



## Center Spotlight

### Faculty In The News

Our incredible faculty members continue to receive significant media coverage. See the latest articles that showcase their exceptional expertise and contributions in their respective fields.



### Impact of heat

Kevin Lanza, PhD, spoke with several media outlets on the impact of extreme heat on children and communities. He spoke with the [Houston Landing](#) about health inequities in low-income communities, the [Texas Observer](#) about the health effects of physical labor in the heat, and [KUT](#) on bus shelters' ability to protect against heat.

Steven Kelder, PhD, offered insights to the Children at Risk segment on [KPFT Houston](#) on how Texas kids are impacted by extreme weather.



## Healthy school lunches

Deanna Hoelscher, PhD, RDN, gave the [Austin American-Statesman](#) some tips on how to make healthy school lunches fun, including making wraps and adding dips to dishes.

Dolores Woods, RDN, spoke with [KPRC](#) in Houston and [FOX 26 Houston](#) about nutritious lunch and snack ideas (pinwheel wraps, no-bake, healthy cookies) that parents can pack for their kids during the new school year.



## Healthy meal swaps

Dolores Woods, RDN, spoke with [USA Today](#) on the health benefits of yogurt and potential benefits of kombucha. She also spoke with [Healthline](#) about the benefits of olive oil.

Diana Guevara, MPH, RD, shared some healthy grilled meals to try with [FOX 26 Houston](#). She also spoke with [Telemundo Houston](#) on foods you can eat to stay hydrated during the summer.



## Weight loss surgeries among teens

More than 400 media outlets — including [NBC Nightly News](#), [NPR](#), and [Time Magazine](#) — picked up a study by Sarah Messiah, PhD, MPH, on the rise in weight loss surgeries among kids and teens.



## Volunteering among youth

Several media outlets including [Health Day](#) and [U.S. News & World Report](#) covered a study by Drs. Kevin Lanza, Ethan Hunt, Dale Mantey, and Steven Kelder about the effect of volunteering on youth's physical and mental health.

[Read more news >](#)

# Healthy Summer Challenge

The Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living Healthy Summer Challenge wraps up this month with a focus on mind and body. We have 28 fun activities to help kids and families prioritize themselves before the school year! Our August favorites include a DIY family spa night, volunteering one morning, and laying in the grass. Share the challenge with children and families in your life and on social media, and use #HealthySummerChallenge23.

Learn more about the challenge on our [blog](#).



## Save the Date!

Sept.  
12

The **2025 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee** invites the public to present oral comments (two minutes per commenter) during its meeting on September 12. Registration to provide oral comments opens tomorrow with limited spots! Learn how to register [here](#).

Sept.  
15

Rice University's **Baker Institute for Public Policy** hosts a discussion on closing the COVID-19 achievement gap in schools. The event will kick off with a keynote speaker followed by a panel discussion and Q&A with researchers, policymakers, parents, and school administrators.

Sept.  
28-29

The **dPAD 2023 Fall Symposium** enables faculty and trainees to share their research, hear from experts in the field, and network with others. This event aims to promote discussions and presentations based on successful studies, as well as to identify existing resources and opportunities to collaborate with field experts.

Nov.  
2

The Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living's annual **Philip R. Nader Legacy of Health Lectureship** aims to promote and inspire academics, providers, public health students, and community residents to stimulate the field of primary prevention.

**Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration  
(TX RPC) Project**

The TX RPC Project recently released new Texas-focused, data-driven reports:

- [SNAP Gap](#)
- [Grocery Gap](#)
- [Economic and Business Benefits of SNAP](#)
- [Health Benefits of SNAP](#)

[View More Health Policy Resources](#)

Learn more about the TX RPC Project [here](#).

**SNAP Gap**  
June 11, 2023

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

1. In 2018, Texas ranked 45th in the nation for SNAP participation, with only 75% of eligible individuals enrolled and receiving benefits.
2. With a large SNAP Gap, the potential economic and health benefits seen with SNAP participation will not be fully realized.

**What is SNAP?**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a federal nutrition and health program administered by each state. SNAP provides benefits that supplement the food budget and provide additional nutritional quality for eligible adults and children. (1)

- Even though SNAP is 100% federally funded, the state of Texas is responsible for general program administration and program integrity. (2)
- The state is also responsible for determining the eligibility of individuals and households, issuing for SNAP benefits and is responsible for assisting with issuing monthly allotments of benefits. (2)
- SNAP has been shown to positively influence people experiencing food insecurity, as well as positively impact economic development and quality of life. (3)
- Around 41 million U.S. residents (12% of the U.S. population) and 3.4 million Texans (11% of the state's population) received SNAP benefits in 2022. (4)
- More than 70% of SNAP participants in Texas were families with children, and around 27% of recipients were families with older adults or people living with a disability. (1)

**What is the "SNAP Gap"?**

The "SNAP Gap" is the difference between the number of individuals and families who are eligible for SNAP and the total number enrolled. (5)

- Nationally, 82% of eligible individuals and families participate in SNAP, leaving 18% of eligible individuals unenrolled. In Texas, only 75% of eligible individuals enrolled receive SNAP benefits. (5)
- Eligible households not enrolled in SNAP tend to be in more densely populated areas, suggesting that rural areas participate in SNAP at higher rates than urban areas. (6)

75% TEXAS 82% NATIONAL

UTHealth Houston School of Public Health | Texas Health Resources | Texas Health Institute for Health Equity

## 88th Texas Legislative Session (2023) Project Achievements

### LEGISLATIVE BILL TRACKER

460

Child and Community Health Bills

}

45

Tracked Bills Passed Into Laws

TX RPC staff tracked **460 bills** impacting child and community health over the 140-day session. Filed bills are compared against those filed in prior sessions and provide a historical context for legislative action. **45 of the tracked bills were passed into law this session.**

### HEALTH POLICY RESOURCES

22

Health Policy Reports Created

The reports include Texas data created in response to legislative requests.

**Topics:** mental health, healthcare access, vaccines, maternal and child health, food-related topics (SNAP, food Rx), and school-based health.

### COLLABORATION INTERACTIONS

TX RPC researchers and staff interacted with Texas legislators over a 6-month period to provide them with data-driven information for the session.

436

INTERACTIONS WITH LEGISLATORS

375

EMAIL ENGAGEMENTS

## Upcoming Webinars

AUGUST

23

## Immunizations: Vaccines Cause Adults

**Catherine Troisi, PhD**  
Associate Professor, Management, Policy & Community Health  
UTHealth Houston School of Public Health

REGISTER →

AUGUST

31

## Evaluation of Texas Opt-in Policy for Sex Education and Abuse Prevention

**Melissa Peskin, PhD**  
Professor and Vice Chair, Health Promotion & Behavioral Sciences  
UTHealth Houston School of Public Health

**Jen Biundo, MPAff, CPH**  
Senior Director, Research and Policy  
Healthy Futures of Texas

REGISTER →

SEPTEMBER

6

## Youth/Child Cardiovascular and Environmental Health: Perspectives from South America

**Augusto César Ferreira De Moraes, PhD, MSc**  
Assistant Professor, Epidemiology, Human Genetics & Environmental Sciences  
UTHealth Houston School of Public Health in Austin

SEPTEMBER

14

# Safe Streets for Everyone?

Implications of School and Municipal Policies on Safe Routes to School Implementation and Equity

**Sarah S. Bentley, MPH**

Research Coordinator

UTHealth Houston School of Public Health in Austin

**Leigh Ann Ganzar, DrPh, MPH**

Senior Evaluator

Professional Data Analysts

Find past webinars [here](#).

## Follow Along on Social Media



[X \(Twitter\)](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Youtube](#)

## Austin Campus

We are excited to welcome new students to the Austin location this fall!

Orientation will take place on **Aug. 22**, and the first day of class is **Aug. 28**.

Students are coming from all across the country including New York, California, and Florida. We wish all of our faculty, staff, and students a great semester and year!

Applications for the 2024-25 school year open **Aug. 17**.

This semester, we are welcoming:

35

new  
master's  
students

8

new  
doctoral  
students

Donate



Research and health promotion activities of the Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living are funded by gifts from individuals like you, foundations, or corporations and by grants from government and state agencies.

Every donation, no matter the size, makes a difference in our vision of Healthy Children in a Healthy World.

[Make a Donation](#)

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Alexandra van den Berg, PhD, MPH, Associate Director  
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Ali Linan, Communications Assistant and Newsletter Editor  
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 **UTHealth Houston**  
School of Public Health



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