News & Updates

from the Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration Project

Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration Project

July 2020

Resources from TX RPC Members and Organizations

Frontline Workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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

TX RPC Network Member, J.T. Menchaca, developed data briefs that summarize existing data and provide new results describing key characteristics of frontline workers in specific Texas legislative districts and in Texas overall during the COVID-19 pandemic. Calculations are based on labor data from the American Community Survey. The reports and analytical code are available upon request.

Key Takeaways:
- 18.1% of the workforce in Texas (2.7 million) are in a frontline industry.
- Women represent 63% of Texas frontline workers, despite representing 46% of the general U.S. workforce.
- Among frontline workers in Texas,
  - 30% are over the age of 50
  - 9% live below the poverty line
  - 27% live below the <200% poverty line

REQUEST THE REPORTS

Texas COVID-19 Dashboard

Shreela Sharma, PhD, RD, LD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Houston
Katelyn K. Jetelina, PhD, MPH - UTHealth School of Public Health in Dallas
Bijal Balasubramanian, PhD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Dallas

TX RPC Members, Drs. Sharma, Jetelina, and Balasubramanian, created a dashboard that publishes graphs and analyses to provide Texas with a better understanding of COVID-19 trends at the state level, the county level, and within collections of counties (trauma services areas and metropolitan areas). As they continue to work on the dashboard, mobile data information, symptom tracking information, and more resources will be added. Support for the dashboard is provided by the Department of Epidemiology, Human Genetics, and Environmental Sciences; the dashboard used data obtained from the Texas Department of State Health Services.

Key Takeaways:
- The Texas COVID-19 Dashboard was not developed for scientists, rather it was designed with Texas community members in mind with the goal of having the information easily interpreted.
- The dashboard includes data for all 254 Texas counties in one place. This is important for smaller, rural counties in which access to information has been difficult to obtain.

SEE THE DASHBOARD

Health Opportunity and Equity (HOPE) Initiative
Dennis Andrulis, PhD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin

TX RPC Network Member, Dr. Andrulis, is involved in the HOPE initiative. The HOPE initiative is an interactive data tool designed to help the nation and states move beyond measuring disparities to spur action toward achieving health equity. HOPE shows where the nation and states are doing well and where they can do better on reaching health equity goals. In doing so, HOPE helps state and federal leaders, advocates, and other stakeholders know three things to inform action and policy change:

1. where the gaps in opportunity are among people of different races and ethnicities;
2. what goals for achieving equity look like; and
3. how far they need to move the dial to make these goals a reality.

Accompanying the preliminary release of HOPE, Dr. Andrulis published a blog in **Health Affairs - The COVID-19 Crisis: An Opportunity to Build a Fairer, Healthier Nation**, in which he explores the COVID-19 crisis and healthy equity.

Key Takeaways:
- HOPE is about health equity: everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible.
- HOPE tracks indicators across five topic areas or domains: 1) health outcomes, 2) social and economic factors, 3) community and safety factors, 4) the physical environment, and 5) access to health care.
- HOPE's indicators span the life course and measure the outcomes, opportunities, and resources people need to achieve optimal health and well-being.

SEE THE HOPE INTITIATIVE

COVID-19 Cases in Cameron County in South Texas
Joseph McCormick, MD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Brownsville

TX RPC Network Member, Dr. McCormick, sat down with the Brownsville Herald on June 19 [th] to discuss the rise in COVID-19 cases in Cameron County in South Texas. Younger people are contracting COVID-19 in much greater numbers in Cameron County, although it is the older residents and those with underlying conditions who are ending up in the hospital.

Key takeaways:
- The overall trend in rising new cases is among young people.
- People under 30 years of age are making up 60% of new cases.
- The increasing incidence among young people is at least partly due to them choosing not to follow recommendations to wear masks or facial coverings when in public.

READ THE ARTICLE

Webinars from TX RPC Members and Organizations

Virtual Adaptations: Three Discussions on the Current Challenges Facing

Higher Education

Harold W. (Bill) Kohl III, PhD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin

TX RPC Network Member, Dr. Kohl, will serve as a panelist on Henningson, Durham & Richardson (HDR) Foundation's three-part webinar series "Virtual Adaptations: Three Discussions on the Current Challenges Facing Higher Education." Specifically, Dr. Kohl will be involved in the webinar "Balancing Public Health and the Academic Experience on Campus." The series of panel discussions will be related to some of the challenges higher education institutions are facing, such as virtual learning, minimizing COVID-19 spread on campus, and the evolving nature of town-and-gown relations. Registration is required to join each weekly webinar.

- Balancing Public Health and the Academic Experience on Campus, July 22, 2020, 10am CST
- Considerations for Town-Gown Relationships in a COVID-19 Age, August 6, 2020, 10am CST
- The Decentralized Campus: How Online Learning is Changing the Campus Ecosystem, August 11, 2020, 10am CST

REGISTER FOR THE WEBINAR SERIES

Advancing Women's Health in Central Texas: From Data to Analysis to Action, August 5, 2020, 10am CST

Evelyn Delgado - Healthy Futures of Texas
Eileen Nehme, PhD - UT Health Tyler
Divya Patel, PhD - UT Health Tyler
Joyce James - Black Mamas ATX
Adriana D. Kohler, JD - Texans Care for Children

Advancing Women's Health in Central Texas: From Data, to Analysis – to Action webinar, explores and discusses three recent studies on maternal health disparities in Central Texas. The webinar will follow a facilitated discussion on paths to action with women's advocates from Black Mamas ATX, Health Futures of Texas, Texans Care for Children and the Texas Collaborative Healthy Mother and Babies. Reports will be sent prior to the event in order for participants to have the opportunity to review materials and formulate questions ahead of the discussion. This webinar is sponsored by the St. David's Foundation.

REGISTER FOR THE AUG 5 WEBINAR

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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