



**MATERNAL AND CHILD
HEALTH AND WELL-BEING:**
A Snapshot of Tarrant County's
Underserved Communities



Center for
Transforming Lives
From Poverty to Prosperity. Together.

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HEALTH AND WELL-BEING:**
A Snapshot of Tarrant County's
Underserved Communities



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Executive Summary

Center for Transforming Lives (CTL) builds cycles of financial and emotional well-being, working side-by-side with women and their children to disrupt the cycle of poverty and homelessness. By providing comprehensive housing services, early childhood education, economic mobility, and clinical counseling services, we address their most critical needs and support mothers in creating long-term sustainability for their families. Our approach is trauma-informed, two-generational, and incorporates best practices rooted in national research to ensure families achieve long-term success.

While 8% of families in Tarrant County live in poverty, 32% of families headed by single mothers live in poverty, contributing to significant destabilization, including homelessness. The most common reasons a family becomes homeless include lack of affordable housing, lack of income, intimate partner violence, racial disparities, and unexpected events such as a major illness.

Poverty during early childhood can interfere with a child's brain development and poverty has been found to have cumulative effects - the longer a person is exposed to poverty, the greater the consequences. Thus, growing up in poverty is detrimental and stressful for children and parents. Stress is not always bad but excessive or intense exposure to stress or stressful experiences without adequate support can lead to toxic stress.

Toxic stress impacts multiple biological systems and disproportionately impacts the brain's emotional center, interfering with both the parent and child's emotional response. This biological damage has been demonstrated to impact short and long-term academic and employment success. Interrelated programming offered by CTL focuses on reducing the impact of toxic stress while ensuring stable housing, quality early childcare, and economic mobility.

This report focuses on women and children under six years of age in single-parent households of the most underserved communities in Tarrant County. Specifically, the report presents data on poverty, homelessness, adverse childhood experiences, trauma, employment, healthcare access and coverage, and school readiness.

For Tarrant County to ensure that every child and family can thrive, it is critical to understand the prevalence of poverty and the state of maternal and child health and well-being. Aside from the moral obligation to ensure well-being, our local economy is contingent upon reducing poverty, homelessness, while promoting a thriving workforce that includes working mothers. No single organization or sector can accomplish this. However, a multi-sector, holistic approach will lead to a sustainable, productive future for women, children, and our community.

**"If it is true that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link,
isn't it also true a society is only as healthy as its sickest citizen
and only as wealthy as its most deprived?"**

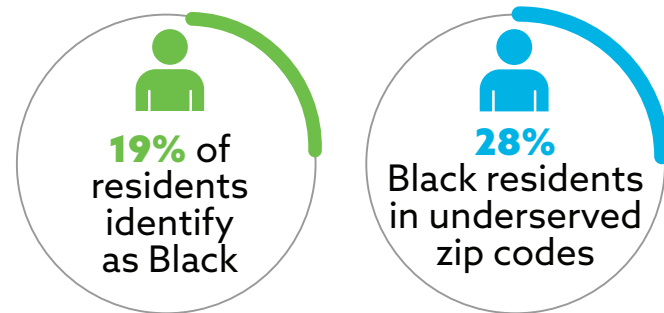
- Maya Angelou

“I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word.”

- Martin Luther King Jr.

Race/Ethnicity

CTL seeks to advocate for changes to local, state, and federal policies that have perpetuated racial disparities. During 2020 in Tarrant County, 75% of residents identified as White. However, data on the most underserved communities of Tarrant County indicate greater diversity¹. For example, in the same year, while only 19% of Tarrant County residents identified as Black, the average percentage of Black residents in underserved zip codes (76010, 76011, 76013, 76102, 76104, 76105, 76119) was 28%. Notably, these communities have inequitable maternal and child health and well-being outcomes².



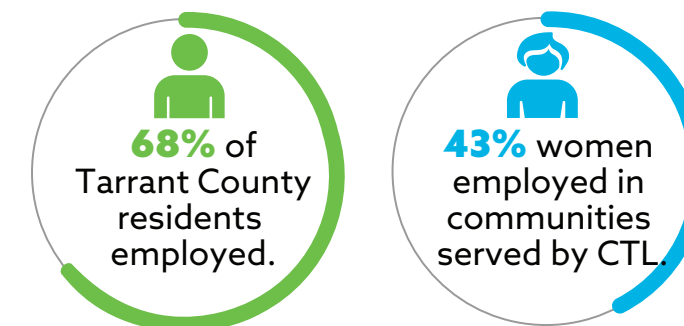
Our work seeks to eradicate barriers to financial and emotional well-being perpetuated by racially inequitable policies and practices. Throughout our community and the state’s history, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) have had inequitable access to programs and resources, thus substandard maternal and child outcomes. We contribute programmatically and through local, state, and federal advocacy to ensure that gender, racial and/or ethnic identity does not predict outcomes.

“Any society that fails to harness the energy and creativity of its women is at a huge disadvantage in the modern world.”

- Tan Wei

Employment

Women are underemployed in Tarrant County, which substantially impacts children and contributes to unstable housing and worsened maternal and child outcomes. During 2020 in Tarrant County, 68% of individuals 16 years of age or older participated in the workforce compared to 62% of women³. Therefore, in communities that CTL serves that have fewer resources, only 44.3% of women were employed. Even more concerning is the lack of participation in the workforce for single mothers with children under six years of age from these same communities, of whom 55% live below the poverty level⁴. Our comprehensive, holistic model includes Economic Mobility Services to support women in gaining employment, launching their own businesses, and ensuring healthy, thriving families.

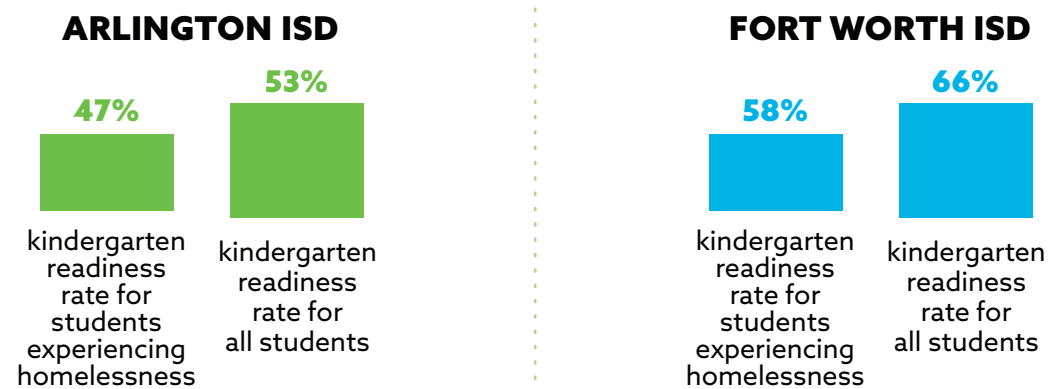


**“Inclusion is not simply about physical proximity.
It is about intentionally planning for the success of all students..”**

- Anonymous

School Readiness

CTL offers high-quality, affordable childcare to disrupt the cycle of poverty for both women and their children. Data was gathered on Fort Worth and Arlington Independent School Districts (ISDs) to compare overall kindergarten readiness with that of economically disadvantaged and homeless students. Due to a lack of affordable, quality childcare, data from 2019-2020 indicates that children experiencing homelessness are entering school unprepared to succeed. In Arlington ISD, 47% of children experiencing homelessness were ready to enter kindergarten compared to 53% of all students⁵. Furthermore, 58% of children experiencing homelessness in Fort Worth ISD were kindergarten-ready compared to 66% of all students⁶. CTL advocates for expanding Early Head Start and Head Start programs to ensure that homeless and economically disadvantaged students do not fall behind.



“Peace – that was the other name for home.”

- Kathleen Norris

Mobility Rate

CTL recognizes that students who are not stably housed have disparate academic outcomes. In the 2019-2020 school year at Fort Worth ISD, Black and Latinx children were three times more likely to be mobile than White children, indicating that they missed six or more weeks of school⁷. CTL's Housing Services program works to ensure that children and families are sustainably housed to ensure that children can thrive in school and reach their full potential.



Children who often move schools have worsened academic performance.

**“As long as poverty, injustice,
and gross inequality exist in our world,
none of us can truly rest.”**

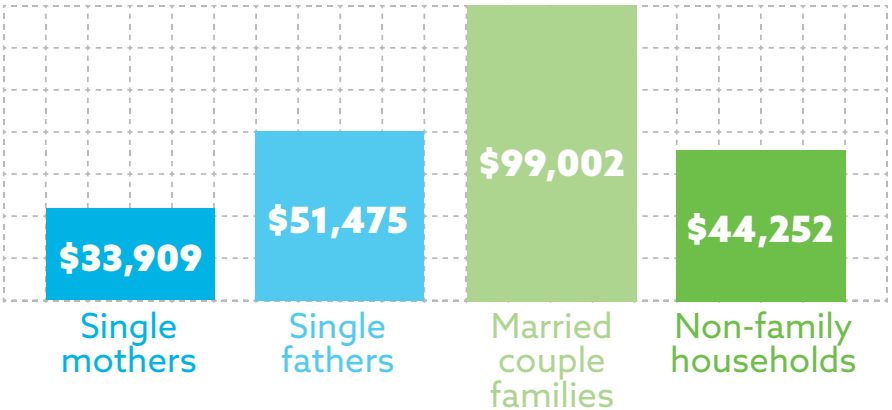
- Nelson Mandela

**“The test of our progress is not whether we add more
to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether
we provide enough for those who have too little.”**

- Franklin D. Roosevelt

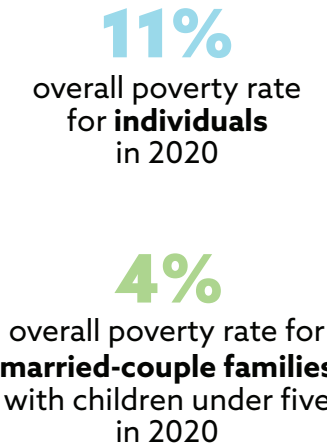
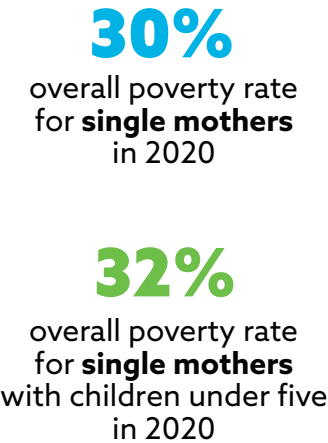
Area Median Income

CTL witnesses firsthand the challenge that women living below the area median income face in ensuring their family's needs are met. In 2020, single mothers in Tarrant County had the lowest median income (\$33,909) compared to other household structures including single fathers (\$51,475) married-couple families (\$99,002), and non-family households (\$44,252). On average, single mothers made less than half the overall median household income level and nearly 66% less than that of married-couple families⁸.



Poverty Level

Children who experience poverty are more likely to have developmental delays and disparate academic outcomes and are less likely to be up to date on immunizations and well-child visits. The poverty rate for single mothers in Tarrant County was 30% in 2020⁹. This was more than triple the overall family rate (8%). Among single mothers with children under five, the rate was 32%, almost eight times that of married-couple families with children under five (4%)¹⁰.

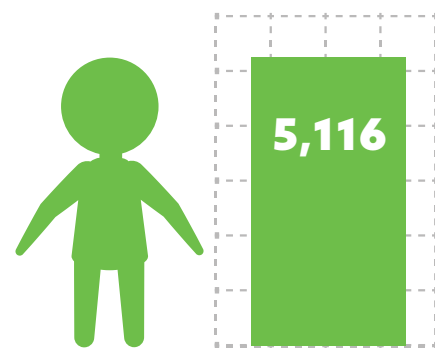


“One of the oldest human needs is having someone to wonder where you are when you don’t come home at night.”

- Margaret Mead

Homelessness

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a key protective factor against child maltreatment is living in a community with access to safe, stable housing. CTL provides Housing Services to ensure that women and children can move towards permanent housing, including emergency shelter, transitional housing, and rapid rehousing. Across all school districts in Tarrant County, there were 5,116 total children experiencing homelessness during the 2021-2022 school year, including 1,945 children in Fort Worth ISD and 1,411 children in Arlington ISD¹¹. Notably, according to HUD, 51% of homeless children are under six, indicating that the actual number of homeless children is much higher. CTL partners with providers throughout the community to ensure that women and children are prioritized in housing services.



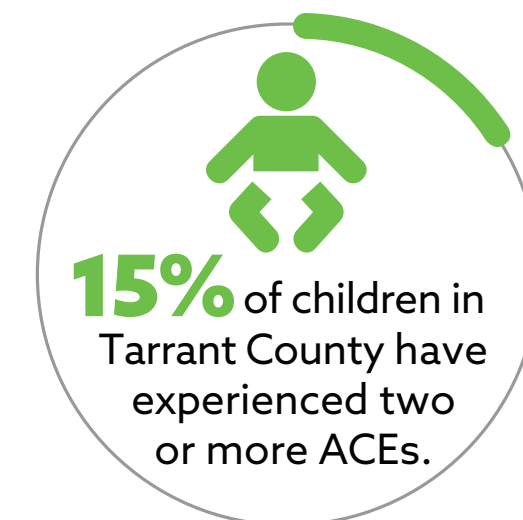
Number of Homeless School Aged Children in Tarrant County.

“Our job is not to toughen our children up to face a cruel and heartless world. Our job is to raise children who will make the world a little less cruel and heartless.”

- LR Knost

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) have been demonstrated to have long-term consequences on physical and mental well-being. The most common types of ACEs in Tarrant County in 2021 were divorce or separation of parents or guardians (23%) and living with anyone who was mentally ill, suicidal, or severely depressed (10%). Around 15% of children experienced between two and eight ACEs in 2021¹². CTL recognizes the critical need across Tarrant County for mental health services and continues to expand clinical counseling services.



“The idea that some lives matter less is the root of all that is wrong with the world.”

- Paul Farmer

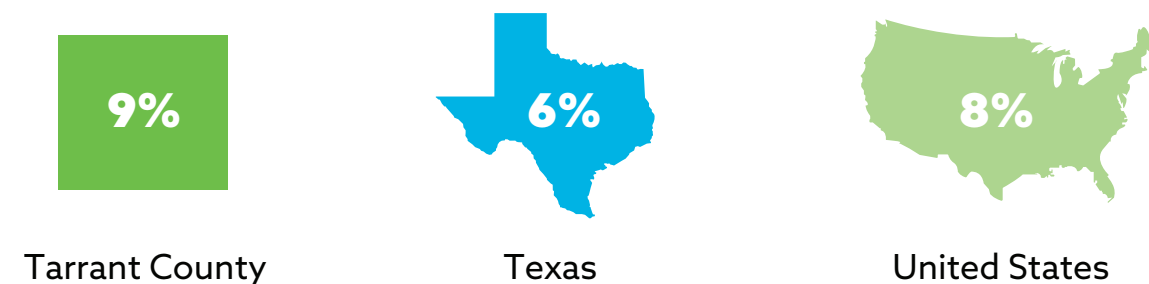
“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”

- Frederick Douglass

Eviction Rates

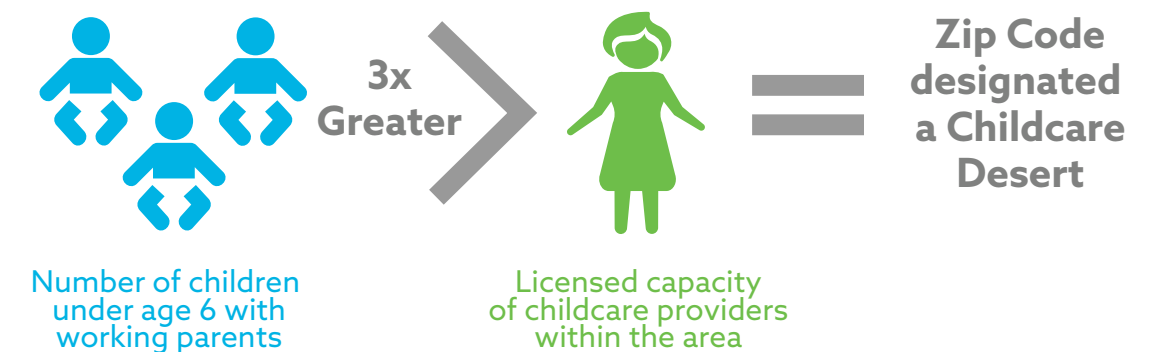
CTL advocates to protect families with children from eviction in our community, recognizing that eviction can lead to chronic homelessness. The eviction rate in Tarrant County of 9%¹³ between 2018 and 2022 was notably higher than the Texas rate (6%) and the U.S. rate (8%) during this same time period¹⁴.

Eviction Rates by Comparison



Access to Childcare

CTL recognizes that access to quality childcare protects today's workforce and prepares the workforce of tomorrow. However, many low-income families with working parents do not have access to childcare in Tarrant County, adversely impacting both children and parents¹⁵. Between 2021 and 2022, less than half of the total childcare providers in Tarrant County offered subsidized seats allowing for only 52% of working parents to have childcare¹⁶. The majority of working parents in Tarrant County during this time lived in a childcare desert¹⁷. Notably, a zip code is a "childcare desert" if the number of children under age 6 with working parents is three times greater than the licensed capacity of childcare providers in the area¹⁸.



“Wellness, I came to realize, will not happen by accident. It must be a daily practice, especially for those of us who are more susceptible to the oppressiveness of the world.”

– Jenna Wortham

Health Insurance

Families without health insurance are often hit with sizable bills that may impact their ability to remain in stable housing. During 2020 and 2021 in Tarrant County, 20% of single mothers were uninsured, which is higher than the rate overall uninsured rate (16%)¹⁹. More than a third of Texas children were dropped from health insurance from 2020-2021 because it was unaffordable²⁰. In Tarrant County, during the same period, 9.2% of children under six and 12% of children ages six through 18 were uninsured²¹.



More than a third of Texas Children were dropped from health insurance from 2020-2021 because it was unaffordable.

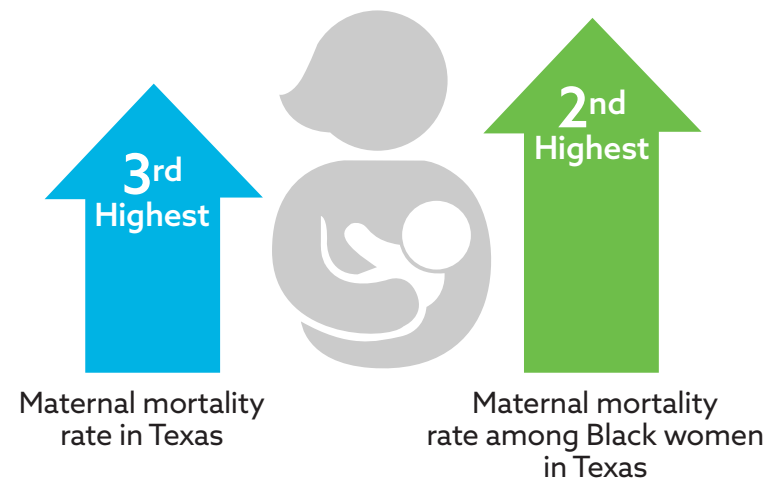
“A society that places a low value on its mothers and the process of birth will suffer an array of negative repercussions for doing so. Good beginnings make a positive difference in the world, so it is worth our while to provide the best possible care for mothers and babies this throughout this extraordinary influential part of life.”

– Ina May Caskin

Infant and Maternal Mortality

The leading cause of infant mortality in 2019 in Tarrant County and Texas was congenital malformations. Public Health Region 2/3, including Dallas and Fort Worth²², had the third-highest maternal mortality rate in Texas and the second-highest rate among Black women²³. The maternal mortality rate for region 2/3 was 25 per 100,000 live births from 2012-2015²⁴ compared to the maternal mortality rate for Texas of 23 per 100,000 live births from 2018-2020²⁵. CTL recognizes the critical need for coordinated and aligned services to support healthy pregnancies and infant care²⁶.

Public Health Region 2/3
(includes Dallas and Fort Worth)



“In too many instances, the march to globalization has also meant the marginalization of women and girls. That must change.”

- Hillary Clinton

Women’s Health

For families to thrive, CTL recognizes that we must ensure the health of women. In Tarrant County, 21% of women had no health care coverage²⁷, 66% reported being obese or overweight²⁸, 16% reported food insecurity²⁹, 22% reported a depressive disorder³⁰, and only 77% had a medical home³¹. We cannot expect a healthy child population if we do not ensure mothers’ well-being in our community³².

21%

Tarrant County women with **no** health insurance

66%

Tarrant County women reported being obese or overweight

16%

Tarrant County women reporting food insecurity

22%

Tarrant County women reported a depressive disorder

77%

Tarrant County women had a medical home

“Children are one-third of our population and all of our future.”

- Select panel for the Promotion of Child Health

Children’s Health

During 2021, nearly 30% of children in Tarrant County were told they had anxiety problems or depression (triple the rate for Texas), 17% sought treatment or counseling in the past year, and 10% did not have consistent health insurance coverage during the past year³³. CTL recognizes that children’s physical and mental well-being are directly correlated to academic and lifelong success and the availability and affordability of mental health services.

30%

anxiety problems or depression

17%

sought treatment or counseling

10%

inconsistent health insurance coverage

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Conclusion

In Tarrant County, women and children of color continue to have worsened health, well-being, housing, and employment outcomes. CTL seeks to meet the needs of families with integrated services that contribute to sustainable improvement. However, CTL believes that further investment is needed in comprehensive services for women, children, and communities to disrupt the cycle of poverty and ensure thriving families and communities.

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