COVID-19 Rapid Response Requests

We are now over a year into the pandemic, and the Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration (TX RPC) Project continues to develop accessible and accurate resources from experts in the field. If you would like to request information on a public health topic, 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.

- **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.

Resources from TX RPC Members and Organizations

Navigating Kid-Related Activities by COVID-19 Risk Tolerance Level
Katelyn Jetelina, PhD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Dallas

Dr. Katelyn Jetelina created a resource to guide parents and family activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, this resource examines activities for unvaccinated children, such as summer camps, extracurricular activities, sports,
and travel. Unvaccinated children are at lower risk of contracting COVID-19 if traveling on flights where masks are worn, and eating at least three feet away from other occupied tables in airport terminals. However, unvaccinated children are at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 while traveling if they are waiting in highly crowded airport areas like baggage claims or are on flights longer than five hours where meals are being served and masks must be removed to eat.

**Key Takeaways:**
- Unvaccinated children can stay safe this summer by participating in low risk transmission activities.
- Low risk transmission activities include riding bikes; playing outdoor sports like baseball, golf and frisbee; and playing on the playground at summer camp.
- High risk transmission activities include eating on long flights, high contact activities (even when outdoors), and attending indoor programs where less than 60% of students are masked and/or vaccinated.

### Navigating kid-related activities by COVID-19 risk tolerance level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Airports &amp; Flying</th>
<th>Summer Camp</th>
<th>Extracurricular Activities</th>
<th>Participating in Sports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Summer Camp</td>
<td>Extracurricular Activities</td>
<td>Participating in Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bike riding, skating, hiking</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uber/taxi/air, with mask/face covering</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpooling with another consistent household, per day (few households)</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children (&lt;2 years old)</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eating at least 3 feet away from other occupied tables in the terminal</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heating surfaces (fomite transmission is rare)</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flights where mask use is enforced</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wearing in highly crowded areas, like baggage claim and the gate</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long flights (&gt;5 hours) in which full meals needed and/or masks removed</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre or post-game locker room activities</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Highlights from TX RPC Members Conducting COVID-19 Research**

**COVID: What do California, Texas, New York and Florida have in common? Stunningly low infection rates**

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

The approach to combating COVID-19 has varied between the four big states of Texas, California, New York, and Florida. New York and California had solid public health stances toward fighting COVID-19, while Texas and Florida’s approaches have been more focused toward reopening the state. However, all four states have
one thing in common...decreasing COVID-19 case rates. Dr. Troisi said, “certainly it shows that vaccinating people helps cut down on transmission, and that’s great, but we haven’t fully vaccinated everybody, we haven’t gotten to herd immunity. It’s probably not the whole answer.” After some states like Texas lifted their mask mandates, experts expected to see cases increase. According to Dr. Troisi, the increase probably did not happen because communities continue to wear masks out in public and transmission of infection may be lower since more people are spending time outside, according to geolocation data.

**Key Takeaways:**
- Declining case rates among the population may be due to multiple factors such as vaccination rates, increasing resistance to infection within the community, voluntary use of masks, time spent outside, and how the disease variants are circulating within the community.
- At this point in time, current adult and adolescent vaccination rates are not enough to stop virus transmission and children 12 years of age and younger still cannot receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

As families prepare to travel this summer, how can they plan on keeping their children safe? Dr. Troisi says there are a few things to consider when planning your trip: the test positivity rate and the vaccination rates at the destination of choice. She says it is also important to consider including activities that are mostly outside and not crowded, including beaches. Furthermore, driving is still the safest option when traveling, but planes pose minimal risk for infection because air within the plane is being refreshed every three minutes and most planes have upgraded to hospital grade air filters. If you must fly, sit at the back of the plane, avoid the bathrooms, and open the air vents above your seat. Private rental homes are recommended, but clean hotels and motels can be safe as well; however avoiding lobbies, elevators, and indoor dining areas can help prevent infection. Finally, Dr. Troisi also notes that it is important that anyone who is eligible to be vaccinated receive the COVID-19 vaccine to protect the community.

**Key Takeaways:**
- As summer approaches, many are preparing to travel for the first time since the pandemic began, and there are factors to consider when planning your trip, including looking at positivity rates and vaccination rates at the destination of choice.
- Continue planning and attending outside events, especially those that are less crowded, since the risk of spread is lower outside.
- Try staying in private rental homes or review sanitation guidelines at hotels. Hotels can be safe for travel, but try not to spend extended time in lobbies, elevators, or at indoor dining areas.
WEBINAR: Unspoken - Debunking Myths and Delivering Strategies to Foster Relationships in Vulnerable Communities: A Texas School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) webinar

Texas School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) is hosting a webinar on Thursday, August 26 from 11-12:30pm CT. Families of all demographics and communities are necessary for SHACs to understand the needs, impact policy, and advocate for change. Unspoken thoughts and practices, at the core of our culture and climate, often determine whether family engagement relationships in our underserved and marginalized communities fail or flourish.

In this webinar, participants will:

• Gain further insight on health disparities and inequities in our schools
• Discuss misconceptions towards family engagement in underserved communities
• Share key strategies on how to build long-term trusting relationships

‘Texas CDC’ Will Aim to Improve Statewide Response to Pandemics

UTHealth School of Public Health

A new state agency, “Texas CDC,” aims to prepare Texas for the next pandemic as well as help Texas to recover from the current pandemic that has claimed over 50,000 lives and infected over 2.5 million people in Texas. Dr. Boerwinkle, dean of UTHealth School of Public Health in Houston, said UTHealth will help lead the Texas Epidemic Public Health Institute (TEPHI) because UTHealth - which has several regional campuses across the state - has the statewide potential to respond to public health emergencies. Dr. Boerwinkle also discusses the need for the new agency due to the growing population in Texas and the necessity to protect residents and the Texas economy, saying “we’ve basically talked about good public health and good business as being on the opposite side of the fence; they’re not mutually exclusive...the role of TEPHI really is to help save lives in Texas and keep businesses strong, keep schools open, and just help Texas be prepared better for the next pandemic.”


Non-COVID-19


**General:**


Central Texas:


South Texas:


**KUDOS**

SAMHSA Report Lists CATCH My Breath as only school-level vaping prevention program

CATCH My Breath

CATCH My Breath has been recognized by Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) and by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Schools often turn to CADCA and SAMHSA for guidance on program selection and CATCH My Breath was recognized as the go-to vaping prevention program for school-aged youth. The CATCH My Breath program was developed by experts at the Michael and Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living at the UTHealth School of Public Health, and was designed for students grades 5-12. The program is also available to schools within the United States at no cost. Since 2017, the program has reached more than 4,000 schools and over 1.4 million students. For more information about the program, visit
Your Local Epidemiologist Receives U.S. Health and Human Services Honor
Katelyn Jetelina, PhD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Dallas

Dr. Katelyn Jetelina received an honor from the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for her blog, Your Local Epidemiologist. The information communicated in Your Local Epidemiologist has supported briefings to stakeholders at the highest level of government and this award reflects the national-level expertise at UTHealth and the UT System.

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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msdcenter.org