

Beyond ABC 2025-2026 recommendations

The Beyond ABC Advisory Board convened a series of meetings in early 2025 to discuss and analyze the issues and current conditions affecting the health and well-being of children in North Texas. The recommendations included in the Beyond ABC report are the result of the trusted insights, real-world expertise and ideas presented by the members of the Advisory Board.

health

- Improve access to mental and behavioral health care for children
- Protect Medicaid for children and ensure more children have access to health insurance coverage

economic security

- Address housing instability and improve access to housing options
- Improve access to healthy foods

safety

- Enact safeguards to protect children from online harm
- Improve Texas' foster care system and enhance support for foster care youth

education

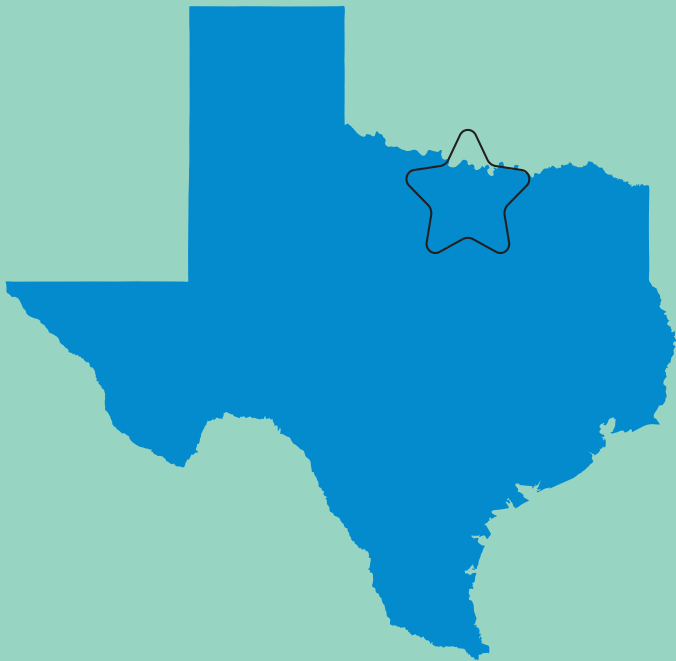
- Support adequate funding for Texas public schools
- Improve student literacy

To explore the detailed research and findings that informed the Advisory Board's recommendations, read the full Beyond ABC 2025-2026 report at childrens.com/beyondabc. To request copies, send an email to beyondabc@childrens.com. Past editions are also available on the webpage.

On the cover:
Julian Marie, age 4,
Tarrant County



Miles, age 4, Ellis County



1.82 million children

live in the eight counties featured in the Beyond ABC report

COLLIN
Youth population 280,048
COOKE
Youth population 9,947
DALLAS
Youth population 661,827
DENTON
Youth population 224,897

ELLIS
Youth population 53,955
FANNIN
Youth population 7,796
GRAYSON
Youth population 33,760
TARRANT
Youth population 548,477



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to read the full Beyond
ABC 2025-2026 report

2025-2026



Assessing the Well-Being of Children in North Texas



executive summary

Welcome to the 19th edition of Beyond ABC,
a comprehensive report on the quality of life
for children in North Texas.

At Children's Health,SM we know each child's well-being is shaped by a complex interplay of factors. Beyond ABC examines more than 60 indicators across four areas: health, economic security, safety and education. These influences can impact a child's long-term health. Where children live, their family's income and job opportunities, the quality of their schools, their access to nutritious food and whether they live in stable housing all influence their development and long-term well-being.

This year's edition takes an even broader view of our region with the addition of Ellis County, building upon our historical data collections across Dallas, Collin, Cooke, Denton, Fannin, Grayson and Tarrant counties.

As this year's report shows, children across North Texas continue to face significant challenges, including the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. These struggles, often intensified by social media, the threat of school violence and unstable home environments, persist for too many young people. At the same time, research indicates there is progress. Communities are expanding access to care and resources, giving more children the support they need to grow up healthy, resilient and hopeful.

The report also highlights a continuing trend: widening geographic disparities. While North Texas benefits from rapid growth and prosperity, this growth brings new pressures. In suburban areas, infrastructure often struggles to keep pace with demand. In many rural areas, smaller populations cannot support the range of services available elsewhere in the region.

To meet these challenges, the Beyond ABC Advisory Board – composed of leaders, experts and community advocates – has developed a comprehensive set of recommendations. Their insights reflect the complex realities of an increasingly diverse youth population and point toward a shared path forward. Together, we can ensure every child in our community has the opportunity to thrive.

Our mission at Children's Health is, and always has been, to make life better for children. The challenges before us are real, but they also present opportunities for us to come together as a community to overcome barriers and to create healthier futures. For more than 110 years, we have stood with children and families across North Texas, helping each new generation grow stronger and more resilient. It is a responsibility we embrace with purpose and resolve. Together, we will build a brighter tomorrow for every child.



Chris

CHRISTOPHER J. DUROVICH

President and Chief Executive Officer
Children's Health

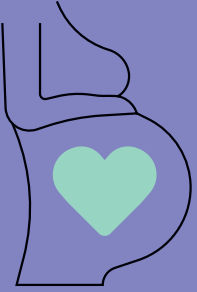
health

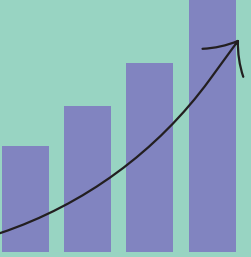
104,215 fewer



Dallas County children were enrolled in Medicaid in 2024 than in 2023

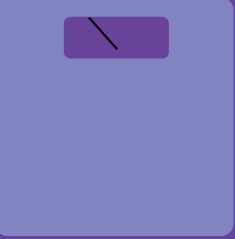
Collin County consistently reports the highest rates of early prenatal care for expecting mothers





Diagnoses of emotional disturbances and addictive disorders are climbing in most North Texas counties

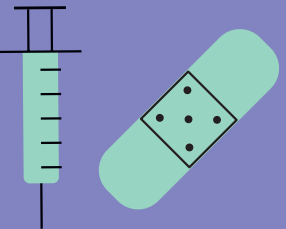
The rate of young people becoming overweight or obese is rising



More than half of pediatric ER visits in Dallas and Tarrant counties were considered avoidable

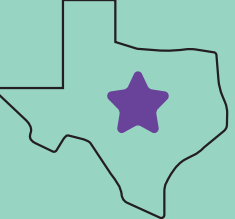


Kindergartners' immunization rates are dropping regionally



Number of children with diabetes (Type 1 or Type 2) increased in every North Texas county from 2020 to 2024

Texas remains the state with the highest rate of uninsured children: 11.9%



economic security

Ellis County has the highest percentage

74.5%

of families with both parents working

SNAP enrollment for children declined significantly across North Texas from 2020 to 2024

30.6% more Dallas County students didn't have a permanent residence in 2024 than in 2020

Cooke County has the highest rate of children living in poverty: 26%

The number of families using housing vouchers has been increasing across the region





1 in 5 Texas kids suffer from food insecurity

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families enrollment for North Texas children dropped sharply from 2020 to 2024



The number of licensed child care facilities has declined regionally



safety

Cooke County has the highest rate of child abuse victims in the region

4 of 5 North Texas children killed with a gun are children of color



Child mortality rose in Collin County from 2020 to 2024

Alcohol/controlled-substance discipline cases at North Texas public schools increased from 2020 to 2024



10% increase in unintentional deaths of Texans 20 and under since 2020

21%+ of Texas youth have seriously considered suicide



Child Protective Services worker caseloads are declining across the region

North Texas commitments to Texas Juvenile Justice Department dropped 17% from 2019 to 2023



education



90.3% of Texas high school students graduated on time in 2023, the state's highest recorded rate

Pre-K enrollment has rebounded from the 2021 pandemic low

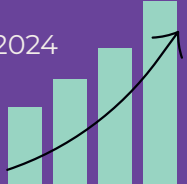
Most North Texas counties have fewer students passing STAAR exams

Kindergarten-readiness rates improved across the region from 2023 to 2024



Denton County special education enrollment rose 41% from 2020 to 2024

Almost 40% of Dallas County students are English language learners



Third-grade reading proficiency declined in 2024 across North Texas

Dallas County jumped from 46% in 2019 to 63% in 2023 in TEA-measured college readiness

