



# Legislative Priorities for Texas Children & Families

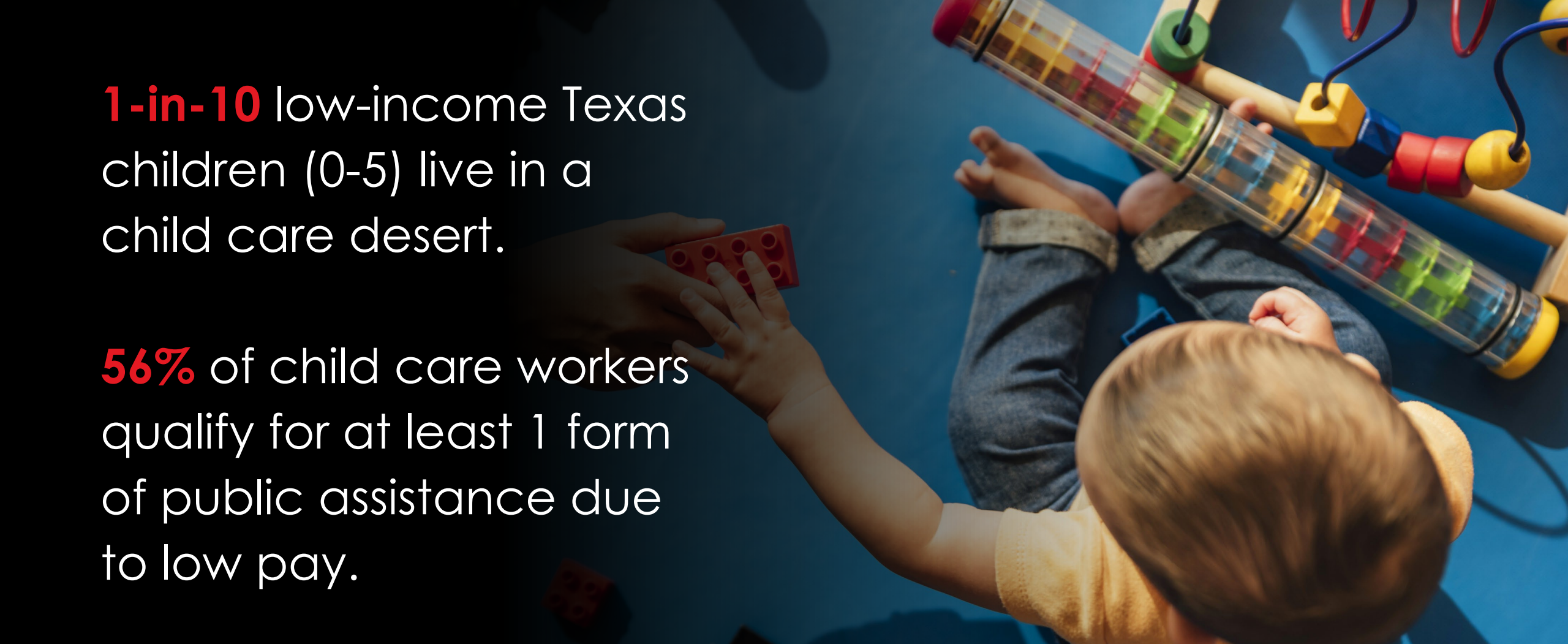
**Caroline Roberts**

*Associate Director of Policy & Staff Attorney*

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LEADERSHIP  
COUNCIL**

**#TXFLC #TXLEGE**



**1-in-10** low-income Texas children (0-5) live in a child care desert.

**56%** of child care workers qualify for at least 1 form of public assistance due to low pay.

*Early Childhood Education*

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# Child Care Deserts before Covid

childrenatrisk.org/childcaresdeserts/



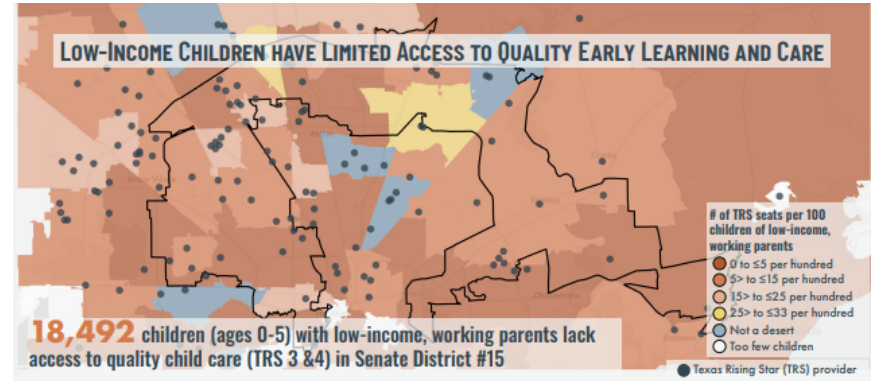
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## Child Care Desert & Affordability Map

An interactive tool for Texas policymakers & stakeholders showing where low-income, working families need **quality child care** & how communities can increase access for all children.

- VIEW MAP
- ANALYSIS
- CHILD CARE SYSTEM
- METHODOLOGY
- LEGISLATOR PROFILES



Sen. John Whitmire  
Senate District #15

### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Texas's economic success depends on a stable workforce today and building the brains of children for a prepared workforce tomorrow. **Quality early childhood education** can improve both outcomes, yet Texas is currently lacking in access and affordability, especially for low-income families. In **Senate District #15**, **26%** children are living in poverty and **50%** are living in low-income families. We all must act to improve access to quality early childhood education.

### READ OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

children at risk has a robust legislative agenda to support and improve access to quality child care and early childhood education.

<https://childrenatrisk.org/public-policy/>

Note: Texas Workforce Commission data on child care providers and availability is from Sept. 2019. Public Pre-K data reflects 2018-19. Pre-K waivers data was accessed on June 2, 2020.



### ACCESS TO QUALITY CHILD CARE in SD #15

**19,380** children ages 0-5 with low-income, working parents are eligible for tuition assistance through the Texas child care subsidy program and are not enrolled in Head Start or public Pre-K.

**4,005** children are receiving subsidy, just **21%** of those in need.

**55 of 260** providers accepting subsidy are in Texas Rising Star.

**5** quality child care seats per 100 children ages 0-5 with low-income working parents.

### INFANT AND TODDLER CARE in SD #15

**624** child care seats are available for infants and toddlers.

**25%** of child care seats for infants and toddlers are at quality providers (Texas Rising Star 3 and 4)

### PUBLIC PRE-K AVAILABILITY in SD #15

Public-Private Pre-K Partnerships ensure that local school districts partner with private child care providers, which maximizes government dollars, supports the public education system and expands access to quality early education.

**18,311** economically disadvantaged children (ages 3-4) are eligible for free public Pre-K.

**208** economically disadvantaged children are attending Pre-K.

**7 of 16** area school districts waived out of full-day Pre-K. (Charters excluded)

To view an interactive map of your district, visit:  
<https://childrenatrisk.org/childcaresdesertmap/>

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## Child Care Deserts Across Texas

With support from the Kellogg Foundation, CHILDREN AT RISK presents the **Texas Child Care Desert Map** — an interactive tool to explore the local availability of child care across the state of Texas.



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# Early Ed Policy Goals

1. Increase access to care;
2. Support the child care workforce;
3. Enhance and strengthen our early childhood education system.



**59%** of Texas students are economically disadvantaged.

**51%** of Texas students are at risk of dropping out of school.

*PreK-12 Education*

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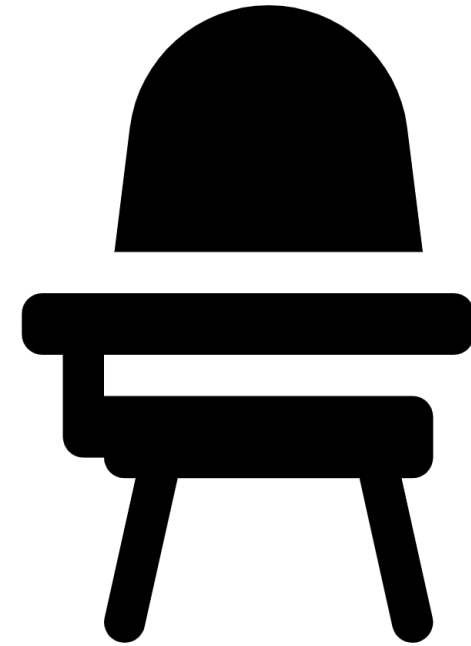


# Chronic Absenteeism

- Texas **does NOT** currently define chronic absenteeism.
- Chronic absenteeism **negatively impacts a student's ability to learn and decreases the likelihood that s/he will graduate on time**, which hinders Texas's ability to meet the goals laid out in the 60x30TX strategic plan.

# PK-12 Policy Goals

1. **Define chronic absenteeism in the Texas Education Code** as a student who misses 10% or more of instructional time within an academic year for any reason.
2. **Add chronic absenteeism to the “at risk” category** as a duplicated count.
3. **Ensure reporting.** Require that TEA report chronic absenteeism as an indicator.

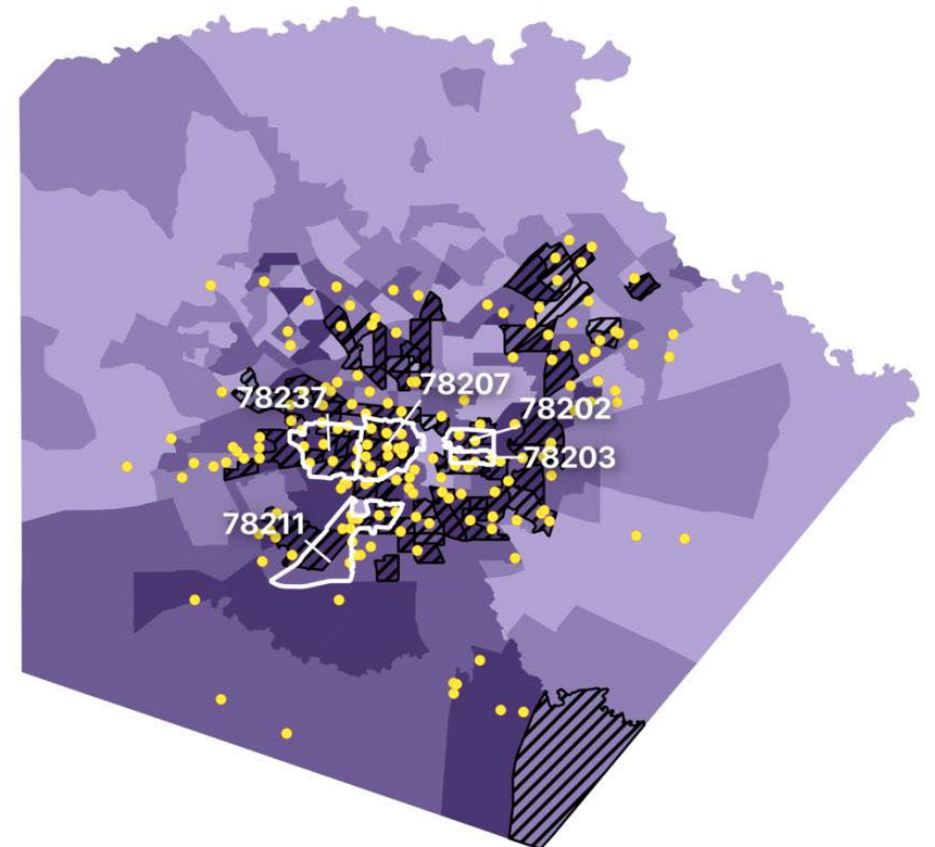
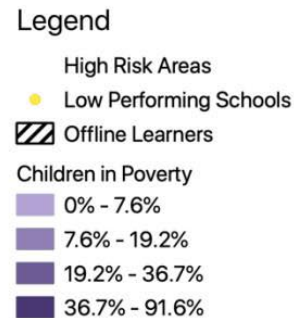




# Digital Divide Among Texas Students

Analysis shows the highest concentration of child poverty, lack of access to online learning, and low-performing schools

Identifying Offline Learners, Bexar County





# PK-12 Policy Recommendations

4. **Collect and use data to understand** connectivity, gaps in learning, and areas in most need of resources
5. **Expand access to broadband internet and technology to all students**
6. **Protect state funding** for public education so all students have access to quality education

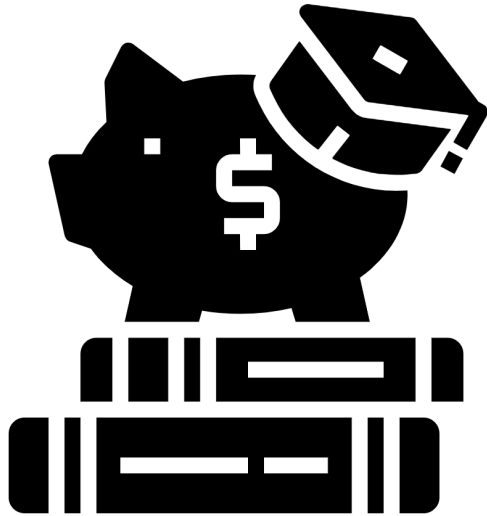
## HB 3 (86<sup>th</sup> Texas Session)

- Full day Pre-K
- Early learning academies
- Longer school year



# PK-12 Policy Recommendations

6. Protect state funding for public education so all students have access to quality education



## HB 3 (86<sup>th</sup> Texas Session)

- Full day Pre-K
- Early learning academies
- Longer school year

**1 in 5** uninsured  
children in the  
U.S. is from  
Texas.

*Health & Well-Being*

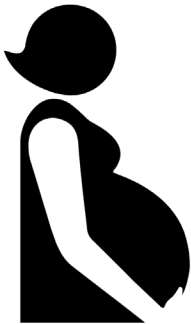
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# Maternal Health in Texas



Texas continues to struggle with **high maternal morbidity & mortality rates.**

Texas' Medicaid provides insurance to low-income, uninsured women while they are pregnant, but this **coverage ends 60 days after delivery.**

Onset of **postpartum depression (PPD)** typically does not occur until at least **4 to 6 weeks after delivery.**

DSHS data suggests this loss of insurance coverage contributes to the **under-diagnosis of PPD** and difficulties accessing care.



# Health Policy Goals

1. Extend Medicaid coverage to increase the number of Texans with health care access, including **12-month health coverage for mothers postpartum**
2. Provide 12-month continuous Medicaid Coverage for children



**1 in 5** Texas children live in poverty but for Black children, it is nearly **1 in 3** and for Latinx children, it is nearly **1 in 4**.



*Equity & Racial Disparities*

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# Equity and Racial Disparities



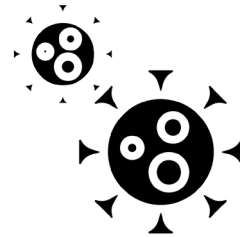
In Texas, the infant mortality rate for black babies is **2x** as high as that of white or Hispanic babies.



Black children are nearly **2x** as likely to be investigated by CPS in Texas, and nearly **2x** as likely to be removed as compared with white children.



4 of the top 10 US cities with the largest gaps between whites and all students of color are in Texas: **Austin, Dallas, Houston, & Fort Worth.**



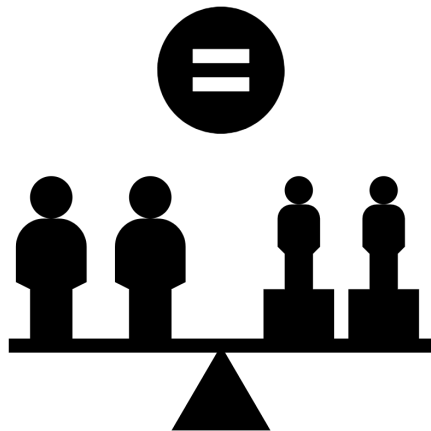
While African Americans make up roughly **13%** of the population in the United States, studies have shown that they account for nearly **60% of COVID-19 related deaths.**

# Equity and Racial Disparities

Multiple agencies work to help Texas families achieve a quality standard of living, however, not all Texans are faced with the same opportunities due to **systemic racism**.

## States must play a role in addressing systemic racism

- The Texas Legislature currently lacks a formal process to determine the impact a proposed law (bill) will have on racial disparities in the state



## Policy Priorities

1. Require the **Sunset Advisory Commission** to assess the agency's efforts to reduce racial disparities when under review.
2. Require **Childhood Racial Disparity Impact Statements** at the request of the lieutenant governor or speaker of the house of representatives.



Approximately **80,000** youth are sex-trafficked in Texas each year.

**35,000** children across Texas attend public schools within 1,000 feet of a suspected Illegal Massage Business.

*Human Trafficking & Child Exploitation*

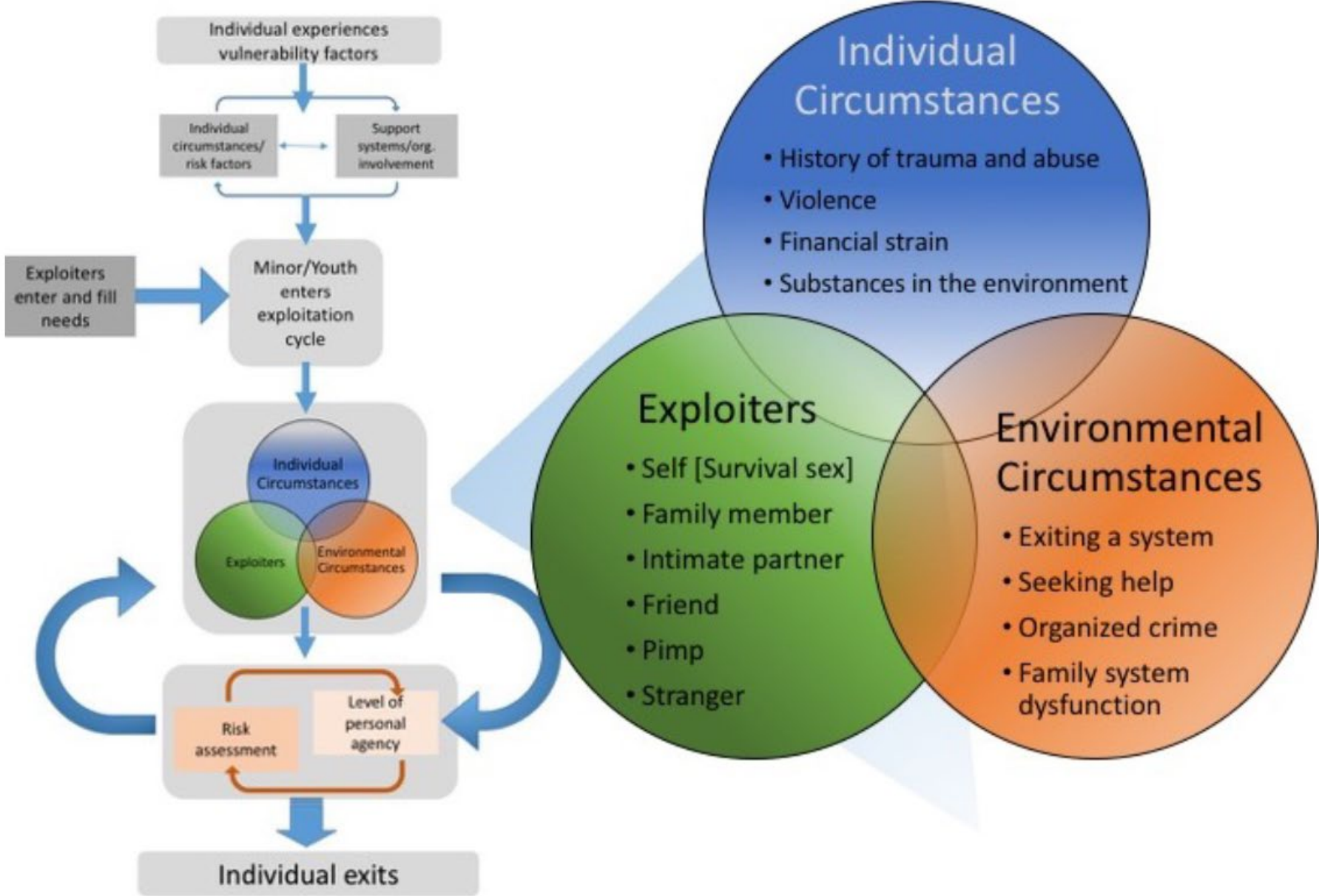
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# Underlying Dynamics

- Primary drivers of vulnerability
- Lack of healthy, trusted relationships
  - Economic necessity



# Anti- Trafficking Policy Recommendations

1. **Prevent** children from becoming vulnerable to traffickers by collaborating and working across issue areas to address root causes
2. **Increase economic opportunities** and supports for survivors of human trafficking.





# ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

- Preparation
- Personal Visits
- Public Hearings
- Testimony
- Op-ed's
- Public Rallies





# BE PREPARED

- Research the issue—we will help!
- Are there key players?
- Know the opposition.
- Have a clear message.
- Have an ask....what do you want?



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

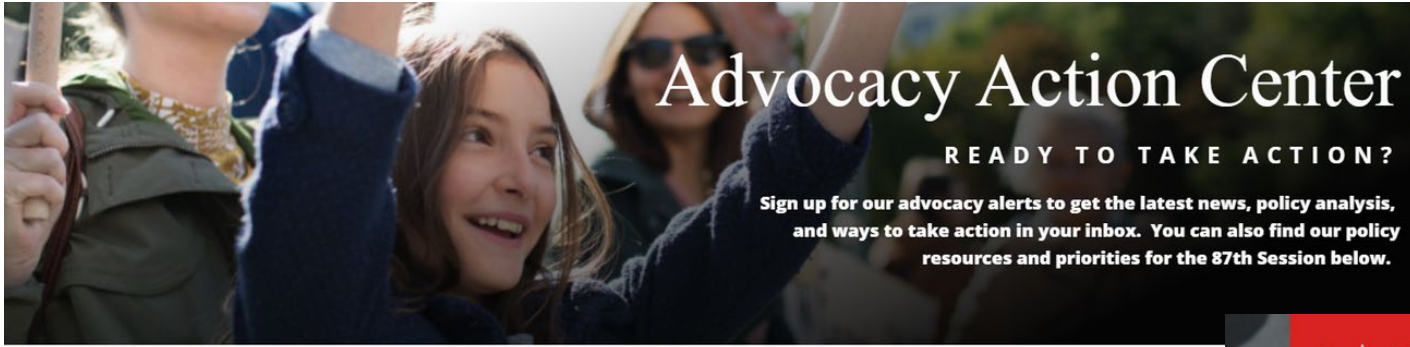
- Get familiar with your elected officials and their stands.
- Gain support, there is power in numbers.
- Personal contact is most effective.
- Don't be intimidated.
- Be brief but informative and precise.
- Be patient—advocacy is a process.
- Start now!





# ADVOCACY ALERTS & SIGN-ON'S

If you haven't already, sign up for C@R advocacy alerts!



## PRIORITIES FOR THE 87TH TEXAS LEGISLATIVE SESSION

This year, the world shut down. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in more insecurity, hunger, and learning loss than any child should experience and disproportionately affected children of color. However, we have the power to reverse course, address the systemic barriers and racial inequities preventing children from reaching their full potential, and build a brighter tomorrow for Texas children.

The public policies addressed in the upcoming 87th Texas Legislative Session can either set our children up for success or leave them further behind. With your help, we can pull the levers of power in favor of children.

**PROMOTE POLICIES TO INCREASE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HIGH-QUALITY CHILD CARE AND STRENGTHEN THE EARLY EDUCATION**

## JOIN OUR EMAIL LIST

We need your help advocating for child-friendly policies! Sign-up for our Advocacy Alerts to stay informed during the 87th Texas Legislative Session and stay up-to-date on the latest actions!

**SIGN UP**



Legislative Opportunity



**SCAN ME**

The 87th Texas Legislative Session is here and now is the time to act! Advocates, child care providers, parents, and stakeholders across Texas have worked together to create early childhood education legislative priorities. These one-pagers provide data, background, and policy recommendations for legislatures, advocates, and community members. To demonstrate a collective voice, we are asking for organizations across the state to sign-on and add their organizations' name in support of these key issues. To view these one-pagers in more depth, please visit <https://childrenatrisk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/87th-ECE-full-slate-2.pdf>

For questions or comments  
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*Speaking Out + Driving Change for Children*