regardless of socioeconomic status. (9)

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Texas Research-to-Practice
Collaborative Program

Non-Medical Drivers of Health

March 8, 2024

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. We can improve health by supporting community conditions that impact health (e.g. environment, education, access to care, and other factors) through laws, policies, and community partnerships.
2. In 2022, factors such as food insecurity and education were significant contributors to healthcare costs for Texans.
3. Healthcare plans, clinic and hospital systems, and other healthcare providers can integrate non-medical drivers of health into their delivery systems to improve health conditions and outcomes.

Background

Non-medical factors that influence health, collectively known as social determinants of health, foundations or non-medical drivers of health (NMDOH) are conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age that contribute to health outcomes.^{1,2}

- We can improve overall health by improving community conditions through laws, policies, and community partnerships.³
- The Non-Medical Drivers of Health Framework encourages collaborations with communities across sectors to improve community foundations and health benefits.



Examples: Non-Medical Drivers of Health*

- Safe housing
- Transportation
- Food security and access to healthy foods
- Opportunities for physical activity
- Income level
- Educational Opportunities
- Early childhood experiences
- Social support
- Neighborhood crime rates and exposure to violence
- Access to safe drinking water
- Air quality
- Language and literacy skills

Figure 1. Non-Medical Drivers of Health Factors
Healthy People 2020, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

*References 5 & 6

UTHealth Houston
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- The quality of a mother's pregnancy impacts the health of the mother and their children.
- The maternal mortality rate in Texas is 20.2 per 100,000 live births. But 90% of the leading causes of death are preventable.
- Expanding access to maternal healthcare, creating a broader maternal care workforce, and increasing the availability of maternal health data could support the well-being of Texas women and children.

- Non-medical drivers of health are conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age that contribute to health outcomes.
- Access to food and healthcare, income, education, and housing environment are the most crucial non-medical drivers of health contributing to Texans' healthcare costs.
- We can improve overall health by enhancing community conditions that target non-medical drivers of health through laws, policies, and community partnerships.

TX RPC Project Researcher Publication

Urban-Rural Differences in School Districts' Local Wellness Policies and Policy Implementation Environments

This study compared the urban-rural differences in districts' Local Wellness Policies (LWPs) and explored the environmental supports for implementing LWPs in Texas.

- LWPs are district-level policies about physical activity and nutrition required for all districts that have the potential to improve school district health environments and, in turn, students' health behaviors and outcomes.
- Rural areas have fewer LWP goals than urban areas, suggesting the need for rural school districts to prioritize the selection of goals that have the strongest impact on student health outcomes.
- More resources are needed to help develop and implement LWPs in rural areas. The state-level organizations could facilitate the establishment of the School Health Advisory Councils (SHACs) and provide resources for SHACs to develop and implement LWPs in rural settings. At the local level, gathering additional support from a wide range of community stakeholders to ensure the school health.

Resource Corner

The TX RPC Project develops accessible and accurate public health policy-related resources from field

experts. If you would like to request information on a public health topic, please complete the following form:

Access the Request Form

See below for links to specific resource categories on our website:

- [Health Policy Resources](#)
- [Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living Webinars](#)
- [TX RPC Project Newsletters Archive](#)
- [Texas Legislative Bill Tracker](#)
- [Texas Child Health Status Reports and Toolkits](#)
- [Newsletter Resource Sharing Form for Publication](#)

About TX RPC Project

The [Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration \(TX RPC\) Project](#) is a nonpartisan network that aims to bridge research and policy by supporting partnerships between child health researchers and legislators.

The TX RPC Project team and overall network are available to support Texas legislators with informational requests or resources related to health during the interim and in preparation for the 2025 Legislative Session.

If you and your legislative office are interested in collaborating with our team to receive data-driven information at state, district, and local levels, please reach out to TXRPCNetwork@uth.tmc.edu.

Contact Our Team

For more information, email TXRPCNetwork@uth.tmc.edu.

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