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Fort Worth-Area Child Poverty – Historical and Current Policies Mean Wide Disparities across Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Location

State of Texas Children 2016: Race and Equity in Fort Worth finds wide-ranging racial and ethnic disparities in children's health, education and financial security that demand common sense policy solutions

FORT WORTH – Historical and current policies have created and maintained unequal opportunities and large disparities in child poverty across race, ethnicity and gender, according to [State of Texas Children 2016: Race and Equity in Fort Worth](#), a new Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPP) report released here today. Because people of color were historically denied access to high-opportunity neighborhoods, for example, certain families consequently experienced poor living conditions, fewer services and less economic mobility. Although no longer in legal practice, similar policies have had cumulative effects in the economic and educational benefits and disadvantages that can be passed from generation to generation.

"Fort Worth is fortunate to have a strong, secure and growing economy," said Mayor Betsy Price. "But even as the fastest-growing large city in the nation, one of our biggest focus areas as a community is and will continue to be centered on equipping our future leaders, our city's children. Knowledge is power, which is why we must use data to evaluate services and make improvements in areas that we are lagging behind. In Fort Worth we are working to do more to ensure that no child's zip code determines their future success in life."

These policies and practices may be from Fort Worth's past, but they still have a profound effect on the present. Notably, almost 117,000 children in Tarrant County live in poverty. Of those children, 64,000 are Latino, 29,000 are Black, 62,000 are White and 4,000 are Asian. But the proportion of children affected by poverty within each group tells a different story. In Tarrant County, poverty rates for Latino (33 percent) and Black children (33 percent) are nearly three times higher than they are for White or Asian children. Today, one of every three Hispanic and Black children in Tarrant County lives in poverty.

Read the new report [here](#).

Fort Worth Superintendent Kent Scribner, School Board President Jacinto Ramos and The Parenting Center's Executive Director, Paul Gravely, also made remarks at the event. The North Texas Community Foundation, the Boone Family Foundation, and the Early Learning Alliance co-sponsored today's event.

According to the report, with more than half a million kids living in the Fort Worth metro area, the future of children in Fort Worth will help determine the future of Texas. Finding creative solutions to closing the educational, health and financial gaps between Fort Worth kids from different backgrounds will require intentionally breaking down any obstacles to certain groups of children reaching their full potential and can be a model for the rest of the state.

Key findings include:

- Although the share of the Fort Worth children living in high-poverty neighborhoods is still lower than cities like Dallas, Houston and Austin, the rates of children living in poverty have increased faster in

Fort Worth and Arlington than in these other Texas cities. Twenty-six percent of children in Fort Worth live in high-poverty neighborhoods, up nine percentage points in just five years, and 19 percent of children in Arlington live in high-poverty neighborhoods, up 12 percentage points over the same time period.

- An estimated 26 percent of children (or 130,880 children) in Tarrant County are food-insecure, meaning they lack consistent access to enough food for a healthy diet. Hungry children have a harder time focusing in school and are more likely to have social and behavioral problems.
- Hispanic and Black students in Tarrant County are more likely to be enrolled in disproportionately high-poverty school districts. While these districts can and often do perform well for low-income students, these students are also more likely to have fewer school resources, fewer academic opportunities, and more out-of-school challenges like housing instability and food insecurity.
- Nearly one of every four women (100,000+) in Tarrant County of childbearing age lacks health insurance. The likelihood of being uninsured as a woman between the ages of 15 and 44 differs based on race and ethnicity and can lead to delayed or inconsistent care should a woman become pregnant.

Key policy recommendations:

- Collect more data that is broken down by race and ethnicity.
- Create partnerships between schools, workforce development programs and businesses to promote pathways out of poverty and better support for families.
- Increase access to affordable health insurance for underserved families and women of reproductive age.
- Expand access to school-based child nutrition programs, such as Afterschool Meals, Summer Nutrition and School Breakfast.

"As one of the fastest growing areas in the country, the future of the Fort Worth area and our state depend on the health, education and financial security of all our children—across gender, neighborhood, income, race and ethnicity," said CPPP Associate Director Frances Deviney. "Looking deep into the data, we found that too many children in Fort Worth today continue to face tremendous barriers to opportunity because of the color of their skin."

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The State of Texas Children 2016: Race and Equity in Fort Worth report is part of the State of Texas Children 2016 statewide report. There are now several reports as part of the Kids Count project, a national and state-by-state effort to track the status of children in the U.S. funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Check out the Kids Count Data Center for extensive child well-being data for each of Texas' 254 counties and seven largest metropolitan areas. Visit datacenter.kidscount.org.

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