

News & Updates

from the Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration Project



December 2021

Happy Holidays!

From the Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration Project

Resource Reminders

COVID-19 Rapid Response Requests

Two years into the worldwide pandemic, the Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration (TX RPC) Project continues to develop accessible and accurate resources from health experts in the field. If you would like to request information on a public health topic, please complete the following form.

[ACCESS FORM
HERE](#)

[VIEW AVAILABLE HEALTH POLICY
REPORTS](#)

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

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

General COVID-19 Resources

The TX RPC Project is committed to promoting optimal health for all Texans. For further information and updates on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic,

the [Texas Department of State Health Services](#), [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), and [World Health Organization](#) provide masking and social distancing guidelines, as well as recommended best practices to limit transmission of the coronavirus.

Texas Research-to-Policy Updated Reports

UPDATED REPORT: Impact of COVID-19 on Food Insecurity Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration Project

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. Models predicted 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. Approximately 30.9% of Texas children were projected to be food insecure in 2020, compared to 21.6% of children in 2018. This report was updated on November 22, 2021.

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 is over \$11.1 billion.

[VIEW THE UPDATED REPORT](#)

UPDATED REPORT: Texas Child Health Status Report: Child Physical Activity

Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living

The Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living is developing a series of reports, *Healthy Children*, *Healthy State*, to raise awareness of child health risk factors to develop to develop new programs and actions, and to build on current initiatives in Texas. The Child Physical Activity in Texas one-pager showcases the current state of physical activity for children in Texas. This report was updated on December 2, 2021 using 2019-2020 Texas SPAN data.

Key Takeaways:

- 80.4% of Texas youth do not meet guidelines of 60+ minutes of physical activity daily.
- Only 45% of middle schools allow students to use gym facilities and equipment outside of school hours.

[VIEW THE UPDATED REPORT](#)

Resources from TX RPC Members and Organizations

Pediatric Vaccines: Top 8 Parental Concerns Answered

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

"Your Local Epidemiologist", a blog by TX RPC Project member Katelyn Jetelina, released a report to answer parents' questions related to the pediatric COVID-19 vaccines. The COVID-19 vaccines recently became available for children 5-11 years old. Click the link to view and print the report.

COVID-19 PEDIATRIC VACCINE
Top 8 parental concerns answered
October 2021

- For **5-11 year olds**, starting November 2021, a COVID19 vaccine will be authorized for emergency use. The vaccine is a 2-dose series taken 3 weeks apart. Each dose is 10 µg, which is 1/3 the dosage of the adolescent/adult vaccine
- For **12-17 year olds**, a vaccine is already authorized and more than 11.1 million adolescents have been vaccinated. This vaccine is a 2-dose series taken 3 weeks apart. Each dose is 30 µg.

The vaccine is effective

- 90-100% efficacy in clinical trials
- There were no severe cases of COVID19 during clinical trials
- Vaccines work against Delta and other known variants of concern

Your child may experience side effects

- Mostly mild-to-moderate side effects are reported: fever, fatigue, headaches, chills, diarrhea, muscle and joint pain
- More kids report side effects with the 2nd dose compared to the 1st dose
- Rare side effects include swollen lymph nodes and skin sensitivity

Myocarditis is rare

Myocarditis (heart inflammation) has been linked to mRNA vaccines

- It is very rare. We expect 26 cases of myocarditis per 1 million doses administered
 - It's more common for young males and more common for the 2nd dose
- Symptoms typically arise within 7 days of vaccination
- Majority of cases have been hospitalized. No kids have died. Cases fully recover within ~34 days.
- Vaccine-induced myocarditis is much milder compared to COVID19-induced myocarditis

There is a need

COVID-19 disease in kids can range from asymptomatic to severe illness

- As of October 21, over 6.3 million COVID-19 pediatric cases have been reported
 - Only 43% of kids under 12 years old have natural immunity
- In 23 states, 24,073 pediatric hospitalizations have been reported
 - 30% of hospitalized had **no** underlying medical condition
 - Hospitalization rates for COVID-19 are higher than for the flu
 - As of October 2021, 5,217 MIS-C cases have been linked to COVID-19
- Over 600 pediatric deaths have been reported. Although this seems low compared to adults, **COVID-19 is a top 10 cause of death** for kids in the United States.
- Long COVID-19 is reported among 7-8% of kids

The vaccine got to us fast

Speed does not mean rushed. It meant leveraging a whole lot of people, money, and decades of previous work to get us a vaccine in 9 months. This included:

- Previous research (mRNA research started in 1961; first clinical trial was in 2001);
- Lots of money and resources for scientists around the world;
- Production started before clinical trials were complete because the government financially supported the effort;
- Although vaccines went through Phase I, II, and III, phases were overlapped to remove white space. This is standard practice;
- High rates of disease in the community (unfortunately) meant we didn't have to wait for a minimum number of COVID19 cases during clinical trials;
- Over 150,000 people flooded to participate in the U.S. trials. This couldn't have been done without each and every one of them

Key Takeaways:

- Clinical trials have shown the COVID-19 pediatric vaccine is 90-100% effective among 5 to 11 year olds.
- Messenger RNA (mRNA) cannot be used to alter DNA.
- Long term side effects from the vaccine, such as infertility, are not expected and are highly unlikely.

[VIEW THE REPORT](#)

Highlights from TX RPC Network Members Conducting COVID-19 Research

Even As Texas COVID-19 Cases Decline, Public Health Leaders Say

The Omicron variant has created concern around the world, with many countries closing their borders again as scientists continue to examine the severity of the new variant. When asked about health experts' concern about the Omicron variant, TX RPC Project member Dr. Catherine Troisi said “the concern is that we are seeing with this variant 30 mutations in the spike protein and that’s the important part of the virus that attaches to cells and also that our bodies make immunity to”. Dr. Troisi spoke about the importance of masks, which are not perfect, but do help to prevent infection because they “are an easy prevention to take”. Health experts also recommend getting children ages 5-11 years old vaccinated because COVID has become one of the major vaccine-preventable causes of death in the U.S.

Key Takeaways:

- If everyone who can be vaccinated gets vaccinated, including children, the odds of transmission are lower
- Health experts worry about the potential for increases in infections due to the Omicron virus variant, and warn that therapeutics may not be as effective as for previous variants.

[READ THE ARTICLE](#)

More Than 75% of Texans Have COVID-19 Antibodies, Survey Say

Eric Boerwinkle, PhD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Dallas

It is estimated that 75% of Texans have COVID-19 antibodies through vaccination or previous infection. However, experts state that people who are not vaccinated but have previously been infected with COVID-19 have fewer antibodies to fight COVID-19 compared to vaccinated individuals. Dr. Boerwinkle says that the Texas Coronavirus Antibody REsponse Survey (Texas CARES) data show that “vaccination may provide the highest level of protection, even for those who have had a prior COVID-19 infection and developed antibodies.” The Texas CARES study had participants complete a short survey about their health, then participants had their blood drawn at three different time points for antibody testing. The study provides further insight into how long immunity from natural infection and vaccinations lasts.

Key Takeaways:

- Approximately 4,000 children between the ages of 5 and 19 participated in the Texas CARES study and 33% of those children had antibodies to the COVID-19 virus. Of those 33%, around 50% of children were asymptomatic.
- Almost half of parents (44.9%) reported that the pandemic negatively impacted their child’s mental health.

[READ THE ARTICLE](#)

WEBINAR: The 87th Legislative Session, Interim Opportunities, and Updates on the Fight Against Obesity

Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living and Partnership for a Healthy Texas

Participants learned about the ongoing advocacy of the Partnership for a Healthy Texas, whose mission is to combat obesity in the state via policy change. In this webinar, Dr. David Lakey and Joel Romo discussed the work of the Partnership, policy wins in the 87th legislative session, the work happening between legislative sessions, and what the landscape looks like for future efforts. Additionally, participants will hear an update on the Texas Research-to-Policy Project from Dr. Deanna Hoelscher, and the use of Texas SPAN data to provide information to decision-makers. Learn more about the Partnership for a Healthy Texas and get involved at <https://partnershipforahealthytexas.org>.

[VIEW THE RECORDING](#)

REPORT: Health Fits Into Every Day

Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living & CATCH Global Foundation

The Coordinated Approach To Child Health (CATCH) is a school-based health program that works to promote healthy food choices and physical activity in order to prevent tobacco use. CATCH transforms a child's environment, culture, and society through child health efforts across the educational experience: classroom, family, physical education, and food service. CATCH has proven to reverse childhood obesity in El Paso and Austin-based schools, and has been adopted by more than 8,500 schools in the United States and across the world. It is the most widespread and researched coordinated school health program in the world. Check out their infographic about healthy eating!

It's important for your kids to eat a **healthy breakfast** every day

Kids who eat a healthy breakfast **every day** are more attentive and less disruptive in the morning, as well as have more energy to **play and learn**.



Eat more **GO** foods than **SLOW** foods every day and **WHOA** foods only every once in awhile! The most healthful breakfasts, GO breakfasts, are made up of mostly GO foods.



GO foods are "whole foods" or those that are the least processed, lowest in salt and/or added sugars.



SLOW foods are between GO and WHOA foods.



WHOA foods are the most processed and are highest in unhealthy fats, added sugars, and/or salt.

Breakfast shouldn't have a lot of sugar, but many packaged breakfast foods—sugary cereal, some yogurts, toaster pastries—can be loaded with it.

Avoid foods with added sugar or adding sugar to foods like cereal and oatmeal. Sugary or caffeinated drinks are not part of a healthy breakfast for kids.



[VIEW THE INFOGRAPHIC](#)

INFOGRAPHIC: Creating a Culture of Bicycling & Walking Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living

Creating a culture that is safe for walking and bicycling includes all aspects of the community: schools, businesses & worksites, media awareness, safety patrol, leadership, open streets & cyclovias, and infrastructure. Local leaders can promote walking and biking in ways that align with their existing policies, while media can promote "Open Street" events and provide bike safety education. Additionally, schools along "Open Street" routes can encourage communities members to learn how to ride their bikes safely. Check out the infographic on how you can help create a safer bicycling and walking culture!



VIEW THE INFOGRAPHIC

Recent Publications by TX RPC Researchers

COVID-19 Publications

Omer, S. B., Benjamin, R. M., Brewer, N. T., Bутtenheim, A. M., Callaghan, T., Caplan, A., Carpiano, R. M., Clinton, C., DiResta, R., Elharake, J. A., Flowers, L. C., Galvani, A. P., **Lakshmanan, R.**, Maldonado, Y. A., McFadden, S. M., Mello, M. M., Opel, D. J., Reiss, D. R., Salmon, D. A., Schwartz, J. L., Sharfstein, J. M., & Hotez, P. J. (2021). Promoting COVID-19 vaccine acceptance: recommendations from the Lancet Commission on Vaccine Refusal, Acceptance, and Demand in the USA. *Lancet (London, England)*, S0140-6736(21)02507-1. Advance online publication. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(21\)02507-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(21)02507-1)

Suchting, R., Green, C. E., de Dios, C., Vincent, J., Moeller, F. G., **Lane, S. D.**, & **Schmitz, J. M.** (2021). Citalopram for treatment of cocaine use disorder: A Bayesian drop-the-loser randomized clinical trial. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 228, 109054. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2021.109054>

Teixeira, A. L., **Krause, T. M.**, Ghosh, L., Shahani, L., Machado-Vieira, R., **Lane, S. D.**, Boerwinkle, E., & Soares, J. C. (2021). Analysis of COVID-19 Infection and Mortality Among Patients With Psychiatric Disorders, 2020. *JAMA Network Open*, 4(11), e2134969. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.34969>

Non-COVID-19

Beauchamp, A. M., & **Jetelina, K. K.** (2021). Effects of Social and Occupational Stress, and Physical Strain on Suicidal Ideation Among Law Enforcement Officers. *Occupational Health Science*, 1-17. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s41542-021-00103-7>

Camacho, L., Jr, Burmicky, J., **Cervantes, D.**, & Salinas, C., Jr (2021). Community college competencies for student educational leadership development and degree pathways. *New Directions for Student Leadership*, 2021(171), 45–55. <https://doi.org/10.1002/lyd.20455>

Francis, J. K., Rodriguez, S. A., Dorsey, O., Blackwell, J. M., **Balasubramanian, B. A.**, Kale, N., Day, P., Preston, S. M., Thompson, E. R., Pruitt, S. L., & Tiro, J. A. (2021). Provider perspectives on communication and dismissal policies with HPV vaccine hesitant parents. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, 24, 101562. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2211335521002527>

Holcomb, J., Ferguson, G., Roth, I., **Walton, G.**, & Highfield, L. (2021). Adoption of an Evidence-Based Intervention for Mammography Screening Adherence in Safety Net Clinics. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 9, 748361. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.748361>

Holcomb, J., Rajan, S. S., Ferguson, G. M., Sun, J., **Walton, G. H.**, & Highfield, L. (2021). Implementation of an Evidence-Based Intervention with Safety Net Clinics to Improve Mammography Appointment Adherence Among Underserved Women. *Journal of Cancer Education: The Official Journal of the American Association for Cancer Education*, 10.1007/s13187-021-02116-w. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13187-021-02116-w>

Kobayashi, M. A., Lee, T. K., St George, S. M., Lebron, C., Dorcius, D., Prado, G., & **Messiah, S. E.** (2021). Intergenerational cardiovascular disease risks among Hispanics living in the United States. *Pediatric Obesity*, e12870. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijpo.12870>

O'Callaghan, K. M., Shanta, S. S., Fariha, F., Harrington, J., Mahmud, A. A., Emdin, A. L., Gernand, A. D., Ahmed, T., **Abrams, S. A.**, Moore, D. R., & Roth, D. E. (2021). Effect of maternal prenatal and postpartum vitamin D supplementation on offspring bone mass and muscle strength in early childhood: follow-up of a randomized controlled trial. *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, nqab396. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ajcn/nqab396>

Oyer-Peterson, K., Gimeno Ruiz de Porras, D., Han, I., **Delclos, G. L.**, Brooks, E. G., Afshar, M., & Whitworth, K. W. (2021). A pilot study of total personal exposure to volatile organic compounds among Hispanic female domestic cleaners. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene*, 1–14. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15459624.2021.2000615>

Page, R. L., Han, G., Akinlotan, M., **Patron, M. P.**, Gandhi, H., & Kochan, K. J. (2021). Telomere Length and Preterm Birth in Pregnant Mexican-Origin Women. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 25(11), 1798–1805. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-021-03209-0>

Perez, R. A., **Jetelina, K. K.**, & Reingle Gonzalez, J. M. (2021). The Chronic Health Effects of Work-Related Stressors Experienced by Police Communications Workers. *Safety and Health at Work*, 12(3), 365–369. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.shaw.2021.05.005>

Qureshi, F. G., Wiegand, J. G., O'Neill, G., Allen, B., Wools, G., Klement, J., Franklin, E. V., **Messiah, S. E.**, & Gupta, O. T. (2021). Longitudinal Outcomes in Adolescents After Referral for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery. *Journal of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition*, 73(6), 677–683. <https://doi.org/10.1097/MPG.0000000000003290>

Schmitz, J. M., Lane, S. D., **Weaver, M. F.**, Narayana, P. A., Hasan, K. M., Russell, D. D., Suchting, R., & Green, C. E. (2021). Targeting white matter neuroprotection as a relapse prevention strategy for treatment of cocaine use disorder: Design of a mechanism-focused randomized clinical trial. *Contemporary Clinical Trials*, 111, 106603. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cct.2021.106603>

Szeszulski, J., Craig, D. W., Walker, T. J., Foster, M., Mullen, P. D., & Fernandez, M. E. (2021). Applying evidence-based intervention (EBI) mapping to identify the components and logic of colorectal cancer screening interventions. *Translational behavioral medicine*, ibab140. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1093/tbm/ibab140>

Zhao, X., Lee, R. E., Ledoux, T. A., **Hoelscher, D. M.**, McKenzie, T. L., & O'Connor, D. P. (2021). Harmonizing Ratings from Different School Environment Assessment Methods: A Simplified Approach. *The Journal of School Health*, 10.1111/josh/13108. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.13108>

Texas Population Publications

General:

Adzrago, D., Tami-Maury, I., Schick, V., & Wilkerson, J. M. (2021). Co-occurring substance use and psychological distress among exclusive e-cigarette use and other tobacco use among sexual and gender minorities in Texas. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 229(Pt A), 109135. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2021.109135>

Walker, T. J., Craig, D. W., Pavlovic, A., Thiele, S., Natale, B., Szeszulski, J., DeFina, L. F., & Kohl, H. W., 3rd (2021). Physical Activity and Healthy Eating Programming in Schools to Support Student's Health-Related Fitness: An Observational Study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(21), 11069. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph182111069>

Central Texas:

Janda, K. M., Ranjit, N., Salvo, D., Nielsen, A., Akhavan, N., Diaz, M., Lemoine, P., Casnovsky, J., & van den Berg, A. (2021). A Multi-Pronged Evaluation of a Healthy Food Access Initiative in Central Texas: Study Design, Methods, and Baseline Findings of the FRESH-Austin Evaluation Study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(20), 10834. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph182010834>

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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