

Beyond ABC Texoma

TCOG Initiates Quality of Life Planning for Texoma Children

Children's Health System of Texas published the 2014 update to Beyond ABC: Assessing Children's Health in the North Texas Corridor, a report that evaluates the quality of life for children in North Texas (Cooke, Collin, Denton, Fannin, and Grayson Counties) based on dozens of data points organized into four primary categories: health care, education, economic security, and safety. Beyond ABC has collected over a decade of data related to children's quality of life by tracking statistics such as access to healthcare, teen pregnancy rates, child poverty rates, school meal program eligibility rates, third grade reading levels and child mortality, abuse, and neglect incident rates.

Some notable information from the report includes:

- Texas ranks 3rd worst in the nation with 16% of children lacking health insurance. The national average is 8.9% with Cooke County at 18.2% and Fannin County at 14.8%.
- 32% of all Texas children grades 3-12 are overweight or obese. In Texoma, the rates are higher: Cooke 51.5%, Fannin 46.4%, and Grayson 41.4%.
- In 2012, one-quarter of Texas children live in poverty. The child poverty rates in Cooke and Fannin Counties are 18.8% and 19.0% respectively, both below the state average. The child poverty rate in Grayson County is 26.2%, up from only 14.4% in 2005.
- In 2011 the state-wide adolescent pregnancy rate was 18.5 births per 1,000 females aged 13-17. The rates are 15.1, 12.4, and 18.7 per 1,000 females 13-17 in Cooke, Fannin and Grayson Counties respectively.
- During the 2011-2012 school year 88% of students in Texas completed high school (percent of 9th graders who graduated 12th grade in 4 years). All three Texoma counties outperform the state rate (Cooke 94.5%, Fannin 93.8%, and Grayson 95.3%).

The report suggests that in many respects children in Texoma are better off than many other children across the State of Texas. However, it also reveals some troubling trends such as the increase in child poverty rates in Grayson County, the obesity rates in all three counties, and the tremendous lack of access to healthcare, not necessarily because children lack insurance but because of the lack of providers who will accept CHIP and Medicaid patients.

In response to these trends, and in an effort to ensure children in Texoma have an excellent quality of life, the Texoma Council of Governments has initiated a region-wide planning process to set a vision and develop a strategy addressing the more significant quality of life indicators for children in Texoma. The project is called Beyond ABC Texoma and has been designed to enable stakeholders and the public at large to participate in developing a vision for what quality of life will look like for our children in Texoma. The process will include developing three county-wide strategic plans for addressing children's health, as well as region-wide projects targeting one or more quality of life indicator(s).

The Beyond ABC Texoma Stakeholder Committee is composed of the individuals that participated in 2014 study produced by Children's Health System of Texas: Sandy Barber (Fannin County Children's Center), David Cortinas (United Way of Grayson County) Jana Garner (Bonham ISD), Brenda Hayward (Child and Family Guidance Center of Texoma), Linda Horton (Texoma Community Center), Dr. Randy McBroom (Texoma Council of Governments), and Kate Whitfield (Sherman ISD).

The Texoma Council of Governments is a voluntary association of the local governments in Cooke, Fannin, and Grayson Counties. Established in 1968, the Texoma Council of Governments promotes economy and efficiency in the coordinated planning and development of the tri-county region through its community and economic development activities. Either directly, or through contractors, the Council provides housing, utility assistance, and weatherization services for low-income citizens in the region

better leaders building better lives™



news release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

and assists the elderly through a variety of Area Agency on Aging programs. The Council also facilitates the delivery of grant funding for homeland security and criminal justice.

###

For Additional Information Contact:

Randy McBroom, PhD
(903) 813-3523
rmcbroom@texoma.cog.tx.us

For Statements or Interviews Contact:

Susan B. Thomas, PhD
(903) 813-3514
stthomas@texoma.cog.tx.us

better leaders building better lives™

Texoma Council of Governments | Susan B. Thomas, PhD, *Executive Director* | Honorable Creta L. Carter II, President, *Governing Board*