



BEYOND BABIES

AN INTIMATE LOOK AT HOW INFANTS AND TODDLERS
ARE DOING IN HARRIS COUNTY AND
OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE SYSTEMS OF CARE

PRESENTED BY



FIRST 3 YEARS

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THE NEEDS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS OF HARRIS COUNTY

EARLY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

High quality early learning opportunities and experiences are critical to supporting early brain development as well as social emotional and cognitive skills in very young children. While Harris County has many services working to provide these opportunities, gaps in services and overall capacity is insufficient.

- Of the 2,917 child care centers in Harris County only 1,535 accept infants and toddlers.
- Of the 1,195 providers accepting subsidies, 35% are not Texas Rising Star certified, contributing to the challenge of access to quality care for low income populations.
- Early Childhood Intervention enrollment has steadily declined, impacting minorities most. (2011-2015): Black (-26.8%) Hispanic (-13.7%), White (-11.4%). The decline in funding does not coincide with a decline of need¹.
- While home visiting program are a critical service for preventing child abuse and increasing school² readiness, Harris County is currently not at capacity for families served.

PARENTING AND COMMUNITY

While rich in diversity, Harris County is highly segregated by income level, race, and families' ability to access services.

- 27.6% of the population under 5 lives below the poverty line. Among children born in the past 5 years living below poverty, 71% of the women were Hispanic, 18% black, 8% white. 33% of the women were from the US, 45% from Mexico, and 9.4% from El Salvador³.
- In Harris County, 24.9% of all children live in homes with food insecurity, which is lower than the state rate (25.6%) but higher than the national average (16.5%)⁴.
- Teen Pregnancy has declined in Harris County and the State of Texas⁵.

HEALTH

Improving access to health care is critical to ensuring parents receive prenatal care and children can access medical care.

- Safety net clinics have the capacity to serve just 36% of the demand.
- 25.4% of mothers in Harris County did not receive prenatal care until the second trimester, and 11.7% of women received late or no care⁶.
- Community surveys cite transportation as the number one barrier to accessing health care



KEY OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN SUPPORTS FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS IN HARRIS COUNTY

1) WORK TO STRENGTHEN AND CONNECT SYSTEMS OF CARE

Ensure families are welcomed into a system that places parents as an expert and peer alongside the professional of their child's needs. Offer multiple points of entry to integrated services. Key areas to focus capacity building efforts include:

- Relationship Based Practices to address the Developmental and Behavioral Concerns of Young Children
- Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Services
- Screening, Referral, and Follow-Up: Understanding and Troubleshooting the lifecycle of referrals

2) CONNECT PARTNERS TO INCREASE FAMILIES' RESILIENCE

Dual Generation Programs: Co-locating quality early child care with adult education programs increases their capacity to provide for their family and creates a network of peer parental support while also engaging them to learn new skills that support their child's learning.

Home Visiting: Develop a network among home visiting programs to build capacity and leverage resources to:

- Connect families to other community services such as child care and group parenting support programs.
- Increase professional development opportunities.

Early Childhood Professional Development System: A sustainable pipeline of qualified professionals is critical to building strong early learning environments and depends on the collaboration and coordination of public and private resources.

"The highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from investing as early as possible, from birth through age five, in disadvantaged families. Starting at age three or four is too little too late, as it fails to recognize that skills beget skills in a complementary and dynamic way. Efforts should focus on the first years for the greatest efficiency and effectiveness. The best investment is in quality early childhood development from birth to five for disadvantaged children and their families."

—James J. Heckman, December 7, 2012

3) SUPPORT PROCESSES TO COLLECT, SHARE AND LEARN FROM DATA

Data on the 0-3 population is fragmented, leading to a misunderstanding and dismissal of the need for services, lack of accountability, and lack of coordination and funding for the 0-3 population.

To address this issue, First3Years suggests the community work to:

- Request that governmental agencies invest in and be transparent with data.
- Encourage funders to become a partner for transparent data.
- Engage non-traditional partners, such as environmental health scientists, to help identify what data is missing.
- Work to understand and support the unique needs of infants and toddlers in child welfare.

ABOUT FIRST3 YEARS

First3Years' mission is to educate, advocate, and collaborate to advance the healthy development of infants and toddlers.

First3Years' work focuses on building long-term, sustainable solutions to advance the health and development of young children and their families. Our programs:

- Increase awareness of the critical importance of the first three years of life,
- Support conditions that enhance the quality of infant and toddler/caregiver relationships,
- Advocate for policies and practices that support the healthy development of young children, and
- Educate the birth-to-three workforce in best practices.

A key component of our work is focused on developing innovative solutions to longstanding problems with overlooked populations in our community.

Focusing on the health and development of young children and their families, First3Years works with the community to bring the critical importance of 0-3 to the forefront while also demonstrating and advocating for innovative solutions. Through education, advocacy and collaboration we involve the broader community to work together in improving the lives of infants and toddlers, their families and communities in Texas.

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INTERVIEWEES

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¹ Public Information Request DARS ECI

² Texas Department of State Health Services. (2017) Early Childhood Intervention Data and Reports. Retrieved January 11, 2017, from <https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/provider-portals/assistive-services-providers/early-childhood-intervention-eci-programs/data-reports>

³ U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). SAIPE State and County Estimates for 2015

⁴ McMillan, T. (2017). The New Face of Hunger. National Geographic. Retrieved from https://www.nationalgeographic.com/foodfeatures/hunger/images/Houston_map_web.png

⁵ Texas Department of Health Services

⁶ National Center for Health Statistics: Peristats. (n.d.). Retrieved January 11, 2017, from <https://www.marchofdimes.org/peristats/Peristats.aspx>