

News & Updates

from the Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration Project



January 2021

Resource Reminders

COVID-19 Rapid Response Requests

Since the start of the pandemic, Texas legislators have expressed the need for access to accurate information in a timely manner from experts in the field. As a result, the Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration (TX RPC) Project has created multiple reports and/or one-pagers using Texas data on public health topics of interest expressed by Texas legislators. If you would like to request additional information on a public health topic related to the upcoming legislative session, please complete the following form.

[ACCESS FORM HERE](#)

The Texas RPC Project resources are available on our website. We hope these resources are valuable to your respective offices.

- [Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living Webinars \(includes COVID-19 specific webinars\)](#)
- [TX RPC Resources for Improving Measurable Impact \(resources available to policymakers to provide facts and evidence on health-related topics\)](#)
- [TX RPC Newsletters Archive](#)
- [Texas Legislative Bill Tracker](#)
- [Texas Child Health Status Reports and Toolkits](#)

Texas Research-to-Policy Report Highlights

Below are highlights of newly released reports that have been highly requested. These topics are relevant to the impact of the current pandemic in Texas and the upcoming legislative priorities!

Data Brief: Food Insecurity in Texas and Texas Legislative Districts Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration

Eating a healthy diet can be a challenge for people with limited income and/or limited physical access to supermarkets, grocery stores, and other sources of healthy and affordable food. This data brief describes and compares the number of individuals at risk of low food access in Texas, Texas House Districts, and Texas

Senate Districts.

Key Takeaways:

- Approximately 2,403,438 (9%) individuals in Texas have both low income and low access to healthy food sources, as of 2015.
 - In Texas Senate Districts, this proportion ranges from 3% to 23.3%.
 - In Texas House Districts, this proportion ranges from 0.2% to 34.6%
- The Food Access Research Atlas data are available for specific census tracts (neighborhoods) and can now be viewed by Texas Senate and House districts.

[VIEW THE INTERACTIVE REPORT](#)

Dashboard: Health of Texas

Center for Health Care Data - UTHealth School of Public Health

The Center for Health Care Data created the Health of Texas Dashboard to produce and publicly report cost, quality, utilization and health status measures, along with risk values and key social determinants of health.

The dashboard summarizes results on key performance parameters including health care costs, health services utilization, and quality of care of three providers that include Medicare, Medicaid, and Commercial providers.

[VIEW THE INTERACTIVE DASHBOARD](#)

Comparing COVID-19 Vaccines: Pfizer/BioNTech vs. Moderna

Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration

Shreela Sharma, PhD, RD, LD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Houston

Katelyn Jetelina, PhD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Dallas

This graphic describes and compares the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines, and is available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Mandarin. It can be downloaded and distributed to the public free of charge.

Key Takeaways:

- Both vaccines are mRNA vaccines, meaning they provide "instructions" for our cells to make a piece of protein that is found on the surface of the virus that causes COVID-19. Our body recognizes this protein as "foreign" and will build an immune response that protects us from COVID-19.
- To gain maximum protection and ensure "memory" immunity, you must get the second dose.
- Vaccine side effects are a sign that the immune system is responding as it should and do not mean that the vaccine is unsafe.

[VIEW THE GRAPHIC IN ENGLISH](#)

[VIEW THE GRAPHIC IN SPANISH](#)

[VIEW THE GRAPHIC IN MANDARIN](#)

[VIEW THE GRAPHIC IN VIETNAMESE](#)

Public Health Outcomes of Healthcare Access

Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration

Katelyn Jetelina, PhD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Dallas

Access to and affordability of healthcare are significantly worse for low-income adults in Texas than in other southern states (including Arkansas, Kentucky, and Louisiana). This brief highlights the problem with healthcare access, as well as health and economic outcomes associated with healthcare access.

Key Takeaways:

- 54% of low-income adults in Texas do not have a primary care physician
- Medicaid expansion serves as a lesson for the effectiveness and impact of increasing healthcare access on health and quality of life outcomes.
- Similarly, policy solutions such as increased workforce participation, telehealth, rural health care center care, and enabling services, can increase access and utilization of healthcare services.

[DOWNLOAD THE REPORT](#)

Impact of COVID-19 on Food Insecurity

Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration

Kathryn Janda, PhD, MPH – UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin

Alexandra van den Berg, PhD, MPH – UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin

Lesli Biediger-Friedman, PhD – Texas State University

Sarah Crulcich, MPH, RD, LD – Houston Food Bank

Deanna Hoelscher, PhD, RDN, LD, CNS, FISBNPA – UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin

Food insecurity among adults and children has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic due to rising levels of unemployment, poverty, and limited access to school nutrition programs because of school closures. Current models estimate that 54 million Americans (16%) experienced food insecurity in 2020 compared to 37 million Americans (11.5%) in 2018, an increase of 17 million food insecure Americans due to COVID-19.

Key Takeaways:

- Food insecurity among Texans has doubled from December 2018 (about 13%) to April-June 2020 (about 28%).
- At the current projected levels of 28% food insecurity in Texas, the annual estimated healthcare costs associated with lack of access to food in Texas will be over \$11.1 billion.
- Approximately 30.9% of Texas children were projected to be food insecure in 2020, compared to 21.6% of children in 2018.

[DOWNLOAD THE REPORT](#)

Teen Vaping in Texas

Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living

Melissa Harrell, PhD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin

Teens who vape are more likely to start and continue cigarette smoking. It is estimated that 498,000 Texas teens under the age of 18 will die prematurely from smoking if it is not curbed. Cigarette smoking costs the state of Texas more than \$10 billion each year in health care and Medicaid dollars. Texas Child Health Status Report, *Healthy Children, Healthy State: Teen Vaping in Texas* highlights trends in teen vaping.

Key Takeaways:

- E-cigarettes are now the most commonly used tobacco product among teens according to data from the Texas Adolescent Tobacco and Marketing Surveillance Study (TATAMS).
- Vaping increases teens' risk for nicotine dependence.
- Texas can prevent teen vaping by prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products and taxing e-cigarette products (e.g., devices, e-juice/liquids, accessories).

[DOWNLOAD THE REPORT](#)

Vaping Advertisements & Teens

Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living

Melissa Harrell, PhD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin

Vaping, or e-cigarette use, has become an epidemic among teens. Unlike cigarette advertising, e-cigarette advertising is not restricted by the federal government. Texas Child Health Status Report, *Healthy Children, Healthy State: Vaping Advertisements & Teens* highlights trends in teen exposure to vaping advertisements using data from the Texas Adolescent Tobacco Marketing Surveillance System (TATAMS).

Key Takeaways:

- Vaping ads are misleading and target teens with bright colors, sleek and fashionable images, and themes of health and wellness, fun and adventurous lifestyles, sex appeal, and rebelliousness. They promote teen-friendly flavors like cotton candy and gummi bear.

- 75.6% of teens reported vaping ad exposure through watching TV.

[DOWNLOAD THE REPORT](#)

Vaping with Flavors

Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living

Melissa Harrell, PhD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin

In the US, 6.2 million teens use tobacco products. Most of them (70%) use flavored tobacco products. These numbers are worse in Texas, where 80% of teens who use tobacco use a flavored product like strawberry e-cigarettes, menthol cigarettes, or grape cigars. Texas Child Health Status Report, *Healthy Children, Healthy State: Vaping With Flavors* highlights the flavored tobacco crisis, discusses the causes of the vaping crisis, and provides recommendations on how we can prevent teen tobacco addiction fueled by flavored tobacco.

Key Takeaways:

- Nearly 16,000 different flavors of e-cigarettes are currently on the market.
- Nearly 80% of teen e-cigarette users say they would stop using the products altogether if sales of flavored e-cigarettes were restricted.
- Preventing teen tobacco addiction fueled by flavors can be done by strengthening the enforcement of current Texas age verifications laws for both online and in-person sales of e-cigarettes and other tobacco products to ensure retailers are not selling to kids.

[DOWNLOAD THE REPORT](#)

Child Obesity Toolkit

Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living

Texas Child Health Toolkits accompany *Healthy Children, Healthy State* reports to raise awareness of child health risk factors in order to develop new programs and actions, and to build on current initiatives in Texas. Use this toolkit to learn about the current obesity crisis in Texas and how you can impact our state's health as a **parent, school, or community**. Resources relating to the impact of COVID-19 on child obesity are included in all categories.

[SEE THE TOOLKIT](#)

COVID-19 Food Needs in Travis County 2-1-1 Call Analysis Report - November 2020

Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living

Kathryn Janda, PhD, MPH - UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin

Alexandra van den Berg, PhD, MPH - UTHealth School of Public Health in

Austin

In April 2020, the City of Austin Office of Sustainability reached out to the UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin and Dell Medical School for assistance in identifying communities where there are unmet food needs in Austin due to COVID-19. In response, TX RPC Network Members Drs. Janda and van den Berg have been developing reports on food insecurity from March - November.

Key Takeaways:

- Increased overall call volume in November 2020 compared to 2019 (6307 vs. 5553 calls).
- Decreased overall call volume from October 2020 (6588 calls) to November 2020 (6307).

[READ THE NOVEMBER REPORT](#)

Highlights from TX RPC Members Conducting COVID-19 Research

Study shows more Latinos are hesitant about getting vaccinated for COVID-19

Joseph McCormick, MD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Brownsville

TX RPC Network Member Dr. Joseph McCormick spoke to KRGV-TV in Brownsville about the importance of ensuring the Latino community in the region is vaccinated against COVID-19 once a vaccine is available. Dr. McCormick is also the director of UTHealth Clinical Research Unit (CRU) at UT Brownsville. The CRU is affiliated with UTHealth School of Public Health in Brownsville and its Hispanic Health Research Center (HHRC) which focuses on diseases that are common in Hispanic populations.

Key Takeaways:

- According to the COVID Collaborative, more than 50% of Latinos know someone who's been hospitalized or died from COVID-19.
- Only 34% of Latinos said they trust the new vaccine.

[WATCH THE INTERVIEW](#)

The Best Shot: Answering Your Questions About the Vaccine

Catherine Troisi, PhD, MS - UTHealth School of Public Health in Houston

TX RPC Network Member Dr. Catherine Troisi answered KHOU-TV Channel 11 viewer questions about the COVID-19 vaccine during their new series called The Best Shot.

Q&A Highlights:

- **Q:** How long will the vaccine protect you?
- **A:** We are not sure because the vaccine has not been around long enough to

indicate. Based on evidence, protection will last at least 6 months, it might be longer. With other coronaviruses, the ones that cause colds, protection seems to last for a year.

- **Q:** Can you take the flu shot and COVID-19 vaccine in the same month?
- **A:** We do not know the answer to this question yet because we have not looked at that yet. However, if you have not had your flu vaccine for this year, please go ahead and get it!

[WATCH THE NEWS REPORT](#)

Resources from TX RPC Members Conducting COVID-19 Research

[Webinar: Advocating for School Health - Campus-Parents, District-SHACS, State-Legislature!](#)

Texas Action for Healthy Kids

Do you care about recess and school meals? Are you are concerned about vaping and cyberbullying? We need policies that support good nutrition, physical education/activity, and healthy choices. How do you make that happen?

[WATCH THE RECORDING](#)

[What is the State of Primary Care in your County?](#)

Texas Primary Care Consortium

The **Texas Primary Care Consortium**, jointly led by Texas Health Institute and Texas Medical Home Initiative, recently released a new report, ***Making Primary Care Primary: A Prescription for the Health of all Texans***, and live **interactive dashboard** including primary care profiles for each of Texas' 254 counties with more than 50 data indicators across six domains: demographics, health needs, facilities, workforce, health behaviors, and social determinants of health. The interactive dashboard makes Texas one of the first states to have a comprehensive primary care data resource platform with state and county level data. The detailed report provides a comprehensive understanding of key issues essential to advancing primary care and health system transformation in Texas. Funding for the report and interactive dashboard has been provided by the **Episcopal Health Foundation** and **St. David's Foundation**.

[VIEW THE REPORT AND DASHBOARD](#)

Recent Publications by TX RPC Researchers

Texas Population Publications

General:

Mantey, D. S., Omega-Njemnobi, O., Ruiz, F. A., Vaughn, T. L., Kelder, S. H., & Springer, A. E.

(2020). Association between observing peers vaping on campus and E-cigarette use and susceptibility in middle and high school students. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 219. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33360854/>

Rogers, S. M., **Harrell, M. B.**, Chen, B., **Springer, A.**, Loukas, A., & Perry, C. L. (2020). Multi-directional Pathways of Tobacco and Marijuana Use, including Comorbid Use, among a Population-Based Cohort of Adolescents in Texas: A Six-Wave Cross-lagged Model. *Addictive Behaviors*. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32631731/>

Mantey, D. S., **Harrell, M. B.**, Chen, B., **Kelder, S. H.**, Perry, C. L., & Loukas, A. (2020). A Longitudinal Examination of Behavioral Transitions among Young Adult Menthol and Non-Menthol Cigarette Smokers Using a Three-State Markov Model. *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*.

Haidar, A., **Sharma, S. V.**, **Durand, C. P.**, Barlow, S. E., Salahuddin, M., Butte, N. F., & **Hoelscher, D. M.** (2020). Cross-Sectional Relationship between Regular Bedtime and Weight Status and Obesity-Related Behaviors among Preschool and Elementary School Children: TX CORD Study. *Childhood Obesity*.

East and South TX

Patel, D. A., Salahuddin, M., **Valerio, M.**, Elerian, N., Matthews, K. J., McGaha, P., Nelson, R., & Lakey, D. L. (2020). A Participatory, State–Community–Academic Model to Improve Pregnancy Outcomes in Texas: The Healthy Families Initiative. *Health Education & Behavior*. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33307831/>

Panhandle:

Rodriguez, A., **Douphrate, D. I.**, Hagevoort, R., Cienega, L., Ruiz de Porras, D.G., **Perez, A.**, & Nonnenmann, M. (2020). Association of Exposure to Cattle with Self-Reported History of TB Among Dairy Workers. *Workplace Health & Safety*. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2165079920976521>

Non-Texas Population Publications

Spengler, J., & Stasi, S. (2020). Accessing Minnesota School Administrators' Knowledge and Perceptions Related to Sharing School Play Spaces after the Passage of Minnesota Shared Use Legislation. *Journal of Healthy Eating and Active Living*, 1(1), 31-38.

About the TX RPC Project

The Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration (Texas RPC) Project is a non-partisan network that aims to bridge research and policy by supporting partnerships between child health researchers and policymakers.

[Learn more online.](#)

The Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration Project team and overall network are available to support Texas policymakers with informational requests or resources related to health topics, during the interim and throughout the 2021 Legislative Session.

Contact Us

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

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