To identify issues affecting the lives of Tarrant County residents, the UNTHSC research team analyzed and extracted key findings from existing community assessment reports, publicly available statistical indicators and transcriptions of key informant and focus group interviews. The major areas of concern are not likely a surprise, as these were issues that arose with great frequency among most data sources. Furthermore, these issues are entangled with one another, compounding challenges for residents who are trying to improve quality of life for themselves and their families.

**Tarrant County: An Overview of Key Issues**

**Top Identified Issues**
- Housing and Homelessness
- Health, Mental Health and Wellness
- Transportation
- Education, Early Childhood and Youth
- Basic Needs, Emergency Assistance and Financial Stability

**We Are Tarrant County**

Tarrant County is growing rapidly, having gained 237,058 new residents since 2010. It is the third most populous county in Texas and the 16th largest in the United States. Like other counties in the metropolitan area, it is attractive to new residents and businesses because of its cost of living, quality of life, economic potential and cultural offerings.

Tarrant County is a racially and ethnically diverse community. Languages other than English are spoken by 27% of households, with one in five speaking Spanish. Among adults 25 and older, the vast majority hold a high school diploma or equivalency (85%) and 21% have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Full-time, year-round workers earn a median wage of $46,091 per year. Approximately 12% of families in Tarrant County and 19% of children are living below poverty level.

**Population by race/ethnicity**

- Hispanic of any race: 27.8%
- White, Non-Hispanic: 49.2%
- Black/African American, Non-Hispanic: 15.3%
- Asian: 5.0%
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: 0.2%
- Multi-Racial: 2.1%
- Native Non-Hispanic: 0.3%
- Other: 0.1%

**Physical and Mental Healthcare**

In 2018, Tarrant County was ranked 32nd in health outcomes and 72nd in quality of life indicators among 242 ranked counties in Texas. Almost 14% of the Medicare population in Tarrant County was diagnosed with dementia, which is notably higher than the national average of 9.9%.

Among Texas counties with a population greater than 1 million people, Tarrant County ranks the worst in the ratio of residents to primary care providers, dentists and mental health providers. On average, Tarrant County residents report spending about 3.5 days per month experiencing poor mental health and more than 10% of residents report frequent mental distress. In 2016, this contributed to more than 365,000 hospital visits in the county related to mental health, substance misuse or both.

“I was going through a really hard time, and I was actively crying, and it was really, really [hard] … and I called [a health provider] and asked if I could talk to someone in mental health, and they said we can get you in here to see someone in a month.”

— Focus Group Interview Participant

**Ratio of health providers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Primary care physician ratio</th>
<th>Dentist ratio</th>
<th>Mental health provider ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bexar</td>
<td>120.1:1</td>
<td>638:1</td>
<td>1224:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas</td>
<td>148:1</td>
<td>706:1</td>
<td>1244:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris</td>
<td>1738:1</td>
<td>864:1</td>
<td>1768:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarrant</td>
<td>1738:1</td>
<td>1000:1</td>
<td>1758:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travis</td>
<td>1400:1</td>
<td>1000:1</td>
<td>1400:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Housing and Homelessness**

Affordable housing in Tarrant County is increasingly difficult to find, especially for low-income households. Housing prices continue to rise, and the median home purchase price in 2018 was approximately $228,000.

The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Tarrant County exceeded $1,200 in 2018. At that price someone working a minimum-wage job would need to work almost 115 hours a week to afford rent and living expenses.

**6,701 Individuals**

were classified as homeless at any time during 2017 in the Continuum of Care in Tarrant and Parker County
Basic needs such as food, hygiene, electricity and clothing are occasionally overshadowed by larger concerns such as employment and education; however, they are critical parts of wellness.

In 2015, over a quarter of the population in Tarrant County was reported to have had low access to a grocery store or supermarket. A common theme from our focus group and key informant interviews was that the cost of housing, childcare and transportation left people with limited options to break away from living paycheck to paycheck. Lower-wage employment sectors make up approximately 25% of our local workforce, and over 130,000 full-time workers are earning less than $25,000 annually. These examples of financial vulnerability contribute to food and housing insecurity in Tarrant County.

Community environments contribute to overall health and well-being from unoccupied buildings, access to safe recreational spaces and proximity to grocery stores.

Tarrant County is expected to have a 53% employment growth within the next 20 years. It is critical to continue strategic development efforts that prepare the local workforce to meet predicted industry demands, such as healthcare and technology.

Community members also saw the need for more job training, and adult education was frequently mentioned as a key to achieving financial stability.

"Help people prepare for and get good jobs, because people can’t change their lives if they don’t have income. They just can’t."
— Focus Group Interview Participant

For children living in poverty, the knowledge gained in early childhood education programs is predictive of high school graduation and adult success, yet the cost of childcare is often prohibitive for low-income families. In 2016, 4 out of 5 children in poverty, ages 0-5 years old, were not served by an early education program.

Community relationships are a key theme from focus group and key informant interviews was a call for better communication, collaboration and coordination across and among social service, health, education, transportation, workforce, criminal justice and governmental systems.

"It’s not that any one of them has the solution, but they all have a piece to the puzzle. Sometimes they don’t even put their pieces out to make the puzzle, and I think that’s the greatest dilemma."
— Key Informant Interview Participant

Among the five largest urban counties in Texas, Tarrant County enjoys the lowest overall crime rate, and property crimes steadily declined between 2013 and 2016. The majority of cases handled by the District Attorney; however, involve substance possession. There were 4,369 felony drug possession cases filed and possession of marijuana was the most common misdemeanor offense.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Insecurity Prevalence, 2016</th>
<th>Tarrant County</th>
<th>Texas</th>
<th>Nationwide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infant Food Insecurity %</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toddler Food Insecurity %</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Monthly Cost of Childcare for One Child in Tarrant County

- Infant: $850.92
- Toddler: $794.64
- Pre-schooler: $772.80
- School-aged child: $675.08

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infant</th>
<th>Toddler</th>
<th>Pre-schooler</th>
<th>School-aged child</th>
</tr>
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COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT 2018–2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This project would not have been possible without the financial support of the Sid Richardson Foundation and the contributions of Tarrant County organizations:

- 6 Stones Mission Network
- AIDS Outreach Center
- Alzheimer's Association
- Arlington Chamber of Commerce
- Arlington Housing Authority
- Build A Better Hood Foundation
- Catholic Charities Diocese of Fort Worth
- Center for Transforming Lives
- Community Enrichment Center
- Community Frontline
- Community Link
- Fort Worth ISD
- Gatehouse
- GRACE Clinic
- Harvest International Ministry
- Hispanic Wellness Coalition
- Keller Methodist Church
- Lena Pope
- Lisa's Little Angels
- Mission Central
- Open Arms
- Pathfinders
- Sixty & Better (Haltom City & White Settlement Senior Centers)
- Tarrant County College
- Tarrant County Criminal Courts
- The Women's Center of Tarrant County
- True Worth Place
- Valiant Hearts
- YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth

This community assessment was carried out by the University of North Texas Health Science Center (UNTHSC) School of Public Health, in partnership with United Way of Tarrant County and community stakeholders. For more detailed information about our data sources and findings, see our larger summary and technical reports at www.unitedwaytarrant.org/communityassessment