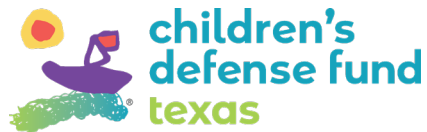


children's
defense fund
texas



Child Poverty, Trauma and Juvenile Justice

Patrick Bresette, Executive Director
September 8, 2021



Vision: The Children's Defense Fund envisions a nation where marginalized children flourish; leaders prioritize their well-being and communities wield the power to ensure they thrive.

Mission: The Children's Defense Fund's Leave No Child Behind mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities

“It is a moral disgrace and profound economic threat that nearly 1 in 5 children are poor in the wealthiest nation on earth. Permitting more than 12.8 million of our children to live in poverty when we have the means to prevent it is unjust and unacceptable. There is no excuse for allowing needless child suffering in our land of tremendous affluence. It is wrong. And it is economically and socially dangerous. “

- *Marian Wright Edelman*



Today's Webinar

- Child Poverty in Texas
- Child Poverty as a Social Determinant of Health
- Poverty and Early Brain Development
- The Lasting Trauma of Economic Deprivation
- *Break*
- Early Poverty can Increase Risks for Entering the JJ System
- Mitigating the Harm/Best Practices
- Q&A

Child Poverty in Texas

Quiz:

In 2019 there were 7,369,488 children under 18. How many were living in poverty?

- A. 515,864 (7%)
- B. 884,339 (12%)
- C. 1,401,000 (19%)
- D. 2,063,457 (28%)

Child Poverty in Texas

Quiz:

In 2019 there were 7,369,488 children under 18.
How many were living in poverty?

- A. 515,864 (7%) New Hampshire %
- B. 884,339 (12%) Maryland %
- C. 1,401,000 (19%) TEXAS**
(more than the population of Dallas and more than any other state)
- D. 2,063,457 (28%) Mississippi %

2021 Federal Poverty Guidelines

2021 POVERTY GUIDELINES FOR THE 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	
Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline
1	\$12,880
2	\$17,420
3	\$21,960
4	\$26,500
5	\$31,040
6	\$35,580
7	\$40,120
8	\$44,660
For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$4,540 for each additional person.	

<https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>

Children in Extreme Poverty (50% FPL)

e.g. less than \$13,250 for a family of four

624,000 (9%) almost the population of El Paso





Data Dashboard

Texas KIDS COUNT Report

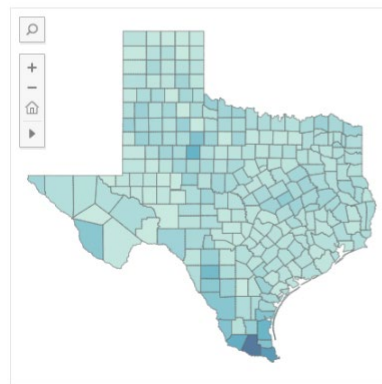
Every Texan acknowledges Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc., for their financial support. The opinions expressed in this document are those of Every Texan and do not necessarily reflect the views of Methodist Healthcare Ministries.

<	Food Insecurity	Nutrition Benefits	Health Insurance	Health Insurance Trends	Effects of COVID	Child Poverty
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Child poverty rates have slowly declined in recent years, but are estimated to have spiked during the pandemic. Despite this, cash assistance for families in poverty, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, has a limited reach today compared to when the program was created in 1996. Currently, only 4 Texas families of every 100 experiencing poverty receive TANF cash benefits. If TANF currently had the same reach as it did in 1996, then over 210,000 more families would be served.

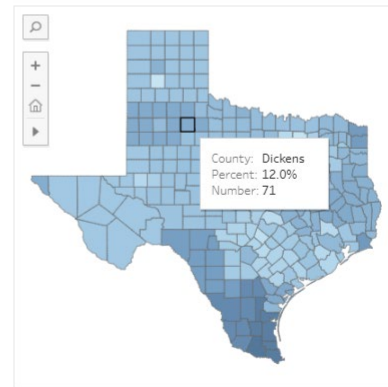
% Under 18 Receiving TANF

Source: Texas Health and Human Services Commission, 2018



% of Children(0 - 18) in Extreme Poverty (<50% FPL)

Source: American Community Survey 2018 5-year Estimates Public Use Microdata



Child Poverty in Texas

Quiz:

What is the maximum monthly income for a family of three (e.g. a mother and two children) to be eligible for TANF cash assistance in Texas?

- A. \$188/month (\$2,256/yr)
- B. \$523/month (\$6,276/yr)
- C. \$937/month (\$11,244/yr)
- D. \$2,015/month (\$24,180/yr)

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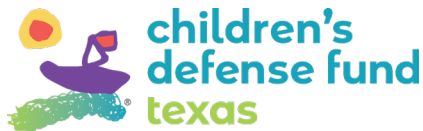
<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/financial/cash/tanf-cash-help>

Child Poverty by Race & Ethnicity

Texas	Race	Data Type	2019
	American Indian	Number	S
		Percent	S
	Asian and Pacific Islander	Number	32,000
		Percent	10%
	Black or African American	Number	233,000
		Percent	26%
	Hispanic or Latino	Number	931,000
		Percent	26%
	Non-Hispanic White	Number	190,000
		Percent	8%
	Two or more races	Number	57,000
		Percent	15%
	Total	Number	1,401,000
		Percent	19

Extreme Child Poverty (50% FPL) by Race & Ethnicity

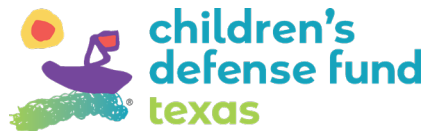
Texas	Race Group	Data Type	2019
	American Indian	Number	1,000
		Percent	4%
	Asian and Pacific Islander	Number	13,000
		Percent	4%
	Black or African American	Number	113,000
		Percent	13%
	Hispanic or Latino	Number	399,000
		Percent	11%
	Non-Hispanic White	Number	92,000
		Percent	4%
	Two or more races	Number	28,000
		Percent	8%
	Total	Number	624,000
		Percent	9%



Poverty is a Key “Social Determinant of Health (SDOH)”

- The prevalence of poverty in the United States is an important public health issue.
- Researchers agree that **there is a clear and established relationship between poverty, socioeconomic status, and health outcomes**—including increased risk for disease and premature death.
- Residents of impoverished neighborhoods or communities are at **increased risk for mental illness, chronic disease, higher mortality, and lower life expectancy**.
- **Racial and ethnic minorities living in poverty may also have more adverse health outcomes.** For example, among those living in poverty African American men are more likely to die from prostate cancer than any other racial group. African American women are more likely to suffer from breast and cervical cancer than any other racial group.

<https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-health/interventions-resources/poverty>



How Poverty Shapes a Child's Mind and Brain

- Poverty, has far-reaching effects on children's physical and mental health.
- The chronic stress of living in impoverished and unhealthy conditions can overwhelm a child's stress response systems, causing what has been referred to as **"toxic stress"** (Garner et al., 2012).
- **Toxic stress affects a child's brain architecture** and increases the risk of developing poor physical, behavioral, socio-emotional, and cognitive health (Shonkoff et al., 2012).
- Children who live in poverty are more likely to be **exposed to multiple adversities**, such as parent incarceration, violence, housing instability, racial or economic discrimination, and household substance abuse (Halfon, Larson, Son, Lu, & Bethell, 2017).
- Several studies have shown that exposures to high levels of stress and poverty during infancy and early childhood are linked to observable changes in brain development, **particularly those areas of the brain associated with emotion regulation and cognitive development** (Shonkoff, 2012).
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6699621/>

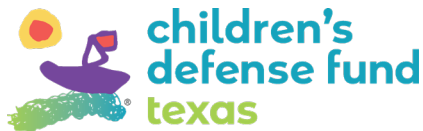
How Poverty Shapes a Child's Mind and Brain

- Childhood poverty has been linked to **emotion dysregulation**, which is further associated with negative physical and psychological health in adulthood.
- **Adults with lower family income at age 9** exhibited reduced prefrontal cortex activity and **failure to suppress amygdala activation at age 24**.
- The amygdala and prefrontal cortex (PFC) play **a critical role for stress and emotion regulation**. The amygdala detects and responds to threats from the environment, activating physiological stress responses.
<https://www.pnas.org/content/110/46/18442>
- A growing body of evidence indicates that effects of poverty on physiologic and neurobiologic development are likely **central to poverty-related gaps in academic achievement and the well-documented lifelong effects of poverty on physical and mental health**. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5765853/>

Poverty Causes Childhood Trauma

Families experiencing hardships are often forced to carry the burden without help and sometimes even **place some of that weight on their adolescents**. Dealing with many of these burdens in hostile and unsafe environments leads to complex trauma in developing brains. **Complex trauma stunts the normal development** of a child's brain which may lead to learning hardships and mental health complications.



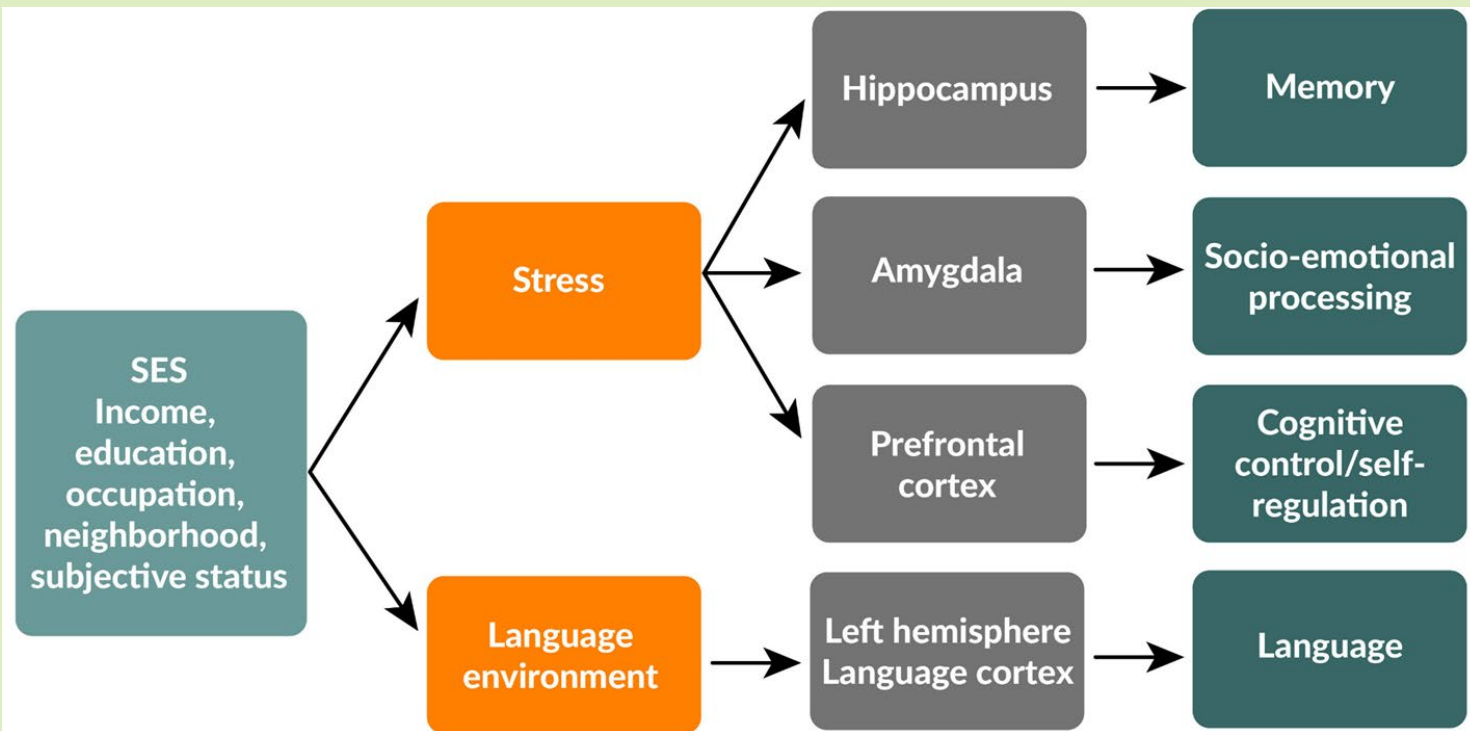


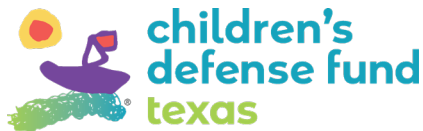
How Poverty and Trauma Affect Brain Development

1. Children live in poverty live in conditions that are **not setting them up for the kind of success** that we know is important
2. It's not just the brain: **what happens in early childhood can have substantial effects on both short- and long-term outcomes** for learning, behavior, mental health and physical health.
3. Duration Matters. Children are more likely to suffer poor outcomes if they experience **sustained racism, poverty, violence, housing instability and food insecurity**.
4. **Brains don't stop developing:** While brains wire themselves for adaptation early in life, they continue to develop until very late in life in a process known as "neuroplasticity." Still, **investments in preventing toxic stress in children in the first two years of life have the highest payoff.**

<https://nationalpress.org/topic/how-poverty-and-trauma-affect-brain-development/>

How Poverty and Trauma Affect Brain Development





Poverty Predicts Stress Levels in Teens

- **Teens who have lived in poverty experience physical signs of stress at higher levels than those in more economically secure families**, showing that public policy programs that help alleviate poverty can improve psychological and physical health even in pre-adulthood
- Decades of studies have previously shown that poverty in children has resulted in downstream health issues over time, but **this study looked specifically at how the body responds to stress.**
- Researchers examined cortisol levels after **participants experienced a social stressor.** Cortisol typically increases following stress. **Atypical patterns of cortisol release can indicate that the body is overtaxed in a stressful situation and can't respond normally.**
- https://www.ucdavis.edu/news/poverty-predicts-stress-levels-teens-research-suggests?fbclid=IwAR35ATTAh6khpMbGCeuQhHLpOb4V_Wo-b0NjhY8FA-aYqQoFZdCnF4cICiE

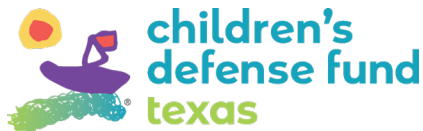
10 Minute Break



Poverty as a Pipeline into the Juvenile Justice System

- **Poverty is a reoccurring factor in juvenile delinquency** that is progressively getting worse in the United States.
- **Youth living in poverty are pressured to survive** in low socioeconomic communities that lack resources such as job opportunities, financial support, mental health services, medical services, education etc.
- The lack of resources in these communities **impedes these youth from becoming successful** in a society that favors those with money.
- Not being in the “right state of mind” can lead a youth to commit unlawful actions.
- Unable to fully process a scenario or situation a youth might act deviant.

<https://medium.com/@acuentas07/poverty-key-factors-contributing-to-high-juvenile-delinquency-rates-31f9aebc44e8>



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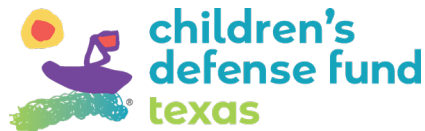
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Youth Incarceration Is Closely Linked to Poverty in the United States

- Many young people who get caught up in the criminal justice are **trying to meet basic needs.**
- Many run-ins with law enforcement and the criminal justice system by youth are related to **“survival crimes.”**
- These are actions defined as criminal charges that are the “result of **working in the underground street economy** as a way to meet their basic needs.
- According to the report - “Through Their Eyes: Stories of Reflection, Resistance, and Resilience on Juvenile Incarceration” - **67% of the people interviewed participated in the underground economy as minors, most often to secure things like food, feminine products, and other essentials.**
- For 30% of those surveyed, **their first juvenile criminal charge involved stealing items from local convenience or clothing stores.** The report argues that this demonstrates a need-based motivation that doesn't get addressed through criminal charges.

<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/youth-incarceration-poverty-united-states>



Youth Justice System Punishes Poverty: NC Study

- “Juvenile courts are filled with low-income families,” we were told.
- Another interview participant indicated that **poverty is “the foundational principle of what’s going on”** in the North Carolina juvenile justice system.
- The “**vast majority of my clients,” a third reported, “are at or below the poverty level** ... families with means simply don’t end up in the juvenile justice system.”
- Juvenile courts in North Carolina are statutorily authorized to assess a range of fees against parents. Courts can also order the youth to pay a fine or restitution. **These court-leveled costs and fees, though not as extensive as in the adult criminal justice system, can represent real hardship for families** that are already struggling on other fronts.

<https://thecrimereport.org/2021/05/03/high-price-of-poverty-in-nc-juvenile-justice-system/>

<https://law.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/juvenilejustice-povertyreport2021.pdf>

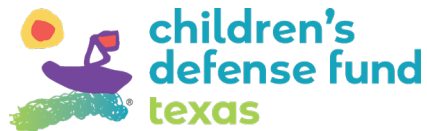


Youth Justice System Punishes Poverty: NC Study

- The imposition of fees in the juvenile system is not rare, though their prevalence varies notably from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.
- **Indirect or “buried” costs are also a huge burden for poor families.** Juvenile cases are time-consuming; the terms can be complicated, demanding and long-lasting. Constraints on time, transportation, housing and access to services hobble economically disadvantaged families’ attempts to comply with diversion plans and court orders. **Failure to comply leads to prolonged supervision, more restrictions, tougher penalties** and a spiral of negative consequences.
- Low-income families fall into the gap between what the court orders them to do and what they can feasibly accomplish. **When they fail, their children pay the price.**

<https://thecrimereport.org/2021/05/03/high-price-of-poverty-in-nc-juvenile-justice-system/>

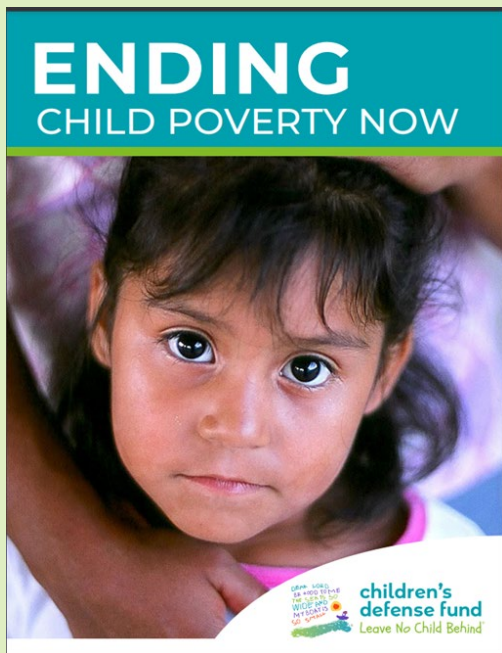
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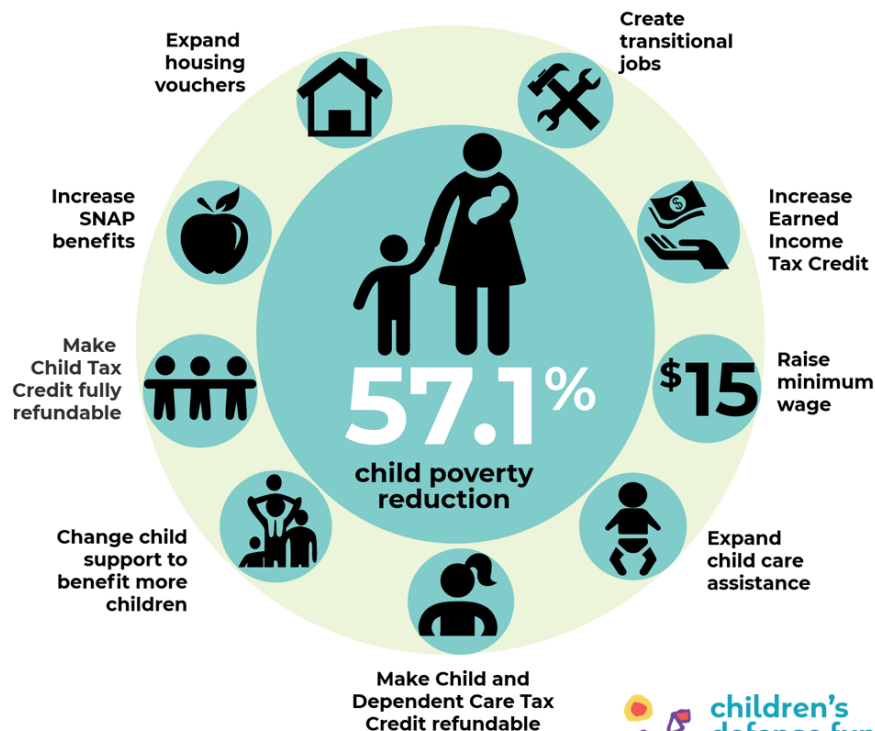
Poverty, Stress, and Brain Development: New Directions for Prevention and Intervention

- In supporting children's physiologic reactivity, cognitive control, and self-regulation through parenting- and classroom-based interventions, **prevention scientists, policy makers, and practitioners are essentially working hard to alleviate the costs of poverty** for human development.
- Yet it is equally **imperative to work further upstream—to lower parents' and children's exposure to poverty** and associated stressors in the first place.
- Two avenues of policy innovation include **supporting families in building higher levels of human capital** so as to increase earnings and increasing federal and state income and non-income transfers (such as the Earned Income Tax Credit or Section 8 housing subsidies) to families so that they are less likely to be poor.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5765853/>



HOW TO LIFT MILLIONS OF CHILDREN OUT OF POVERTY NOW



How can the Juvenile Justice System Address this Challenge?

Poverty in a child's early environment can cause poor outcomes later in life. Risk factors for juvenile delinquency, dropping out of school, and brushes with the law are often determined by below-poverty income, absence of maternal education, and family emotional states. **By leaving children hungry and in poverty, are they being driven to juvenile delinquency and social problems?**



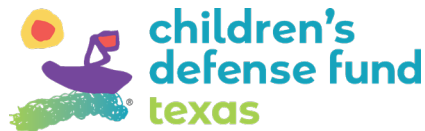


How can the Juvenile Justice System Address this Challenge?

States are working to create **better linkages between child welfare/juvenile justice systems and other economic supports** to give parents necessary tools. Strategies considered include:

- Expediting enrollment process for economic benefits for system-involved families;
- Creating employment helps to coordinate job recruitment, placement and career advancement services for families in the system;
- Allocating federal funds as temporary cash assistance for services to families with incomes below the federal poverty guidelines;
- Family therapy programs designed to help parents access benefits, child welfare organizations, and work training;
- Establish community partnerships to connect families to training, employment, housing and other benefit programs.

<https://info.mstservices.com/blog/poverty-impacts-children>



Screening and Referrals for Poverty-Related Hardship

- Consider assessing whether your clients and their families have access to critical social supports.
- Assist them with navigating “Your Texas Benefits”
- Be aware that many mixed-status families are fearful of using public benefits
- Health coverage is especially important – CHIP and Children’s Medicaid include behavioral health benefits



<https://www.yourtexasbenefits.com/Learn/Home>

Quiz – Access to Health Care

Quiz:

Where does Texas rank in the number and percentage of children with no health insurance?

- A. 12th
- B. 22nd
- C. 30th
- D. 51st

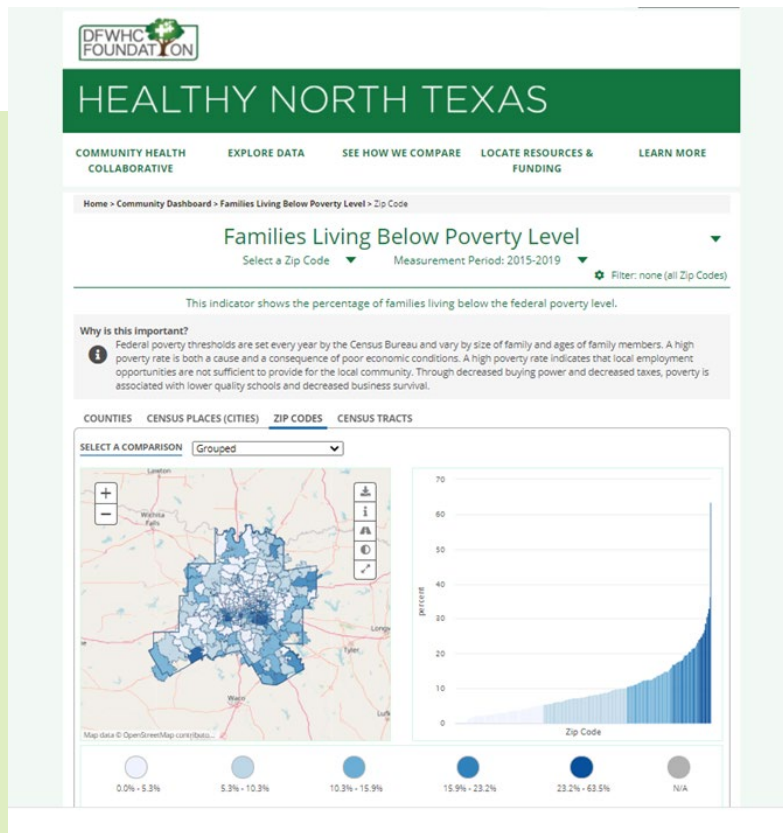
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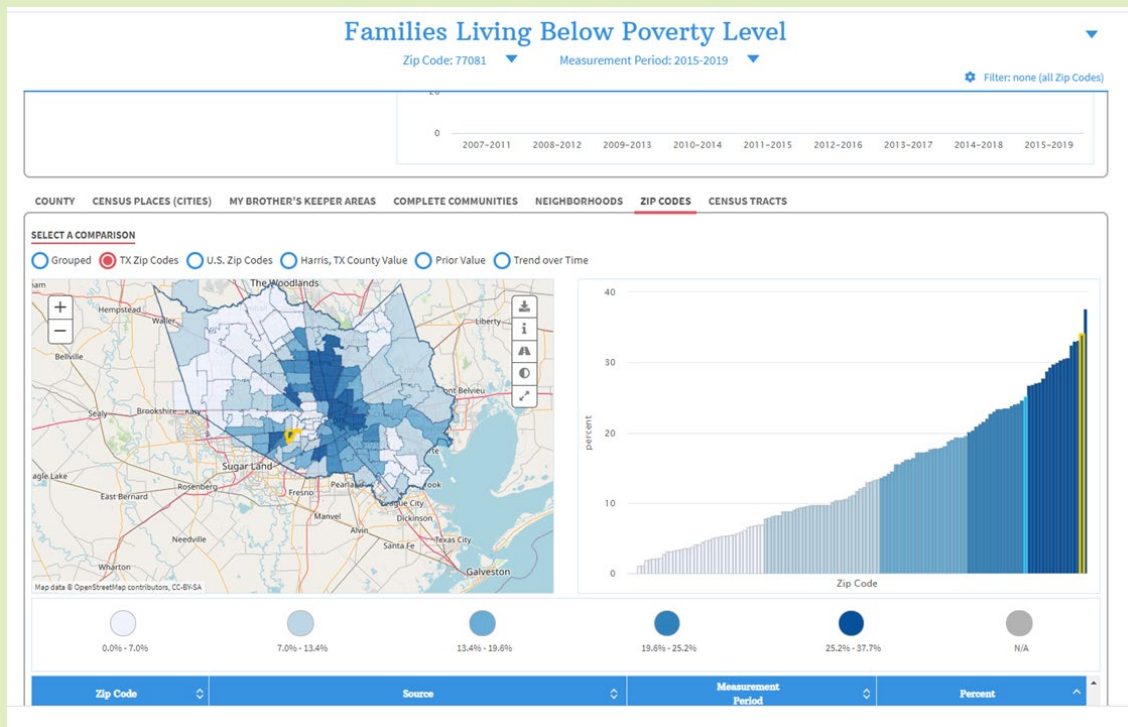
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High Poverty Areas = High Risk



<http://www.healthyntexas.org/indicators/index/view?indicatorId=240&localeTypeId=3&periodId=4523>

High Poverty Areas = High Risk



<http://www.houstonstateofhealth.com/indicators/index/view?indicatorId=240&localeId=38555>

Conclusion and Q&A



- Child Poverty causes “toxic stress” and lasting trauma.
- That trauma affects brain development and behavior
- Many of the juveniles you serve have experienced this trauma.
- How can the system and its protocols screen for these experiences?
- Are certain crimes obviously “economic” in nature?
- Providing access to income supports and public benefits can mitigate economic deprivation.
- Q&A