

News & Updates

from the Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration Project



August 2020

Resource Reminders

The TX RPC Project Team wants to remind you that all of our resources are available on our website. We hope these resources are valuable to your respective office.

- [Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living Webinars \(includes COVID-19 specific webinars\)](#)
- [Resources for Improving Measurable Impact](#)
- [TX RPC Newsletters Archive](#)
- [Texas Legislative Bill Tracker](#)
- [Texas Child Health Status Report and Toolkit](#)

Webinars from TX RPC Members and Organizations

Summer of Our Discontent: COVID-19 Still Rages

Joseph B. McCormick, MD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Brownsville
Susan P. Fisher-Hoch, MD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Brownsville

This webinar will discuss the current state of the Pandemic, and the key factors associated with the surge in cases across the country. Topics covered will include the transmission of the virus, the role of masks, and types of masks and their effectiveness. This webinar will also cover the newly developed issue of airborne transmission, key to transmission inside of closed spaces. The webinar speakers will discuss the current understanding of the clinical picture of COVID-19, the risk factors for severe disease and death, and current treatment including medications and plasma. Other discussion topics will include the array of tests currently available and their differing uses and interpretations, and the types of vaccines under investigation and the status of those studies.

[**REGISTER FOR THE AUG. 20 WEBINAR**](#)

Reopening: What's the Plan to Keep Kids Healthy?

Michelle Smith - Action for Healthy Kids

TX RPC Network Member, Michelle Smith from Action For Healthy Kids, will be hosting a webinar on Thursday, August 27th at 11:30AM CT. Speakers of the webinar include Superintendent Dr. Charles Dupre and Fort Bend board members - Grayle James and Jason Burdine.

There is so much information out there. What are schools doing to protect children? When will they be going back to campuses? How are parents being engaged? It is imperative that school districts address the whole child, not just academics as plans are put in place for the fall. Join us as we ask school district administrators to share how they have developed plans and what they feel works best.

Meals to You: Addressing Child Hunger in the Age of COVID-19

Jeremy K. Everett, M.Div. - Baylor University

Elaine Waxman, PhD - Urban Institute

Jeremy Everett, Executive Director at the Baylor University Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty, and Dr. Elaine Waxman, Senior Fellow at the Urban Institute, discussed the trends of child food insecurity prior to and during the pandemic within the larger context of American poverty. The speakers discussed creative ways organizations are developing scalable, multi-sectoral responses to addressing the issue and how we might improve conditions for families this fall.

Key Takeaways:

- The pandemic has revealed marked racial and ethnic disparities in food insecurity and resource allotment, requiring proactive attention moving forward.
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): Families First Act increased maximum SNAP allocations during the pandemic.
- Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer(P-EBT): Enabled states to enact emergency electronic benefits for children who lost access to free- or reduced-price meals due to school closures. 49 states have approved P-EBT.

WATCH THE RECORDING

Highlights from TX RPC Members Conducting COVID-19 Research

Youth-Led Creative Expression Content to Prevent COVID-19 Across Texas

Andrew Springer, DrPH - UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin

Texas RPC Network Member, Dr. Springer, recently launched a Youth-Led Creative Expression Contest that encourages young Texans to artistically interpret and promote key practices for preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Campaign Highlights:

- This campaign is hosted by the UTHealth School of Public Health COVID-19 Communication Group which represents all six of the school's campuses and multiple community partners.
- The goal of this project is to engage young people in grades K-12 to develop creative communication materials that communities from across Texas can use free of charge to promote COVID-19 protective behaviors.
- The deadline to submit is Sunday, August 30th.
- Submission in all languages are welcome!

CLICK HERE FOR CONTEST INFORMATION

Epidemiologist Answers COVID-19 Questions

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

Dr. Troisi regularly appears on the Q&A portion of the Thursday Houston Matters show. On the July 30 show, Dr. Troisi fielded listeners' questions about COVID-19.

Q&A Highlights:

Q: What is the amount of time of the incubation between people being exposed and getting sick?

A: The incubation period for most people, and there are always outliers, is between 2 and 14 days, the average is 5 days.

Q: Is there any legitimate way for a large high school to open safely for both students and teachers?

A: We don't have all the information that we really need to say whether we can open schools safely. We know that children are less likely to have symptoms, and are much less likely to die. But there is a downside to that, if they are getting infected and don't have symptoms they are probably spreading it more, although we aren't sure.

[LISTEN TO THE 55-MINUTE Q&A](#)

FDA OKs Two Blood Tests to Estimate SARS-CoV-2 Antibodies

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

Texas RPC Network Member, Dr. Troisi, spoke to Medscape about the two COVID-19 blood tests that the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has recently authorized. The two tests will generate an estimate of the number of antibodies present in a person's blood.

Key Takeaways:

- The two US FDA authorized COVID-19 blood tests will add information because the previous antibody tests that were licensed under emergency use authorization indicated whether a person has the antibodies or not, not *the magnitude of the antibody response*.
- Much more research needs to be done on the role of the SARS-CoV-2 antibodies and how long immune response lasts.
- Patients should not interpret results as telling them they are immune or have any level of immunity from the virus.
- The FDA cautions against patients using results from these tests or any blood tests as a reason to relax preventive efforts against COVID-19.
- These two COVID-19 blood tests should not be used to diagnose active infections as they do not detect the virus itself, just the antibodies the immune system has developed in response to the virus.

[READ THE ARTICLE](#)

Own Every Piece: Online Reproductive Health Services

Christine Markham, PhD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Houston

Texas RPC Network Member, Dr. Markham, is working with Drs. Kim Baker and Susan Tortolero-Emery and the Own Every Piece project to ensure that women receive free telemedicine appointments for contraceptive counseling and referrals to in-network partners who are able to provide the birth control method of their choice, regardless of their financial situation. Particularly during COVID-19, investigators are using this opportunity to ensure that all understand reproductive health services remain essential during this time.

[LEARN ABOUT THE PROJECT](#)

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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