

CITY OF HOUSTON

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HOUSTON'S NEED FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



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**HOUSTON'S NEED FOR EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**



“WE MUST ENSURE THAT EVERY CHILD IS RESPECTED, VALUED, TREATED FAIRLY AND LOVED.”

Sylvester Turner, Mayor of Houston
and Chair of R-Cities’ Board
Cities on the Frontline Speaker Series

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FROM THE MAYOR'S OFFICE OF EDUCATION DIRECTOR

I'd like to briefly summarize the purpose of Early Childhood Education & Development (ECD&E) initiatives in Mayor's Office of Education. This is part of my larger mission to make Houston the first Child-Friendly City in the USA. There are multiple components to this, but ECD&E is completely missing from the education sphere in Houston and thus provides an opportunity for **the mayor to champion this**. My vision is to put Houston on the national map as a leader in Children's Wellness and serve as a role model for large cities across the nation. In short, Houston would like to be one of the first to understand VP Harris' dedication and policy benefiting families and communities.

I'm determined to move the needle on ECD&E in Houston as there is no better investment in a child than offering learning while they are developing 85 percent of their brain! And no better investment for economic growth of a city too:

"Decades of studies have shown that children who have access to high-quality early childhood programs complete high school with lower rates of suspension, arrests, and substance abuse issues, and have higher rates of employment as adults. Long term, children who have enjoyed high-quality early learning experience are more likely to graduate from high school, to be continuously employed and be higher earners when they join the workforce".

And there is no more opportune time to pursue ECD&E than now, especially since there are local, state and federal positive trends to make it happen! For example, for the first time we have federal stimulus (ARPA), that has [allocated \\$211B](#) (or total 15 percent of the funding) to education and childcare alone. [House Bill \(HB 3\)](#), a sweeping and historic school finance bill was passed by the 86th Texas Legislature in 2019 and signed by Gov. Greg Abbott.

The bill provides more money for Texas classrooms, increases teacher compensation, reduces recapture and cuts local property taxes for Texas taxpayers. HB 3 is one of the most transformative Texas education bills in recent history. County Judge Lina Hidalgo has allocated [10 million](#) towards developing a plan on ECD&E too. Even [President Biden](#) publicly stated his dedication to free pre-k. Vice President Harris and Secretary Yellen made the case for a program called 'Build Back Better Investments in Childcare, aiming sound the alarming bells on [costs of childcare and its impact on our economy](#). I'd like to prepare us (Houston) to **take advantage of these funds** and 'invest' in developing a strategic plan of action for free or low-cost pre-K for underprivileged communities. I would like to be proactive and avoid the 'stampede' of all cities and government entities grappling to put together a plan once the funds hit the bank.

There is an opportunity here to make a major impact, but it requires a collective public-private collaboration. A coalition of experts and qualified professionals, with a background and experience in navigating early childhood policy is instrumental in moving us forward. That is why Mayor's Office of Education formed the Houston Pre-K Leadership Council. The council members are versed into Early childhood education development and specialized in an area we need to build capacity in. These leaders will help us in the initial heavy lifting and sorting thru policy. The goal of this group is to aggregate knowledge and resources primarily to help with 'advocating' for government funding towards free preschools. This is a very small group of ECD&E leaders to prepare us for meetings with service providers, parents and other stakeholders. It is composed of people who know the need (academia), people who have the resources (e.g., Houston Health Department, Workforce Solutions, City of Houston Housing Department etc.), people who have experience (First3Years, Collaborative for Children) and policy makers (local government leaders).

In summary, it is really important that we develop a strategic plan and get hold of various funds (e.g. ARPA) to initiate the change. To do that, we need to prepare a solid plan, garner public and private support and swift thru legal language to navigate early childhood education funding.

The purpose of the Early Childhood Development & Education Report written by the Mayor's Office of Education is to inform policymakers about the current state of ECD&E in Houston and Harris County and to inspire advocacy among community leaders to take action for the youngest citizens.

Thank you for fighting for ECD&E along with us. Early education is the ticket that children, regardless of economic status, so desperately need on a journey to a bright future. Your support gives us the courage to fight for the future of all children.

With overwhelming gratitude and hope for the future,

Olivera Jankovska, Director

Mayor's Office of Education, City of Houston

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Olivera Jankovska", is positioned below the typed name. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "O".

Houston, A Child-Friendly & An Equitable City



WELCOME TO THE NATION'S MOST DIVERSE CITY - HOUSTON

HOUSTON, THE 3RD LARGEST CITY IN THE UNITED STATES IS PROUD TO BE AN INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE CITY FOCUSED ON STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE RESIDENTS, ESPECIALLY OUR YOUNGEST.

CITY OF HOUSTON IS BUILDING A LEGACY OF EQUITY THROUGH A SERIES OF DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN HOUSTON'S COMPLETE COMMUNITIES. THE MISSION IS TO BUILD ONE COMPLETE CITY FROM RECOVERY TO RESILIENCE BY CHAMPIONING THE VOICES OF RESIDENTS THAT HAVE BEEN IGNORED FOR FAR TOO LONG AND OFFERING EVERY HOUSTON RESIDENT THE FOUNDATIONAL RESOURCES NEEDED TO THRIVE.

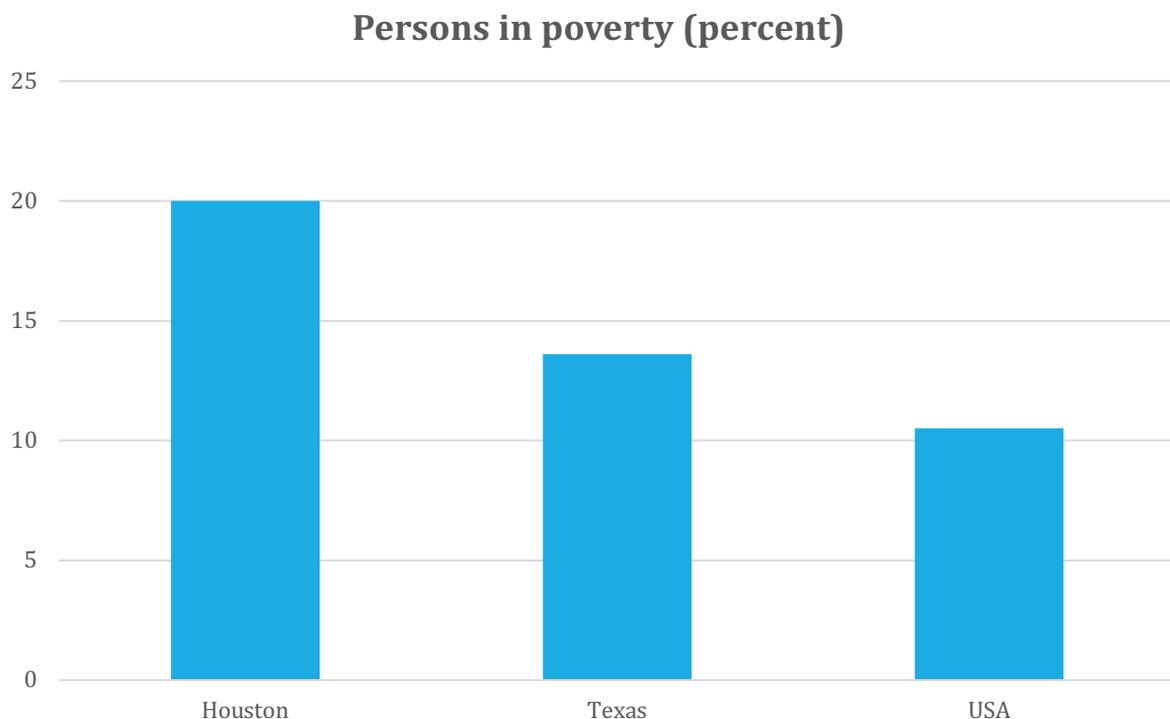
CHILDREN ARE A CORE GROUP OF VULNERABLE RESIDENTS WITH CHILDREN UNDER 18 COMPRISING 25% OF HOUSTON'S TOTAL POPULATION, AND CHILDREN UNDER FIVE ACCOUNTING FOR 7.8% OF THE POPULATION. IN 2019, MAYOR SYLVESTER TURNER WAS THE FIRST AND ONLY MAYOR IN THE UNITED STATES TO SIGN UNICEF'S GLOBAL CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES INITIATIVE MANIFESTO. HE JOINED MORE THAN 130 MAYORS FROM AROUND THE WORLD IN SIGNING THE DECLARATION, AND THE PLEDGE TO BUILD "SUSTAINABLE CHILDREN FRIENDLY CITIES FOR TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE." CITY OF HOUSTON IS ALSO PART OF THE 'REAL PLAY COALITION'.

CURRENT STATE

The county population's racial and ethnic breakdown is as follows: 42% Hispanic (1.9 million); 31% White, not Hispanic (1.4 million); 18.6% Black or African American (880,000); and 6% Asian (312,000). The demographics of new births reflect an increase among the Hispanic population while that of the White population is decreasing. The racial demographics among children 0-4 years of age is: 40.6% Hispanic, 21.3% White, 18.3% Black, and 19.8% Other, Asian or Mixed (2).

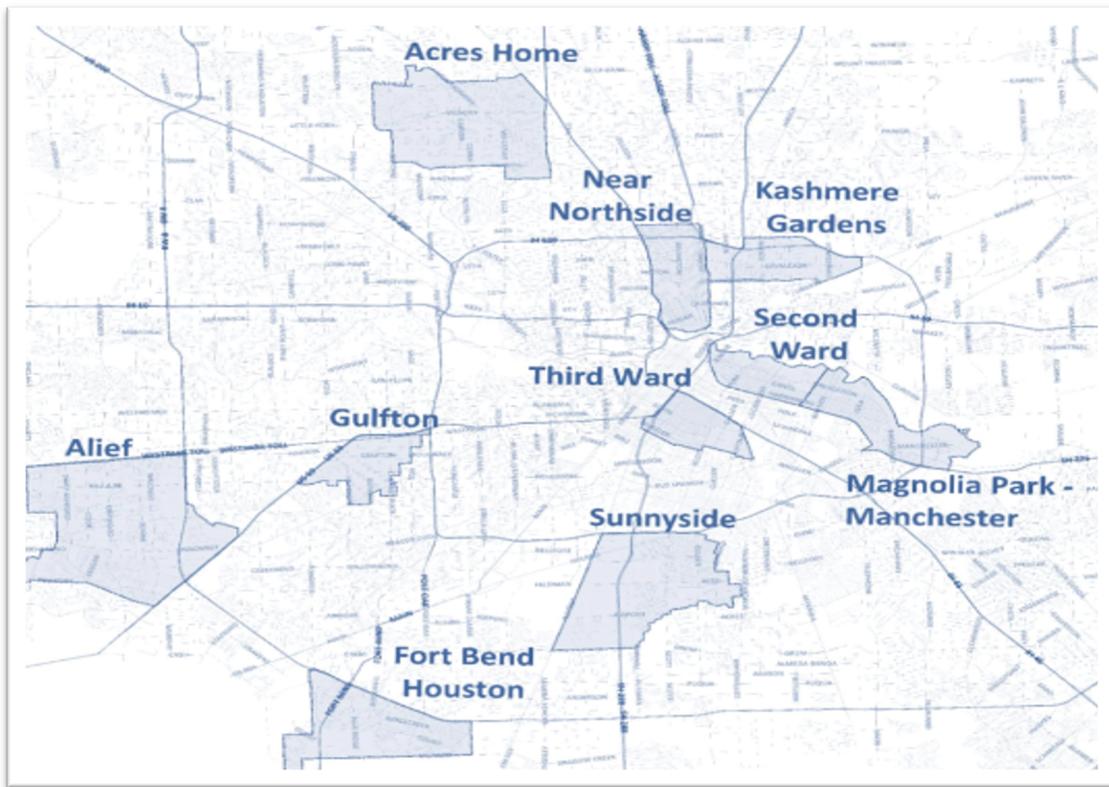
The average age of Harris County residents under the age of five equates to 7.8 % which is relatively higher than the state (6.2%) and nation (6.2%). The 2015 Census estimates that 25% of all Harris County children live in poverty with 24.4% of children under the age of 5 without regard for race or ethnicity. A closer examination reflects the rate of kids living below the poverty line is highest for Blacks, Hispanics, and other races at 30-31% and lowest for Whites at 7.5% (2).

Figure 1: Persons in poverty (percent) (3)



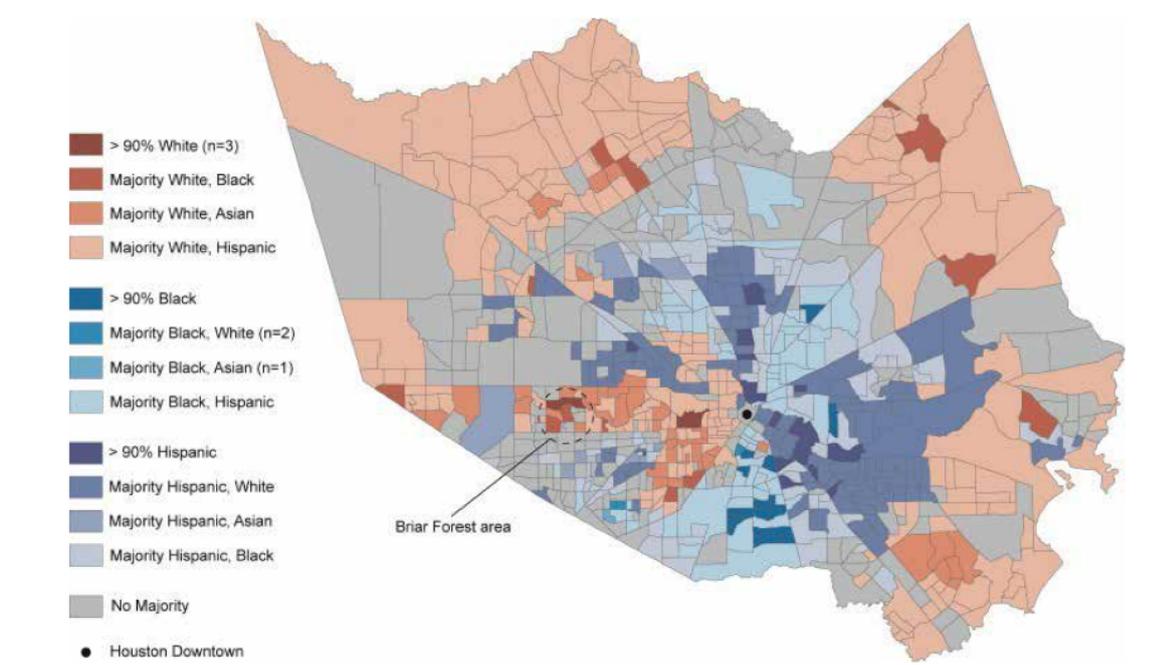
COMMUNITIES WITH HIGHEST NEED

Figure 2: Communities with highest need (4)



RACIAL/ETHNIC BACKGROUND IN HOUSTON (4)

Figure 3: Demographic breakdown by zip code (2015) (5)



WHY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION MATTERS

Investments in early childhood care and education would have enormous benefits for children, families, society, and the economy. High-quality early learning interactions and opportunities are critical to healthy brain development and essential to providing a strong foundation for social-emotional and cognitive development. Community programs and services provided to the child directly as well as to the parent/guardian can create additional means to support the health and development of young children. Parent support programs are defined as initiatives designed to promote the flow of resources and support to parents that strengthen functioning and enhance the growth and development of young children.

A child's exposure to high-quality, responsive interactions with adult caregivers during the first few years of life is crucial to their long-term cognitive, social, and emotional development, and has been proven to positively contribute to a child's readiness and academic outcomes. Additionally, high-quality early education and childcare can improve children's health and promote their development and learning. Inversely, poor-quality care can have harmful effects on children's language, social development, and school performance, particularly for those who are low income and have low access to resources. Thus, the importance of positive and collaborative energy around improving quality in early learning settings.

The Growing Up in Houston report (2017) informs us that there are more than 2,350,000 children ages 0-5 in Texas. Of which, 59% live in households where all parents are currently working. Additionally, of all children in Texas, more than half are considered economically disadvantaged. In Texas, children who are five years old on or before September 1 are eligible, but not required, to attend kindergarten that year.

"In Harris County, there are approximately 360,000 children between the ages of 0 and 4, with a childcare capacity to serve approximately 185,000 children (reflects licensed or registered childcare facilities)".

Childcare facilities are especially important to single-parent households. Given that low-income neighborhoods are most under-resourced with regards to childcare, single-parent households will be most impacted by access to childcare and quality (TRS) childcare providers (2). Early childhood education teaches children at a critical point in cognitive and social development. As the Houston area grows increasingly diverse — from both native-born residents and immigrants — education systems throughout our region must be prepared to accommodate changing needs to help our youngest residents succeed. Access to high-quality pre-K programs helps prepare children from low-income households for the future and helps to close the gaps that reinforce disparities throughout our society. And while many of Houston's poorer children currently lack access to pre-kindergarten (pre-K) programs, with the recent passage of House Bill 3, more

Texas children will have access to the resources they need to get their education off to the right start.

"Decades of studies have shown that children who have access to high-quality early childhood programs complete high school with lower rates of suspension, arrests, and substance abuse issues, and have higher rates of employment as adults".

Long term, children who have enjoyed high-quality early learning experience are more likely to graduate from high school, to be continuously employed and be higher earners when they join the workforce. Parents need their basic needs met, such as housing, food, and available daycare so that they can work. Many parents don't have a formalized support network. Providing resources necessary to ensure all families can access high-quality childcare with well-trained, professional staff qualified to provide early childhood education. High-quality programs will aim to nurture children's cognitive and socioemotional development and allow all children to enter their formal schooling years at comparable levels of preparedness.

“Given the critical importance of high-quality early care and education for all children, many peer nations provide universal affordable childcare through subsidies, universal high-quality prekindergarten programs, and paid family leave.”

In contrast, the American system for the provision of early care and education is deeply fragmented and severely under-resourced, and the cost of early care and education is borne primarily by parents and by the early childhood workforce in the form of their low wages, all of which leads to vastly uneven quality of, and access to, services. The American system leaves the talents of too many children untapped, and society loses out. Further, the combination of economic inequality and disparate access to high-quality early care and education is at the root of achievement gaps between children of different income classes, races, and ethnicities in the United States. (6)

“Early childhood programs have one of the strongest returns on investment for any type of public program.”

When we invest in children, we are building a brighter and optimistic future for our city. The payoff to investment in high-quality early care and education for children is enormous. When society-wide benefits are factored in, it is unfathomable that we would not make this investment. By knowing the data and understanding how early childhood education affects our communities for the better, we can do more to ensure its availability to those who need it most (7)

OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER

EARLY POSITIVE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES SHAPE THE FUTURE

High-quality childcare keeps children safe and healthy and provides fun and engaging experiences that support early child development. In addition, it also offers the skills necessary for children to succeed in school and in their lives outside of school such as:

- Social, emotional and communication skills
- Pre-literacy and basic mathematical skills and concepts
- An awareness of their environment and the roles of the people in it

A study led by Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health researchers suggests positive childhood experiences, such as supportive family interactions, caring relationships with friends, and connections in the community, are associated with reductions in chances of adult depression and poor mental health and increases in the chances of having healthy relationships in adulthood. Positive childhood experiences are a key factor in influencing health and well-being. For those reporting six to seven positive childhood experiences, the odds of having depression or 14 or more poor mental health days in the previous months were 72 percent lower than for those reporting zero to two positive childhood experiences. Even for those reporting three to five positive childhood experiences, the odds of depression or poor mental health were 50 percent lower than those reporting zero to two positive childhood experiences. These associations held true even when respondents reported multiple adverse childhood experiences.

“Research demonstrates that both positive and adverse experiences shape brain development and health across the lifespan.”

On the positive side, successful child development depends on secure attachment during the first years of life. As the child grows, exposure to spoken language and having the

presence of safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments are important factors for optimal development. On the other hand, children with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are at risk for observable changes in brain anatomy, gene expression, and delays in social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development lasting into adulthood. (8)

EARLY EXPERIENCES HAVE LIFELONG CONSEQUENCES

The University of Texas at Austin established the Prenatal-to-3 State Policy Roadmap, and it provides guidance to states, as they build effective and equitable PN-3 systems of care for infants and toddlers and their parents. The Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center identified 11 effective solutions, including five effective policies and six effective strategies, that foster the nurturing environments infants and toddlers need and many of which, reduce long standing disparities in outcomes among racial and ethnic groups and socioeconomic statuses. Some of these solutions include childcare subsidies and early head start strategies. The purpose of states' implementing effective PN-3 solutions is to improve the wellbeing of infants, toddlers, and their parents, and to reduce long-standing disparities in outcomes by race and ethnicity.

The science is clear that our earliest experiences have lifelong consequences for our health and behaviors and infants and toddlers need loving, stimulating, stable, and secure care environments with limited exposure to adversity. Scientists studying neuroscience, epigenetics, endocrinology, inflammatory disorders, and other physiological systems clearly demonstrate that our earliest environments shape the developing brain, influence the expression of our genes, and affect the health of our body's systems. Safe, stable, stimulating, loving interactions between an infant and a parent or caregiver promote optimal brain and body development in the first three years. Parents who have sufficient financial resources, social connections, limited stress, and good physical and mental health are in a better position to meet the substantial challenges that parenting brings, than are parents who struggle to make ends meet, feel isolated or overwhelmed, or have poor mental health.

Too many infants and toddlers do not experience the nurturing and responsive environments that positively shape developing brains and bodies, and instead are exposed to early adversity that inhibits optimal growth. Having a parent with severe

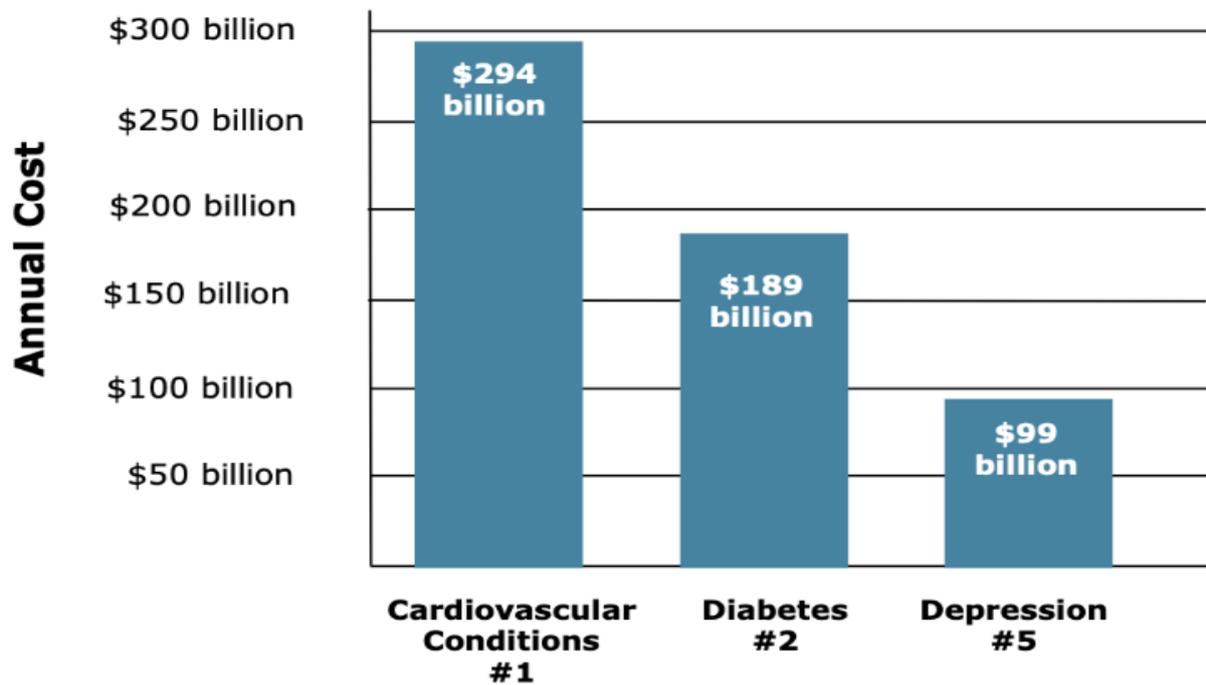
depression, being exposed to violence in your home or neighborhood, moving from house to house without a place to call home, going without enough to eat for days at a time—these examples of early adversity are far too common among our youngest children, and they disproportionately affect our children of color and children whose parents have lower levels of education or income. Although children are incredibly resilient, exposure to chronic stressors early in life sets a path that is difficult to climb and can be costly for society to support (9).

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES LINKED TO CHRONIC DISEASES IN ADULTHOOD

A child's developing brain is most flexible during the earliest months and years of life. This flexibility provides a window of opportunity for establishing a lifelong trajectory for health and wellbeing. Adverse childhood experiences during this period increase the likelihood of physical and mental health difficulties in adulthood, placing children on a trajectory toward physical health problems, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and respiratory and immunological disorders, as well as challenges with learning and mental health. Despite the importance of this age period, children are more likely to experience abuse and neglect during their first three years of life than at any other age. Safe environments and good nutrition can support lifelong health, as can stable, responsive relationships with adults. Also, interventions that identify

and treat early indications of disability or developmental delay during a child's early years can improve a child's trajectory, increasing the likelihood of positive health outcomes long term. Such *interventions are important because 1 in 6 children in the US have a disability.* Social predictors of health, such as poverty, increase a child's risk of disability, as do factors such as low birthweight. Excessive stress undermines the foundations of healthy development, 3 of the 5 most costly adult diseases are associated with early life adversity. Science-informed investments that reduce hardships and adverse exposures faced by pregnant women and families raising very young children offer a promising pathway to enormous savings in health care costs. A graph of annual costs of the costliest adult diseases is as followed:

Figure 4: Annual costs of the costliest adult diseases



THE COST OF CHILDCARE

“Childcare in Texas is expensive, and it is one of the biggest expenses for families.”

The average annual cost of infant care in Texas is \$9,324—that’s \$777 per month. U.S. Department of Health and Human Service standards states that infant care is only affordable for 15.8 percent of Texas families. The agency's standard says that childcare is affordable if it costs no more than 7 percent of a family's income.

Childcare for one 4-year-old costs approximately \$7,062, or \$589 each month.

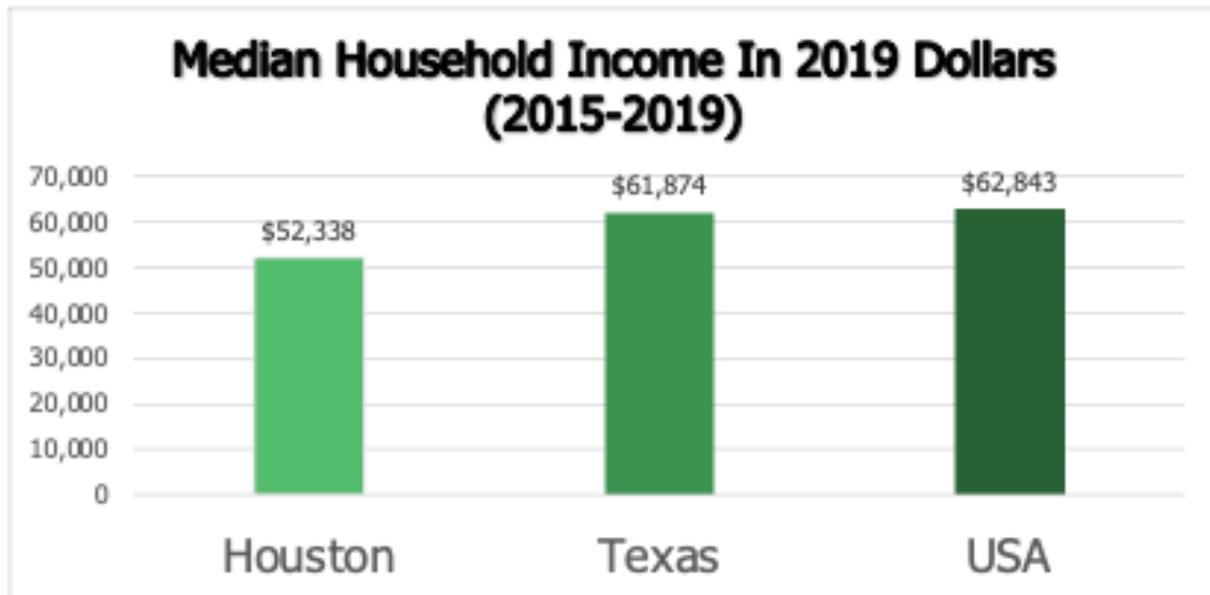
- Infant care in Texas costs \$679 (7.8%) more per year than in-state tuition for four-year public college.
- In Texas, infant care costs just 20.3% less than average rent.
- Infant care for one child would take up 15.7% of a median family’s income in Texas.

Families with two children face an even larger burden. Childcare for two children, an infant and a 4-year-old costs approximately \$16,386. That’s 28.6% more than average rent in Texas.

“A typical family in Texas would have to spend 27.6% of its income on childcare for an infant and a 4-year-old.” (10)

That makes Texas one of 33 states where infant care is more expensive than college. Houston however is at a further disadvantage due to median income being significantly lower than that of the state and national.

Figure 5: Median household income in 2019 (USD) (3)



The concern for childcare cost has drawn attention at the federal level too.

Vice President Harris and Secretary Yellen made the case for a program called ‘Build Back Better Investments in Childcare, aiming sound the alarming bells on costs of childcare and its impact on our economy.

Vice President Kamala Harris and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen made the case for the Biden-Harris Administration’s proposed investments in childcare that will benefit women, children, and working families. In her first visit to the Treasury Department since taking office, the Vice President [announced](#) the release of a [major Treasury report](#) on the economics of childcare. It finds that the proposals in the Build Back Better Agenda would address market failures, help mothers and fathers remain in the labor force, make childcare more affordable for families across the nation, and ensure we can prepare our children for the future.

“Child care is a textbook case of a broken market,” Yellen said in her opening speech.

An average family with just one child under 5 would need to devote 13% of their income for child care. That's more than an average family spends on food and the report concludes that it's an unaffordable sum.

- **AP:** [Harris, Yellen make a personal case for fixing child care](#)
- **Reuters:** [Yellen, Harris urge childcare investments to boost overall U.S. economy](#)
- **CBS News:** [Vice President Kamala Harris and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen push child care spending as Treasury report calls it unaffordable for most families](#)
- **LA Times:** [Harris and Yellen urge Congress to pass spending plan to enhance access to child care](#)
- **NY Times:** [The Biden administration looks to expanded child care funds to combat labor shortages.](#)
- **CNBC:** [America's 'unworkable' child-care system is failing families, Treasury Department says"](#)
- **NBC:** [Harris and Yellen urge Congress to back affordable child care proposal](#)

Immediately after taking office, Vice President Harris [called the mass exodus of women leaving the workforce a national emergency](#) – elevating the crisis. The pandemic has hit women workers hard – and the complete breakdown of childcare infrastructure is an important reason why. Working alongside President Biden, the Vice President continues to make the case that we must fix our nation's child care system – to help women and working families. She has convened leaders in business and advocacy communities, and visited women-led small businesses across the country to hear how women have been impacted by the pandemic – including how they have been impacted by the child care system. The Vice President has also visited child care centers to see firsthand the challenges that parents and workers face, and addressed international institutions on the issue of how to make the world work for women.

LOW WAGE WORKERS

Childcare is out of reach for low - wage workers. A minimum wage worker in Texas would need to work full time for 32 weeks, or from January to August, just to pay for childcare for one infant. Everyone will benefit if we solve this problem. Meaningful childcare reform

that capped families' childcare expenses at 7% of their income would save a Texas family with an infant \$4,941 on childcare costs. This would free up to 9.8% of their (post childcare) annual income to spend on other necessities. This would also allow parents to have more opportunities to enter the labor force. If childcare were capped at 7% of income, 115,703 more parents would have the option to work. A reform would expand Texas's economy by 0.9%. That's \$14.5 billion of new economic activity (11).

A [Columbia University analysis](#) found that low-income families with children who received the first monthly payment experienced a 43% decline in food insufficiency. The analysis also found that the share of parents who missed mortgage or rent payments and who reported having difficulty with expenses, such as childcare, fell with the delivery of the first payment.

POVERTY AND IMMIGRATION

Birth and rearing into poverty are associated with an array of social, health and developmental concerns. Approximately 24.4% of the population under 5 lives below the poverty line. A significant percentage of childhood poverty, specifically under age 5, is concentrated among the immigrant population.

“For example, of individuals earning less than 100% of the poverty line, 20.6% of the population are immigrants with their own children under 18.”

Of the less than 125% of the poverty line, 27.6% of the population are immigrants with their own children under 18. This may be of specific concern for childcare providers to reflect the needs of potential clients but also as providers seek to prepare children for Pre-K. About a quarter (28%) of immigrant women are single. Of the women, 33% had not completed high school or obtained a GED. Therefore, workforce development and support services will be critical for immigrant mothers to stabilize families and subsequently impact the home environment (2).

“On the flipside, a Houston-area program has empowered refugee and immigrant women to step up and fill the childcare gap as entrepreneurs.”

The childcare entrepreneurship program organized by the refugee organization, The Alliance, was limited to refugees when it first began. But a City of Houston grant made it possible to open up the program to other immigrants and Houston residents. More than 70 childcare businesses have opened up in Houston through the program, the majority by refugee and immigrant women (12).

COVID 19 IMPACT

The coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has shaken the world, resulting in a significant loss of life, income, health, and economic stability for many Americans. Social routines that many families rely on to provide structure to their daily lives— such as going to work, sending children to school or daycare, gathering at local religious services, volunteering, and visiting friends and families—are no longer feasible due to stay-at-home orders and social distancing requirements.

“Many families find themselves trying to adjust to the new normal, and deal with the stressors and anxieties that have arisen in a time of great uncertainty. “

In addition to apprehension about contracting the virus, widespread trepidation about current and future financial stability is rampant. The unemployment rate is rapidly increasing, and small businesses may not survive the loss of revenues during this pandemic, resulting in a decline of future job availability (13).

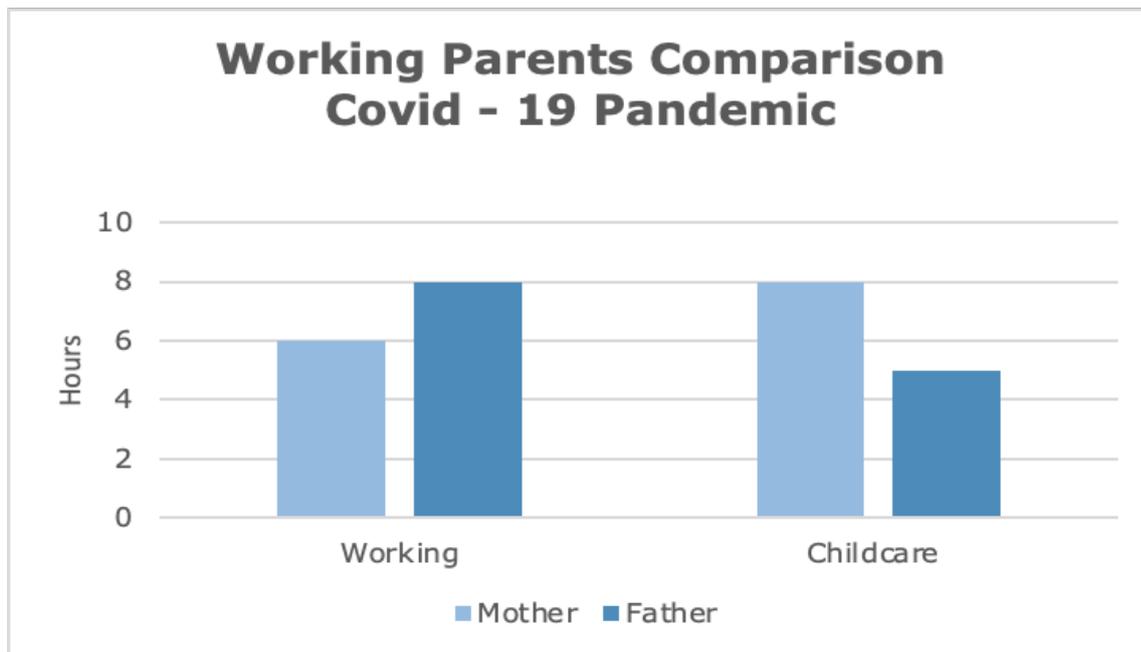
IMPACT ON PARENTS AND THE WORKFORCE

The pandemic has only made the search for childcare more difficult. Data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and analyzed by the Brookings Institution show how Americans parents split their time. The survey and interviews were conducted from May 2020 through December 2020. The objective was to demonstrate caregiving duties during the Covid - 19 pandemic.

“According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in April 2020, 3.5 million moms of school-age children shifted from active work to moving into paid or unpaid leave, which often left families with financial uncertainty.”

Many working mothers lost their jobs or had to leave the labor force completely to focus solely on their children. They did it, oftentimes, because they were the parent more likely to be making less money and more likely to already do the childcare, a picture of how deeply ingrained traditional gender roles are in American society. Survey results shows moms of young children spent about 8 hours a day on childcare while working 6 hours on average; comparison between parents are as followed:

Figure 6: Working parents' comparison (Covid'19) (13)



Women left the workforce in droves after day cares and schools closed or went remote during the pandemic, exacerbating strains on affordable, accessible childcare. In Houston, 110,000 workers left the labor force to perform childcare, more than most major cities, [according to an analysis of Census data](#) by the think tank Third Way. Third Way’s analysis also found that from April to December 2020, 35 states including Texas saw an increase in the share of parents who dropped out of the workforce for childcare reasons — 1.2 million people, a 36% jump on average. And [University of Chicago researchers found](#) nearly 10% of the U.S. workforce has a child under 6 in their household.

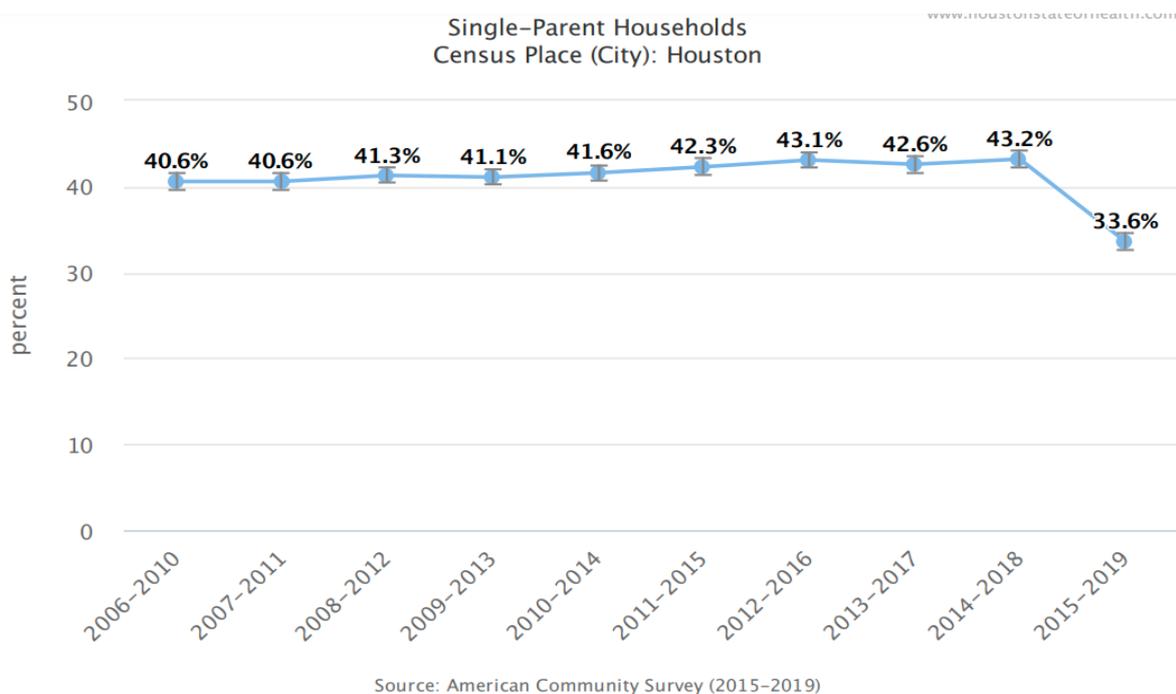
IMPACT ON LOW-INCOME WOMEN (OR SINGLE PARENT)

Women with children are one of the most vulnerable populations impacted by this pandemic, as they often bear the primary responsibility for their children and are overrepresented in low-wage jobs. In 2018, about 72% of U.S. women with children under age 18 were in the labor force. Single mothers were more likely than married mothers to be in the labor force, but they were also more likely to be in poverty. The median annual income of these jobs is lower than the population-wide U.S. median annual income. Poverty negatively impacts child outcomes and contributes to income and health disparities in adulthood. Moreover, minority women disproportionately work in lower-paid jobs, contributing to further inequities for minority children. (14)

“For single mothers, having a full-time job is a matter of survival, therefore having to pay for childcare is often an additional cost they simply cannot afford.”

1. This indicator shows the percentage of children living in single-parent family households (with a male or female householder and no spouse present) out of all children living in family households (15).

Figure 7: Single-parent households census place (Houston) (15)



IMPACT ON CHILDREN

The first few years of a child's life are critical to their cognitive development.

“A US study suggests that children born during the pandemic have significantly reduced verbal, motor and overall cognitive performance compared with children born pre-pandemic.”

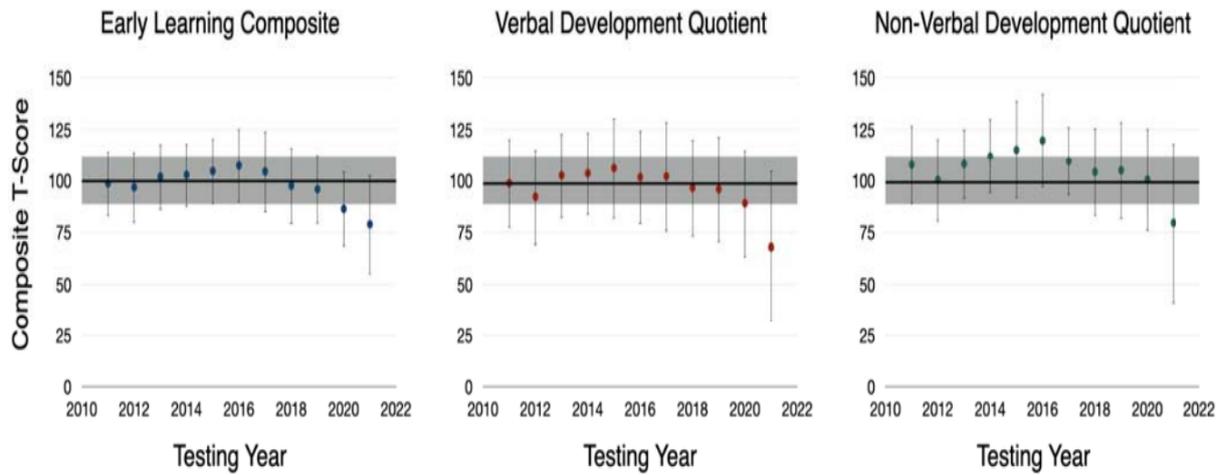
Results highlight that even in the absence of direct SARS-CoV-2 infection and COVID-19 illness, the environmental changes associated COVID-19 pandemic are significantly and negatively affecting infant and child development (16). The study was designed to assess cognitive development and included 672 children from the state of Rhode Island who were born full-term, had no developmental disabilities between the age of 3 months to 3 years, (308 were born prior to January 2019, 176 were born between January 2019 and March 2020, 188 were born after July 2020). The factor influencing these lower scores in infants has likely been stress on parents who faced challenges working and providing full-time attentive childcare, this is also due to limited stimulation at home and less interaction with the outside world.

For parents who were able to work from home, and did not face furlough or employment loss, the task of providing childcare and meeting work demands increased the strain on parents, in particular mothers, resulting in increased parental stress and anxiety. Those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds had lower scores, this could be due as these families have been most affected with the financial, employment and health impacts of the pandemic.

“In the decade preceding the pandemic, the mean IQ score on standardized tests for children aged between three months and three years of age hovered around 100, but for children born during the pandemic that number has gone down to 78.”

Visual comparison and trends of yearly Early Learning Composite, Verbal Development Quotient, and Non- verbal Development Quotient composite scores of the Mullen Scales of Early Learning. A consistent trend of measures from 2011 to 2019 was noted and then a significant decline in 2020 and 2021, corresponding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 8: Comparison (early learning composite, verbal development quotient and non-verbal development quotient) (16)



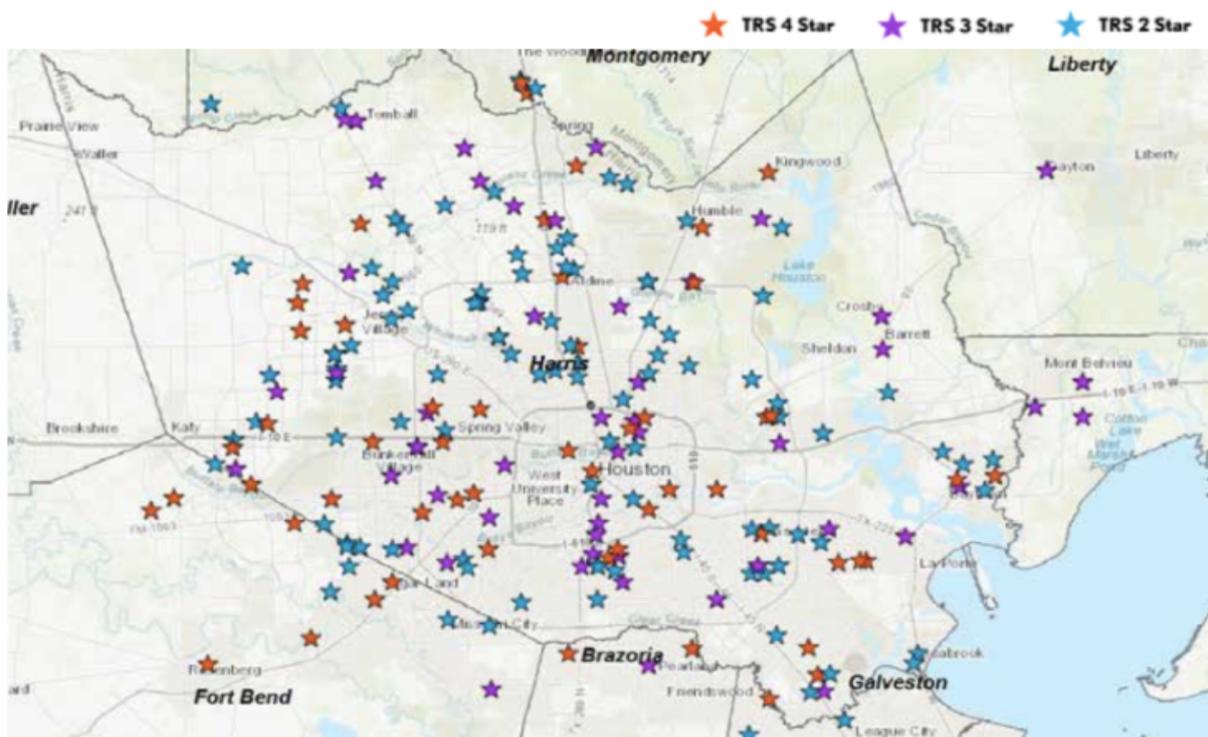
AVAILABLE RESOURCES

HARRIS COUNTY CHILDCARE CENTERS

There are approximately 2,917 licensed or registered childcare locations in Harris County. Of the 2,917 childcare centers (inclusive of 212 licensed home providers) in Harris County, only 1,535 accept infants and toddlers. Of those, 232 have completed the additional certification to receive accreditation of quality standards through the Texas Rising Star program (TRS).

The Texas Rising Star program is a voluntary, quality-based childcare rating system of childcare providers participating in the Texas Workforce Commission's subsidized childcare program. TRS Certification is available to Licensed Center and Licensed and Registered Child Care Home providers who meet the certification criteria. The TRS Provider certification system offers three levels of certification (Two-Star, Three-Star, and Four-Star). See figure below for centers with Texas Rising Star Ratings (2).

Figure 9: Texas rising star ratings (2)



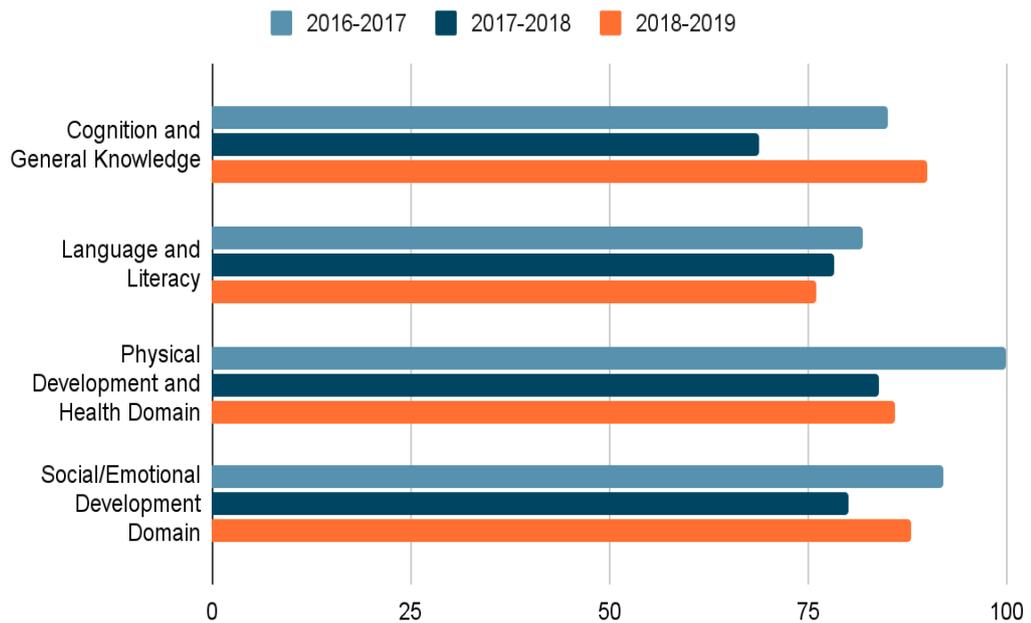
HEAD START PROGRAM REVIEW AND IMPACT (2016-2020)

Harris County Department of Education's Head Start and Early Head Start programs serve to prepare students for school by providing them and their families with the necessary tools and skills needed to succeed in school. In these programs, Frog Street Pre-K is utilized in order to help students develop cognitive and literacy skills and strengthen physical and social-emotional development.

Head Start was able to create child development outcome charts from years 2016 to 2019, but was not able to for the most recent annual report due to COVID-19. However, through mid-year assessments demonstrated that 75% of students would reach "school readiness goals" as they transition from Head Start to Kindergarten. Overall, Head Start had a positive impact on student's cognitive and literacy skills, as well as their physical and social development. From years 2016 to 2019, children in all age groups scored better on their end-of-year assessment than both their middle-of-year and beginning-of-year assessments. However, it is not possible to see the difference between end-of-year assessments with prior assessments, which makes one unable to determine how big of an impact Head Start had on students. Due to there being no data on a student's beginning-of-year and middle-of-year assessments, we are not able to determine how much students improved in each domain. Head Start clearly had a positive impact, but we can not be sure how much of an impact they had on students.

Figure 10: Child Development in the Head Start Program

Child Development Outcomes



In a 2005 Head Start impact study, 5,000 students were examined as they began services provided by Head Start in order to determine the impact Head Start had on developing cognitive and literacy skills. Data collection demonstrated that “for children in the 3-year-old group... small to moderate effects favoring the children enrolled in Head Start” were present, and “fewer positive impacts were found for children in the four-year-old group”¹ These findings are summarized below.

Cognitive Domain:

The study demonstrated that there were “small to moderate statistically significant positive impacts for both three and four year old children on several measures

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (May 2005). Head Start Impact Study: First Year Findings. Washington, DC.

across four of the six cognitive constructs, including pre-reading, pre-writing, vocabulary, and parent reports of children’s literacy skills²

Social/Emotional Domain:

For three-year-olds, there is a small impact on problem behaviors, but “no statistically significant impacts on social skills and approaches to learning or on social competencies for three-year-olds”³ There were no significant impacts present for children of the age of four.

However, Lauren Bauer states that newer and more accurate research shows that there is a significant positive impact present in students who were enrolled in Head Start. Essentially, Head Start was seen to cause “better health, educational, and economic outcomes over the long term as a consequence of participation” and “social, emotional, and behavioral development that becomes evident in adulthood measures of self-control, self-esteem, and positive parenting practices”⁴. Additionally, there is a decrease in teenage pregnancy and crime. These can be read more in depth in a report by the [Hamilton Project](#) and in the [Intergenerational Effects of an Anti-Poverty Program in Early Childhood](#) report by Dr. Barr and Dr. Gibbs.

In conclusion, I do think it is important to expand this program because Head Start does have a significant positive impact on a child’s ability to succeed in school and their overall wellbeing. The data in the past four annual reports has been pretty consistent and

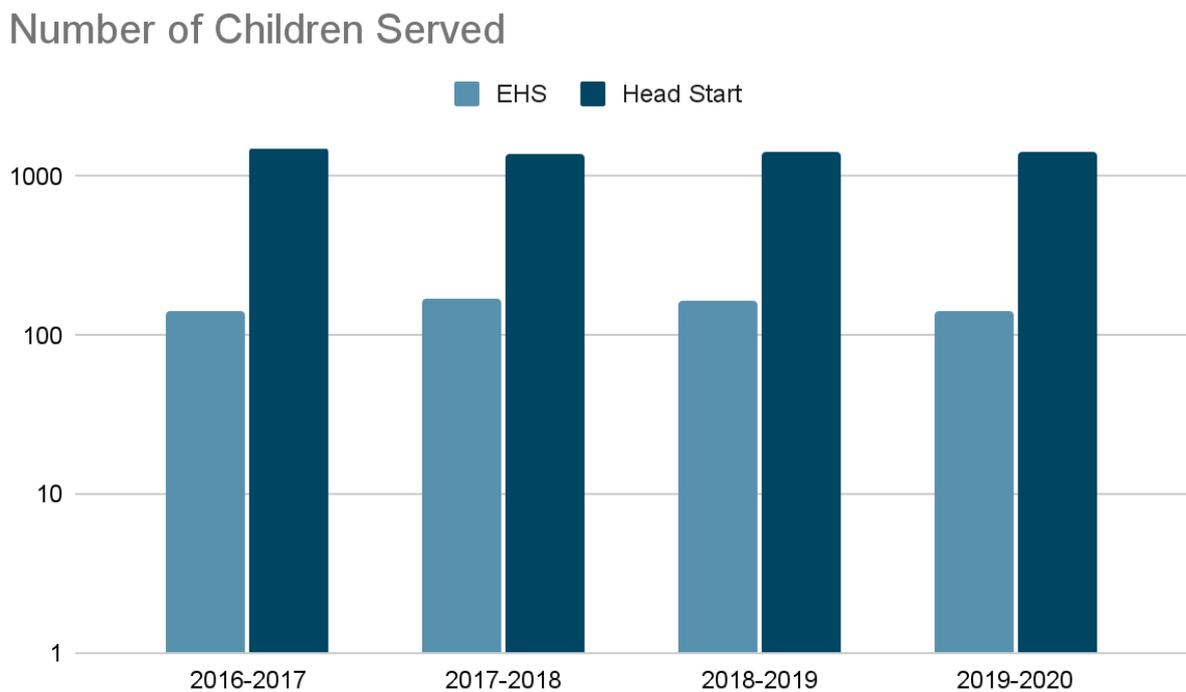
² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (May 2005). Head Start Impact Study: First Year Findings. Washington, DC.

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (May 2005). Head Start Impact Study: First Year Findings. Washington, DC.

⁴ Bauer, Lauren. “Does Head Start Work? the Debate over the Head Start Impact Study, Explained.” *Brookings*, Brookings, 18 June 2019, www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2019/06/14/does-head-start-work-the-debate-over-the-head-start-impact-study-explained/.

there has not been any significant change in child development outcomes year to year. However, I do not view this as a bad thing as it demonstrates that they have consistent results and success in helping students reach school readiness goals, with the most recent annual report showing that 75% of students were on track to do so. The annual report for 2017-2018 shows smaller scores in most categories of the child development outcome, but this is most likely due to Hurricane Harvey occurring. Enrollment in Head Start within the past four years has been consistent, with no substantial change in the number of kids served each year. This can be seen in the graph below:

Figure 11: Number of Head Start Students per Year



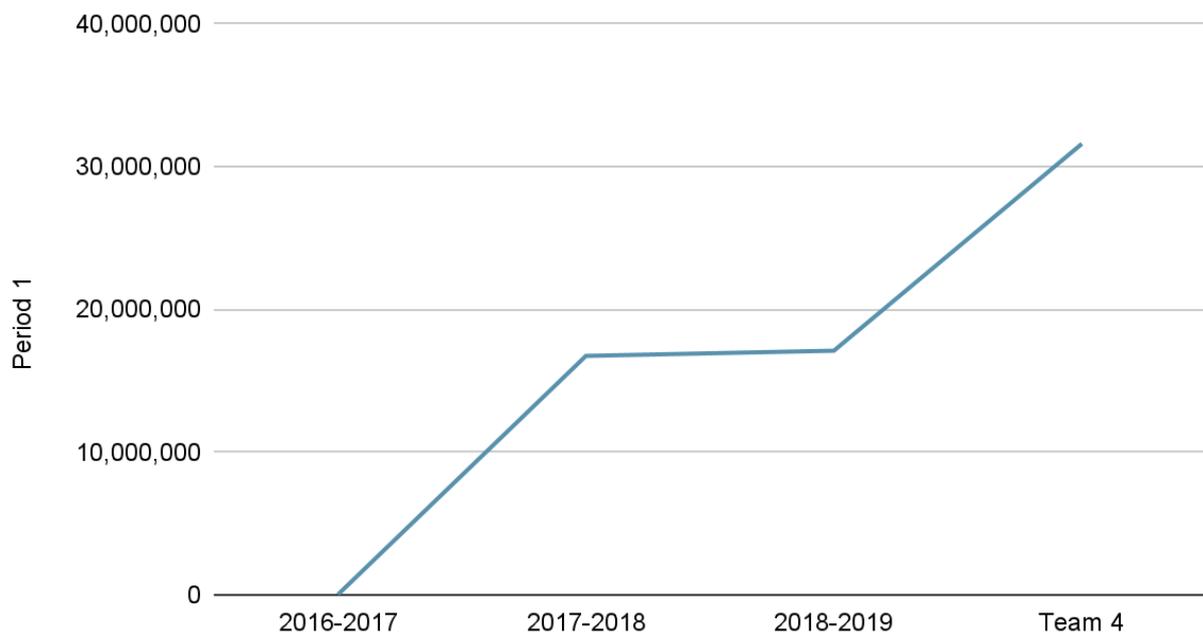
From my findings, it is evident the program has not changed much overtime. There are the same number of head start centers, same curriculum, same assessments, etc. There is an increase in policy council representatives, as well as a new policy council chairperson (just for reference). The biggest difference is the growth in community support over the years, which can be seen on the next page. Below a chart of the program's funding over the past four years can be found.

Table 1: Head Start Funding Breakdown

MAJOR FUNDS	Local Sources	State Program	Federal Progran	Total Revenues
2016-2017	47,421,526	4,550,988	23,363,226	75,335,740
2017-2018	48,556,786	4,748,476	24,895,031	78,200,293
2018-2019	48,556,786	4,748,476	24,895,031	78,200,293
2019-2020	50,779,367	3,584,814	24,919,991	79,284,172

Figure 12: Head Start Community Support Funding by Year

Community Support Over The Years



Community support has increased significantly over the years - from \$21,579 to \$31,604,475.

Figure 13: Head Start Overview

HEAD START PROGRAM

A Harris County Department of Education program that aims to improve every child's education



OVER 1,300 KIDS ENROLLED EVERY YEAR.

FROM HEAD START TO KINDERGARTEN...

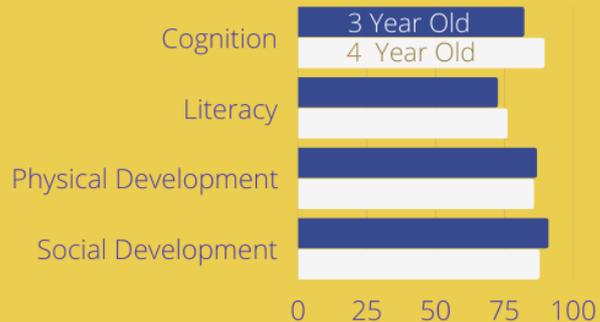


In 2020, 75% of students enrolled in Head Start were on track to reach school readiness goals.



Students enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start programs develop cognition and literacy skills that help them be more prepared to transition into Kindergarten. Both programs have a significant positive impact on a child's ability to succeed in school and their overall wellbeing.

MOST RECENT CHILD DEVELOPMENT OUTCOME PERCENTAGES



16 HEAD START CAMPUSES

- HOUSTON
- GALENA PARK
- CROSBY
- GOOSE CREEK
- CHANNELVIEW
- HUMBLE
- LA PORTE
- SHELDON

TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION

“The Texas Workforce Solutions childcare services program subsidizes childcare for low-income families, promoting long-term self-sufficiency by enabling parents to work or attend workforce training or education activities.”

It also educates parents about the availability of quality childcare, which enhances children’s early learning (17). This program is for eligible families of children under the age of 13 who may receive child care financial assistance to cover a portion or, in some cases, all of the costs for child care so that parents can work, search for work, attend school or participate in training.

Eligibility requirements and coverage amounts vary by service area. In some cases, the local board may have a waiting list for childcare services. Eligible families may choose from the following child care programs that meet local and state requirements: Licensed child care centers, Licensed or registered child care homes or Relative (i.e., family member) providers who are 18 years of age or older, and are a grandparent, great-grandparent, aunt, uncle or sibling of the child(ren) receiving care. (18) Child care assistance is available only for children under the age of 13 in any of these circumstances:

- Parents are receiving or transitioning off public assistance
- Are receiving or needing protective services
- Families are low-income

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIPS (SUBSIDIES)

Even though the Texas Work Commission has a subsidized childcare program, parents or guardians, if eligible, oftentimes will have to join a waitlist. This leaves many parents and children without access to high quality childcare until there is an available space.

“Childcare scholarships, previously called subsidies, helps parents by providing childcare, allows more parents to work longer shifts or complete education and training programs.”

It is known that high quality childhood care is not affordable for many families, especially those with lower incomes, who face additional barriers. Increased parent employment and access to high-quality child care result in improved long-term child outcomes that may impact children’s social-emotional and cognitive development through two main pathways: (1) indirectly, through higher family income from increased employment, which may reduce family stress, boost access to needed resources, and limit adverse childhood experiences; and (2) directly, through access to high-quality child care that may provide enriching and safe environments for children that support positive early development. (9) The end result is it provides parents with the support to raise and nurture healthy child development that is often only accessible through high quality learning experiences.

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

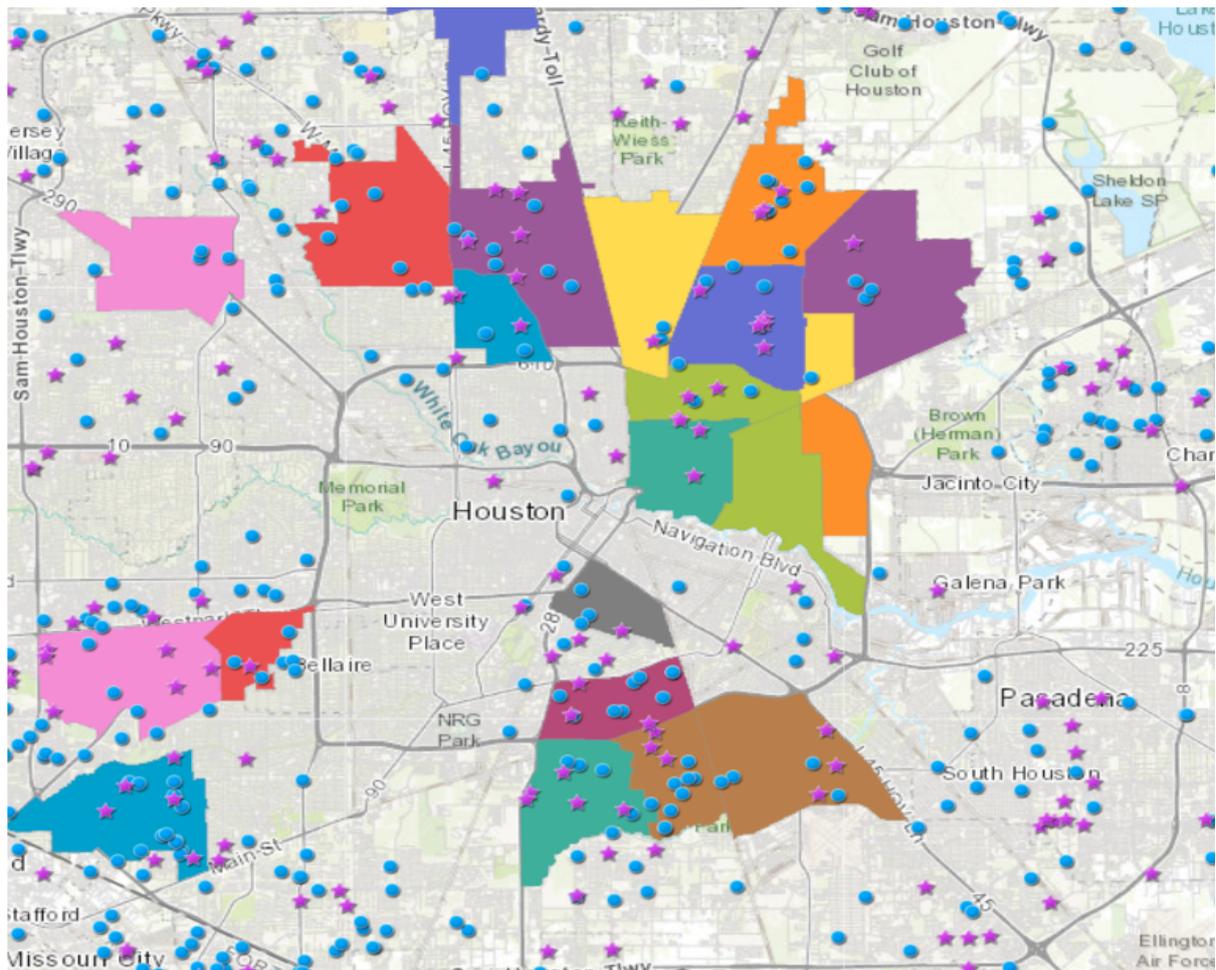
Workforce Solutions (WFS) provides childcare financial aid to parents who are looking for work, working, and/or going to school. Parents applying for childcare financial aid may be added to a waiting list, if funds are limited.

“When there is a waiting list, the wait time for childcare financial aid can average from 2 to 3 months.”

As an alternative, parents may choose to have a relative provide childcare service paid for by Workforce Solutions. Relative providers are required to be listed with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, and they must have a residence different from the parent requesting childcare. In order to be eligible for financial aid, families have to reside in 1 of the 13 counties required, as well as meet the WFS income guideline (12).

Thank you to Dr. Melanie Johnson from Collaborative for Children for providing the following map that shows the number of children in our greater Houston region who are not living near a Workforce Solutions Texas Rising Star rated center.

Figure 14: Workforce solutions Texas rising star rated center (19)



TRS Providers WFS Not TRS



THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN (ARPA)

On March 11, 2021, the Senate passed the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) marking the fourth stimulus package designed to help communities address the devastating impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. *The Biden Administration announced that \$39 billion of the American Rescue Plan funds will be released to states, territories, and tribes to address the childcare crisis caused by COVID-19.* These funds are a critical step to pave the way for a strong economic recovery and a more equitable future.

The \$39 billion funding release will provide a lifeline to hundreds of thousands of childcare providers and early childhood educators, provide a safe and healthy learning environment for more than 5 million children, and help parents, especially mothers, get back to work. The \$39 billion will be provided through two funds: (1) \$24 billion in child

care stabilization funding for child care providers to reopen or stay open, provide safe and healthy learning environments, keep workers on payroll, and provide mental health supports for educators and children, and (2) \$15 billion in more flexible funding for states to make child care more affordable for more families, increase access to high-quality care for families receiving subsidies, increase compensation for early childhood workers, and meet other care needs in their states. (20) A breakdown for Texas state is below.

Figure 15: Breakdown for Texas states (20)

	Child Care Development Fund Flexible Funding	Child Care Stabilization Funding	Total
TOTAL	14,960,830,000	23,975,000,000	38,935,830,000
Texas	1,699,934,795	2,724,368,837	4,424,303,632

These funds for Texas will help to:

- Help childcare centers and family childcare providers, which are mostly very small businesses, stay open or reopen
- Support providers with funds to enable safe and healthy learning environments for more many children
- Keep childcare workers, disproportionately women of color and immigrants, on the payroll and rehire those who have been laid off.
- Provide families with the greatest need for access to affordable care.
- Start to lay the foundation for a stronger childcare system, so families can access the high-quality care they need.

TEXAS STATE LEGISLATION AND INITIATIVES

The [87th Texas Legislative Session](#) had a lot of implications for Texas children. Here are several soon-to-be laws will raise the bar for quality in our state’s child care system, as well as some of the highlights as well as it pertains to early childhood education policy:

- HB 2607 (Talarico et.al/Lucio) will require subsidy providers to participate in the state’s previously voluntary quality rating and improvement system, Texas Rising Star. With an appropriate phase-in period and increased access to supports and coaching, HB 2607 will improve the quality of care available to the more than 136,000 children currently enrolled in a subsidized program.

- HB 1792 (Button et al./Zaffirini) streamlines the evaluation of child care providers participating in the Texas Rising Star system.
- HB 619 (S.Thompson et al./Alvarado) requires TWC to collect additional data and develop a strategic plan to support a sustainable child care workforce.
- SB 1555 (Zaffirini/Raney), already signed by Governor Abbott, brings much needed financial relief to providers and incentivizes high-quality care by increasing state reimbursement rates.
- SB 2081 (Menéndez/Talarico) limits the size of public prekindergarten classes.

HARRIS COUNTY JUDGE - LINA HIDALGO

Harris County Judge, Lina Hidalgo, is a leading example of an effort to explore potential investments for young children in our community. County Judge Lina Hidalgo has embarked on the design of an Early Childhood Initiative to ensure the city is serving our youngest and most vulnerable residents the best to set them up for successful lives.

A 10 million fund to invest in early childhood development programs was proposed, on October 27, 2020, Harris County Commissioners Court approved the Early Childhood Impact Fund (ECIF).

This initiative is aimed at improving health and educational outcomes for young children and their families. This includes reducing adverse childhood experiences and maltreatment and expanding access to high-quality childcare.

COLLABORATIVE FOR CHILDREN

Collaborative for Children is a non-profit organization established in 1987 in the Greater Houston area, as a resource to provide childcare and referral services to Houston-area companies, particularly in response to an increase in the number of working mothers. Since then, it has evolved into a leader in delivering essential, high-quality early childhood education services whose purpose is to give kids the learning experience they need for long-term success, achievement, and personal fulfillment. They are committed to shaping bold, innovative approaches that improve the learning opportunities for children in the first five years of life, and to providing a strong foundation that prepares

them for 21st century success. They have created Centers of Excellence (COEs) that are a model for childcare providers to help them nurture the skills in young children that are essential to seizing the opportunities of tomorrow. This innovative partnership brings strong business practices together with effective early childhood education professionals and engaged families to ensure that all kids have the chance to pursue a future that gives them every chance to do something extraordinary. (21)

Currently, there's 25 COEs in the Mayor's Super Neighborhoods.

"We are coordinating both public and private funds to build a cohesive system whereas parents, teachers and childcare business owners will be coached to align their efforts in support of strong school readiness outcomes. The beauty of this system is that it is backed by a big data hub to provide data for ways legislators and school districts can sustain the outcomes of the little ones in Houston."

- Dr. Melanie Johnson, President and CEO, of Collaborative for Children

Choosing the right childcare is one of the most important decisions a parent will make, and Collaborative for Children's free childcare resource service is an online database of providers that makes it easy. For each provider, you'll find information such as hours of operation, licensing, ratios, accreditation, subsidy acceptance, languages spoken and special needs capabilities. Collaborative for Children also reports quality information such as National Accreditation, Texas Rising Star certification and ratings on our own scale of quality indicators.

Finally, you might be misled by the orange dots (map above) that share the number of licensed family homecare. Family homecare is where most children are, because of the extensive costs of childcare in our state (15% of the average household income of \$59,000 and more than 30% of the income of childcare teachers earning an average \$11/hr.). The hidden tragedy are all the family home care centers that will not appear here, because they are not licensed and are indeterminable.

Our city's children could benefit from a support of our coordinated system of care that blends public and private funds for the benefit of school readiness outcomes. These initiatives stated above could improve teacher's wages, place a ceiling (7%) on childcare

tuition costs, while subsidizing centers to sustain financially. Due to ARPA being short term, Collaborative for Children is primed to assist with sustained results, as we have been the WFS's childcare quality rating entity for 24 years.

SCOPE OF NEED

In Harris County, there are approximately 360,000 children between the ages of 0 and 4, with a childcare capacity to serve approximately 185,000 children (reflects licensed or registered childcare facilities).

“The 2,917 licensed childcare locations in Harris County are not enough to keep up with demand for such centers for Houston’s 0-4 aged population.”

While current capacity is unable to accommodate the current demand for children 0-5 in childcare, that demand continues to increase. This increase reflects both parents as participants in the workforce and the growing Houston population. The lack of capacity and high-quality 4-star rated early education centers hurts infants and toddlers most, particularly those living in communities with high minority populations. With 80% of brain development happening from ages 0-3, access to high-quality early childhood education is an important but often missing piece in the development of Houston youth.

The need for high-quality early childhood education is even more critical for the reported 59% of households in Houston, the report having all parents in the home working. Of the 2,917 childcare centers (inclusive of 212 licensed home providers) in Harris County, only 1,535 accept infants and toddlers. Simply put, the need far surpasses demand and accessibility. Locational access is also of concern, 39 zip codes within Harris County have zero Texas Rising Star childcare providers. Harris County is a childcare desert and a TRS childcare desert. (2)

UNMET NEEDS FOR PRESCHOOL/CHILDCARE

When examining neighborhoods in Houston, primarily Black neighborhoods such as Sunnyside (91% Black) and Acres Homes (52% Black) are among the highest for childhood poverty. Both Sunnyside and Acres Homes have nearly twice the rate of Harris County child poverty at 52% and 40%, respectively¹⁴. When examining predominately

Hispanic neighborhoods Gulfton (71% Hispanic), Greater 5th Ward (74% Hispanic) and Greenspoint (75% Hispanic), childhood poverty is nearly three times that of the County; 61%, 48% and 57% of children are living in poverty, respectively. (2)

Table 2: Children under the age of 5 by neighborhood (22)

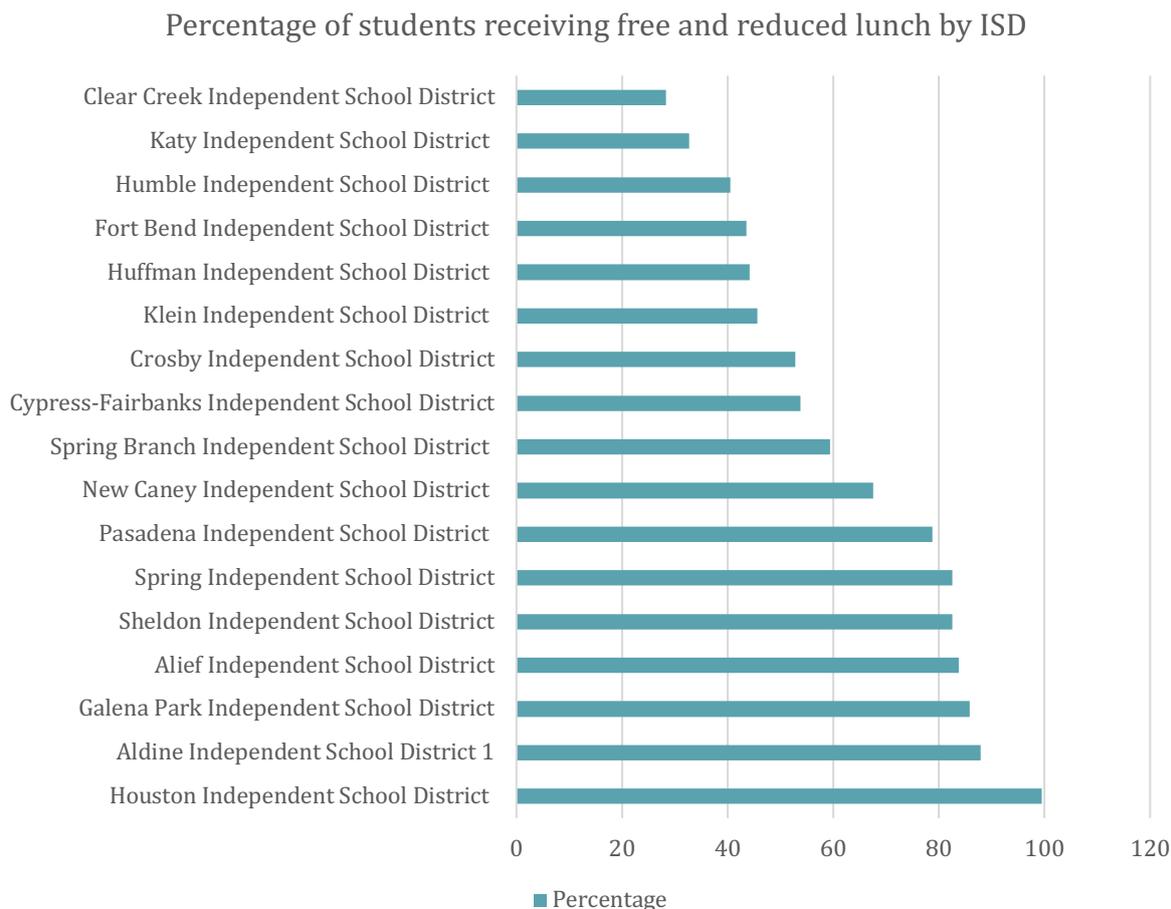
Neighbourhood	No. of children	Neighbourhood	No. of children
Acres Homes	2,129	Fourth Ward	244
Addicks Park Ten	1,687	Golfcrest/ Bellfort/ Reveille	4,786
Afton Oaks/River Oaks	929	Greater Eastwood	666
Alief	7,888	Greater Fifth Ward	1,358
Braeburn	1,870	Greater Greenspoint	5,410
Braeswood	1,790	Greater Heights	3,073
Brays Oaks	5,138	Greater Hobby	2,153
Briar Forest	3,458	Greater Inwood	3,103
Carverdale	163	Greater OST/ South Union	1,536
Central Northwest	4,432	Greater Third Ward	937
Central Southwest	5,415	Greater Uptown	2,764
Clear Lake	5,114	Greenway/ Upper Kirby	987
Clinton Park/ Tri – Community	257	Sharpstown	6,277
Denver Harbor/ Port Houston	1,501	South Acres/ Cresmont Park	832
Downtown	153	South Belt/ Ellington	4,780
East Houston	1,169	South Main	310
East Little York/ Homestead	1,565	South Park	1,589
Eastex- Jensen	2,556	Spring Branch Central	2,481
Edgebrook	1,868	Spring Branch East	1,890
El Dorado/ Oates Prairie	287	Spring Branch North	1,390
Eldridge/West Oaks	6,100	Spring Branch West	2,903
Fairbanks/Northwest Crossing	1,138	Sunnyside	1,847
Fondren Gardens	272	Trinity/ Houston Gardens	875
Fort Bend/ Houston	2,227	University Place	1,221
Washington Avenue Coalition/ Memorial Park	1,740	Westchase	2,749
Westbranch	74	Westwood	2,992
Westbury	1,674	Willowbrook	777

FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH PERCENTAGES (23)

(As a method to define economically disadvantaged)

Houston is home to 17 independent school districts (ISDs) that are home to several charter and smaller private learning K-8 learning centers.

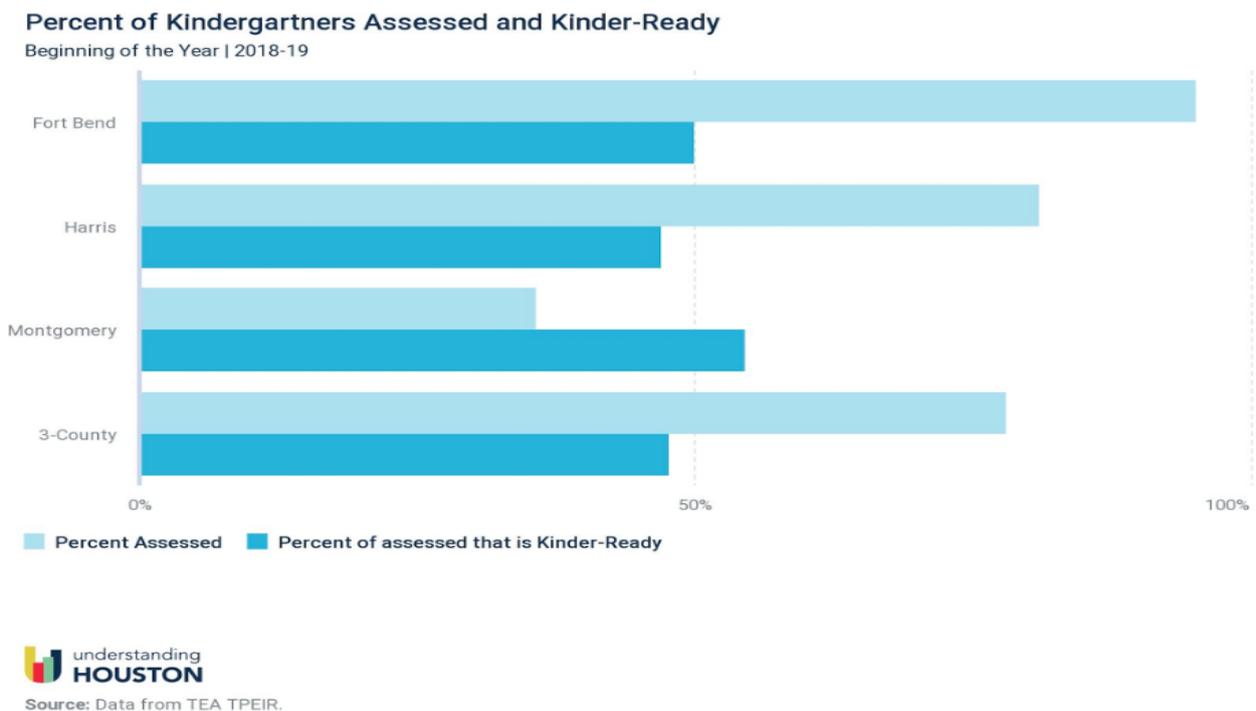
Figure 16: Free and reduced lunch (percentage)



KINDERGARTEN PREPAREDNESS

Children’s experiences in the first five years of life establish the foundation for ongoing learning and development. Because the U.S. early child care and education system is insufficient and inadequate, children from families without significant economic resources enter kindergarten unready to learn.¹⁶ Data suggests that most of Houston’s pre-k youth are not prepared to enter kindergarten. *Among the 49,340 kindergartners who took kindergarten readiness assessments in Harris County, only 47% met the necessary Standard (5).*

Figure 17: Percent of kindergartners assessed and kinder-ready



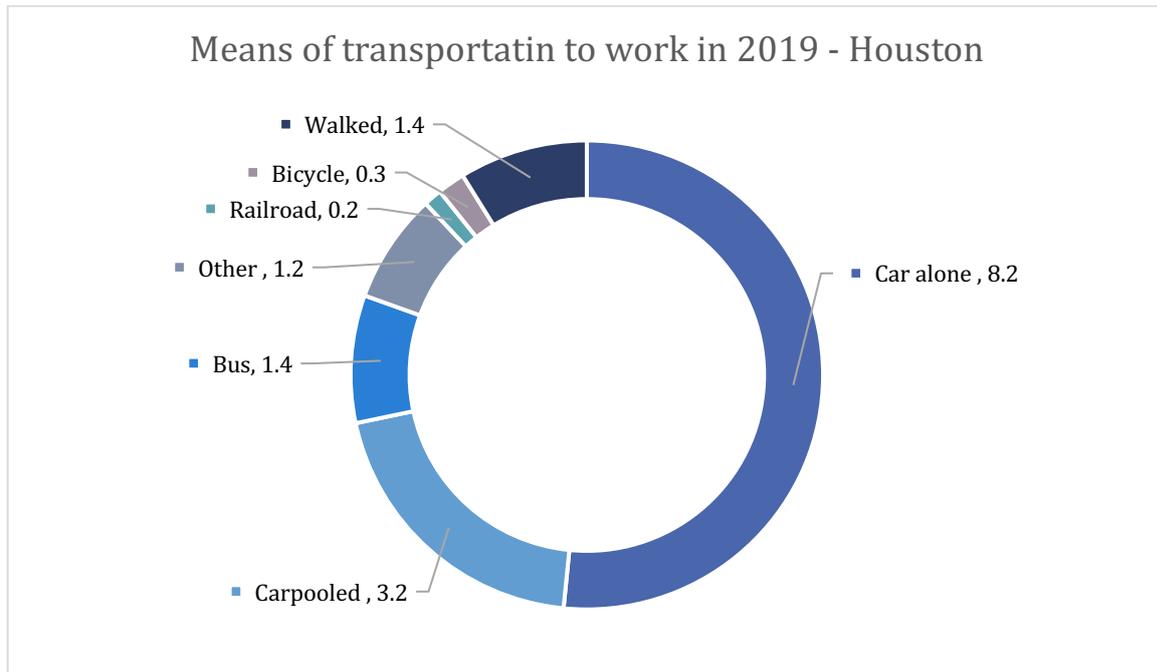
Eligible students who attended pre-K programs in Texas public schools have been more likely to graduate from high school and less likely to drop out, with rates in both categories showing small improvements over time. Eligible students who attended pre-K programs also consistently outperformed students who did not attend on the math and reading portions of the STARR standardized tests taken by each public-school student in Texas (2).

OTHER BARRIERS TO ACCESS: (ACCESSIBILITY)

TRANSPORTATION

As the pie chart suggests, the primary mode of transportation for most citizens in the city of Houston is car alone composed of 83.9% (24).

Figure 18: Means of transportation to work in 2019 – Houston



The city of Houston also has a public transportation system in place, Metro, that provides transportation services to Greater Houston. Metro offers different public transportation services such as Metro Bus, Metro Rail, Metro Lift, and HOT/HOV lanes open free to buses, vanpools, carpools and motorcycles and single-occupant vehicles during some hours if they pay a toll. (24)

IMPACT

Houston Communities would greatly benefit from the presence of high-quality early childhood education facilities. High-quality, responsive interactions with adult caregivers during the first few years of life is crucial to long-term cognitive, social, and emotional development and improves a child's academic outcomes. Additionally, high-quality early education and childcare can improve children's health and promote their development and learning. Inversely, poor-quality care can have harmful effects on children's language, social development, and school performance, particularly for those who are low-income and have low access to resources. Building early childhood education facilities in these communities is not only beneficial to the children who will eventually learn there but it's an investment into the future, creating a more prepared, opportunity driven and ultimately better Houston community. High-quality programs help children learn language, mathematics, and social skills, with studies showing up to \$17 returned in social benefits for every dollar invested in a high-quality pre-K program (2).

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Houston Pre-K Leadership Council:

Olivera Jankovska (Director)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mayor's Office of Education
Karla Cisneros (Councilwoman)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• District H & Chair of the Childhood and Youth Committee
Dr. Quianta Moore (Huffington Fellow)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child Health Policy at the Baker Institute for Public Policy, Rice University
Christy Serrano (Houston Regional Director)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First 3 Years
Dr. Melanie Johnson (President and CEO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborative for Children
Mike Temple (Director)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workforce Solutions
Dr. Millard House (Superintendent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Houston ISD
Jaciel Castro (Operations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Preschools
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- Good Reason Houston

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(Early Childhood Programs Manager)

- Harris County Public Health

- H-CAG or from the Head Start/Early Head Start programs (Baker Ripley to be invited)

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