

June 2020

Resources from TX RPC Members and Organizations

Comparison of COVID-19 cases and deaths in nursing homes and long term care facilities

J.T. Menchaca - MD Candidate at the UT Southwestern Medical Center

TX RPC Network Member, J.T. Menchaca, developed data briefs that describe and compare general population COVID-19 cases and related deaths in nursing homes and long term care facilities within specific legislative districts and in Texas overall. Estimates were generated using COVID-19 case and death data from the New York Times database, population statistics from the American Community Survey, and nursing home and assisted living facility COVID-19 data from the Texas Department of State Health Services. A geospatial analysis was used to extrapolate data available by county and public health region to legislative districts. The reports and analytical code are available upon request.

Key Takeaways:

- As of June 25, 2020, approximately 39% of statewide COVID-19 related deaths (2,292) occurred in nursing home residents (883).
- The statewide COVID-19 related death rate in nursing facility residents is ~120 times greater than the COVID-19 related death rate in the total population of Texas.

[REQUEST THE REPORTS](#)

Highlights from TX RPC Members Conducting COVID-19 Research

Family violence rose 12.5% during shelter-at-home orders

Alex Piquero, PhD, MA - UTHealth School of Public Health in Dallas

Dr. Piquero's new study looking at domestic violence after Dallas issued stay-at-home orders was featured in a Dallas Morning News article.

Key Takeaways:

- Increase in domestic violence incidents in the city of Dallas in the immediate 2-week period following stay-at-home orders.
- Decline in domestic violence incidents after the initial 2-week period.
- 12.5% increase in domestic violence incidents in the 3 weeks after the stay-at-home orders in Dallas compared to the 3 weeks before the stay-at-home orders.

[READ THE ARTICLE](#)

Impact of COVID-19 on medical and recreational cannabis use

Sarah Messiah, PhD, MPH - UTHealth School of Public Health in Dallas

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

Drs. Melissa Harrell and Sarah Messiah are studying, collecting, and analyzing data from adults nationwide on the impact of COVID-19 on medical and recreational cannabis use. The manuscript is currently under review. An op-ed with preliminary findings was [published in The Hill](#).

Key takeaways:

- A portion of self-identified cannabis consumers report changing their route of use since the pandemic was declared.
- About 38 percent of respondents who reported using cannabis-inhaled products indicated they have now stopped sharing them with others.
- About one-half of respondents have one month or more supply of medical cannabis on hand; however, over one-third of respondents have no more than a two-week supply.

[READ THE OP-ED](#)

Impact of COVID-19 Stay-at-Home Orders on Weight-Related Behaviors Among Patients with Obesity

Sarah Messiah, PhD, MPH - UTHealth School of Public Health in Dallas

How the impact of the COVID-19 stay-at-home orders are influencing physical, mental, and financial health among vulnerable populations, including those with obesity is unknown. The aim of the current study was to explore the health implications of COVID-19 among a sample of adults with obesity.

Key Takeaways:

- 72.8% reported increased anxiety and 83.6% increased depression since stay-at-home orders were initiated.
- 69.6% reported more difficulty in achieving weight loss goals, less exercise time (47.9%) and intensity (55.8%).
- 49.6% reported increased stockpiling of food and stress eating (61.2%).

[READ THE ARTICLE](#)

COVID-19 Outbreak Among College Students After a Spring Break Trip to Mexico

Co-authors or acknowledgments include UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin Students and Alumni

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report – Vol. 69 on June 24, 2020, about the [COVID-19 outbreak among the University of Texas at Austin students who attended spring break in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico](#). This COVID-19 outbreak among a young, healthy population with no or mild symptoms was controlled with a coordinated public health response that included rapid contact tracing and testing of all exposed persons. A coordinated response with contact tracing and testing of all contacts, including those who are asymptomatic, is important in controlling future COVID-19 outbreaks that might occur as schools and universities consider reopening.

Key Takeaways:

- Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 during and after a college spring break trip led to 64

cases.

- The outbreak was controlled through effective contact tracing, testing, and cooperation between a university and a public health department.

[READ THE ARTICLE](#)

Webinars from TX RPC Members and Organizations

Webinar Series: Our Food System and Food Insecurity During COVID-19: Stories from Across the State

UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin

Food System Resiliency?

- A brief look at a definition of a "food system", a discussion of how the CV-19 situation has affected it and some ideas as to what webinar attendees can do to improve the inequities and insecurities embedded in the current system.
 - *Robert Maggiani, MS*, Sustainable Ag Specialist, National Center for Appropriate Technology-Southwest Regional Office

Changes to Food Insecurity and Food Access in Austin During COVID-19

- In Austin, access to affordable food has become more limited and food insecurity has increased dramatically, especially among populations hardest hit by the economic consequences of COVID-19.
 - *Heather Helman*, Food Access Director, Farmshare Austin
 - *Kathryn Janda, PhD, MPH*, Postdoctoral Fellow, UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin-NCI Cancer Control Research Training Program
 - *Sam Night, MPAff*, Food Policy Planner, City of Austin Office of Sustainability

Value Chain Coordination for Improving Access to Healthy and Affordable Food in the Paso del Norte Region

- Partnering organizations in the Paso del Norte region from academic, government, non-profit, and for-profit sectors are working collectively to strengthen the food system and increase access to healthy and affordable food through economically and environmentally sustainable strategies.
 - *Leah Whigham, PhD, FTOS*, Director, Center for Community Health Impact, Associate Professor, Health Promotion & Behavioral Sciences, UTHealth School of Public Health in El Paso
 - *Gabriela Gallegos, JD, MPP*, Associate Professor, Management, Policy & Community Health, UTHealth School of Public Health in El Paso
 - *Adriana Clowe*, Director of Operations, Desert Spoon Food Hub

[VIEW THE WEBINAR RECORDINGS](#)

Increases in Food Insecurity due to COVID-19: What Can be Done?

- In this presentation Dr. Gunderson will provide an overview of the food insecurity landscape pre-COVID-19 and how this is likely to change in the near-term.
 - *Craig Gunderson, PhD*, ACES Distinguished Professor, Director of Undergrad Studies, University of Illinois
 - *Alexandra van den Berg, PhD, MPH*, Professor of Health Promotion & Behavioral Sciences, UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin

[REGISTER FOR THE JUNE 30 WEBINAR](#)

A Rapid Response to Food Insecurity and Other Social Determinants of Health During COVID-19

- This webinar will provide insight into the food insecurity and social needs, as well as health

literacy gaps among vulnerable households with children during the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- *Shreela Sharma, PhD, RDN*, Professor of Epidemiology, UTHealth School of Public Health
- *Mike Pomeroy, MPH*, Senior Program Director, Brighter Bites

REGISTER FOR THE JULY 7 WEBINAR

COVID-19 Reopen Texas: Return to Work the Right Way Webinar Series

Dave Douphrate, PhD - UTHealth School of Public Health in San Antonio

A seven-part complimentary statewide weekly industry-specific webinar series is being held to support our community in looking at what the immediate future holds for various Texas industries. Each webinar will feature a panel of specialists in occupational safety, occupational medicine, risk assessment, and guest panelists who are industry representatives experienced in return to work practices. Registration is required to join each weekly webinar.

- Retail Industry, May 20, 2020 (recording available)
- Restaurant Industry, May 27, 2020 (recording available)
- Construction & Manufacturing, June 3, 2020 (recording available)
- Places of Worship, June 10, 2020 (recording available)
- Promoting Mental Health and Employee Resilience, June 17, 2020 (recording available)
- Personal Care Establishments, June 24, 2020 (recording available)
- Other Healthcare Settings, July 1, 2020

REGISTER FOR THE WEBINAR SERIES

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 purpose of the TX RPC Newsletter is to provide relevant, data-driven health information to Texas policymakers. This newsletter will facilitate communication about the recent COVID-19 pandemic implications related to public health, as well as provide communication about other current health issues.

Contact Us

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

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