



## Building Community Resilience: Greater Dallas, Texas

November 2019

*“The common language and focus developed within the Dallas team has resulted in our expanded partnership and joint work with families. Our comprehensive approach to parents and children within the early childhood center setting will fortify families to prevent ACEs from occurring in these young children.” – Sue Schell, VP Behavioral Health, Children’s Health (2019)*

### The Greater Dallas BCR Partners

The Building Community Resilience collaborative serves as a central strategy and organizing platform to address health disparities and community equity with a growing list of community non-profit, city and regional partners in Greater Dallas. Adopted by the Dallas City Council last year, the Resilient Dallas Strategy will use the BCR process to address health inequities and disparities. In addition to working directly with city leaders, the incoming director of the Dallas County Health Department is actively engaged in exploring avenues to collaborate with BCR partners to address the Pair of ACEs in the region.

The Dallas BCR network is a public-private coalition that includes several city government offices such as the Office of Community Care, the Office of Human Rights, and the Office of Welcoming Communities and Immigrant Affairs. Private and non-profit partners include the Arlington-Mansfield Area YMCA @ Cooper Street, Big Thought, Children’s Health (the eighth largest pediatric care provider in the country), ChildCareGroup, the region’s largest provider of early childhood education programs, and Dallas County Health and Human Services. Together they are actively implementing programs and shifting practice and policy to address the Pair of ACEs in the region.

### Community Context

As income inequality has become more pronounced throughout the United States, Dallas has experienced exponential growth in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. Since 2000, the number of people in poverty in the City of Dallas has increased by nearly 40 percent while the total population has increased by only 7.6 percent. Coupled with deep and longstanding disparities in health, education, access to job opportunities, and community resources, Dallas’ economic resilience is facing significant challenges: pernicious economic and racial segregation, spatial mismatch between the location of low-skill jobs and low-income communities seeking steady employment, a dearth of workforce training and credentialing, and a

### What is Building Community Resilience?

Building Community Resilience (BCR) is a national network and learning collaborative that seeks to improve the health and life outcomes of children, families, and communities. Teams in six regions across the country are using the BCR process and tools to help their communities not only ‘bounce back’ in the face of adversity but bounce forward. Over the past four years, BCR teams have helped build and strengthen the buffers that can prevent negative outcomes associated with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), particularly in the context of adverse community environments (ACEs)—the [Pair of ACEs](#).

Using the BCR process and tools, teams work to align large systems with one another—such as health care, city government, and education—and also with community-based partners, including parenting support services and grassroots health advocacy. Teams also develop strategies – from implementing trauma-informed practices to data sharing and advocating for policy change – that bolster strengths, fill gaps, and ultimately build child, family, and community resilience. Teams identify community strengths and gaps, work in partnership with community not on community, develop a shared understanding of adversities and goals, and identify concrete policy asks to pursue. The teams use the BCR tools and resources, including the BCR Coalition Building and Communications Guide, the Partner Build Grow Action Guide, and the Policy & Advocacy Guide, all of which are also free to the public.

BCR is part of the Sumner M. Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness at the George Washington University’s Milken Institute School of Public Health. The national BCR team at GW provides technical assistance, including strategic planning, facilitation of cross-sector information sharing, support for data and measurement, development of policy strategies, convening, and communications support.



decreasing percentage of safe, affordable housing units. Many of the city's poorest neighborhoods experience a variety of social and transportation barriers that prevent residents from accessing economic and educational opportunities that could improve their well-being and quality of life. Additionally, due to the city's close proximity to the U.S. southern border, the region is on the front lines of responding to individual and community trauma and unrest due to enhanced border immigration enforcement and immigrant family separation policies.

Dallas has many strengths to draw upon in community resilience building efforts, including a network of nonprofit organizations working to address the Pair of ACEs in impacted communities. At the government level, the City of Dallas has convened a number of task forces around issues that threaten resilience – including poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and teen pregnancy – with charters to develop solutions and improve outcomes alongside community partners. The child poverty rate is far too high, yet it appears to be improving -- decreasing from a high of 37.5 percent in 2014 to 35.6 percent in 2016 (U.S. Census Bureau).

### **Evolving Partnerships and Goals**

Children's Health initially led the BCR efforts in Dallas, but over the past two years the anchor role has become increasingly shared as the scope of the network's activities broadened beyond health care to include local government and non-profits serving the communities facing the greatest burden of the Pair of ACEs. From the beginning, the Dallas team's focus has worked to "go beyond hospital walls to reach children and families in the community."

The City of Dallas began its collaboration with BCR in the spring of 2017, when it adopted the BCR process, tools, and resources to organize and drive health equity as one of the pillars of its overall resilience work, supported through the 100 Resilient Cities Initiative, pioneered by the Rockefeller Foundation. (Please read the [100 Resilient Cities blog, describing how the City of Dallas is partnering with BCR](#) to solve public health challenges.) Resilient Dallas' vision is to build a resilient, equitable 21<sup>st</sup> century Dallas by improving outcomes for Dallas' most vulnerable residents in four key areas: economic inclusion, healthy communities, community infrastructure, and urban mobility.

### *Sharpening the Lens on Equity with a Focus on Poverty*

Equity became the overarching goal for the Dallas BCR effort as outlined in the city's Resilience Strategy. "Being equitable means thinking about who's around the table," noted a team member. Using the BCR process, the City of Dallas is now engaging all aspects of the community, including stakeholders traditionally not invited to the table, and shaping the larger policy environment. "From the Mayor's office to the neighborhood crime watch captain to our Resilience partners, we strive to achieve common goals, better opportunities and outcomes for all residents and their families," described Theresa O'Donnell, the city's first Chief Resilience Officer.

### *Poverty in Greater Dallas: Root Causes Driving the Pair of ACEs*

In early 2019 the Dallas team made a key decision to focus its equity work, and adopted the '[nine drivers of poverty](#),' identified by the Mayor's Task force on Poverty, as essential guideposts for change. These nine drivers were identified through a Dallas County Economic Opportunity Assessment conducted by the Communities Foundation of Texas and the Center for Public Policy Priorities:

- Sharp decline in median income
- Declining share of middle-income households with increasing numbers of "have" and "have not" neighborhoods
- Lack of affordable transportation
- Lack of homeownership, high rental percentage and single-family rentals
- Increase in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty
- High number of households with children living in poverty
- Lack of educational attainment
- High percentage of limited English proficiency
- High teen birth rates
- High poverty rates for single women heads of households with children

## **Greater Dallas BCR Community Embedded Initiatives**

In its work to address health disparities, community equity, and the Pair of ACEs, the Dallas BCR network has focused on several initiatives.

### *Family University*

Family University, the first initiative launched by the Dallas BCR collaborative, is an initiative of ChildCareGroup. Within the framework of ChildCareGroup's two-generation program model, Family University brings together parents of children in its early childhood education programs, to learn about resources and opportunities for parenting support and how to access other programs. Presentations primarily led by Children's Health, help participating families build a supportive community that is sustained beyond the duration of the program. The Family University programs continue to grow as ChildCareGroup has received funding to spread the program to more sites. Children's Health is providing parent sessions at multiple locations throughout Dallas.

In the fall of 2019, Children's Health and ChildCareGroup increased the collaboration by piloting integrated behavioral health at one of the ChildCareGroup's early childhood centers. The Children's Health clinician is able to observe the children in their learning and peer activities, support the teachers in their individual strategies and work with the families in person or virtually in managing their child's cognitive development and behaviors. The team is currently developing a curriculum, Behavioral Health Begins at Birth, to assist families with newborns to implement strategies aimed for early neuro-cognitive development and the prevention of ACEs.

### *Integrated Behavioral Health*

Children's Health's Integrated Behavioral Health program embeds behavioral health clinicians as full members of their pediatric medical teams. By being part of the child's medical home, they are able to intervene as soon as ACEs are identified, making behavioral healthcare a part of routine medical care. They function as behavioral health service providers as well as care managers for all behavioral health issues in support of the medical providers in treating the whole child and family. State funding beginning in 2020 will allow Children's Health to increase the number of medical homes served and, in partnership with the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School, make child psychiatry consultation available to pediatricians across North Texas.

### *School-based Tele-Behavioral Health and CHIP Enrollment*

In June 2017, the Dallas BCR network added two additional Children's Health programs to its portfolio. One program is the expansion of the Integrated Behavioral Health Program into area high schools that takes advantage of technology to connect with adolescents in need of services. The school counselor refers the student to Children's Health for a brief assessment, including an ACEs screening. If counseling sessions are recommended, appointments occur virtually with the student at school and the provider or caregiver connected from elsewhere. State funding in 2020 will also increase this program across the area with expansion to 150 additional school campuses.

The second program focuses on Children's Health Insurance Plan (CHIP) enrollment, which provides health insurance for low-income children in Texas. The CHIP enrollment program coordinates data sharing and service provision using the [Pieces Iris](#) system, allowing medical care, behavioral health, and social service providers to work together to provide holistic care for children and their families.

New to the Children's Health BCR team is the Health Equity Specialist for the organization who is directly involved in our system-wide health equity work. Specifically, the Health Equity team is working to collect and standardize racial, ethnic, and language data for our patients and families to ensure we are providing care that is both culturally and linguistically effective. The team is also standardizing how the organization screens for social determinants of health. The screening has been implemented in pilot sites across our health system and integrated within our electronic health record. This will connect to our database of community-based organizations and track outcomes when community needs are identified.

## Partnering with the Public Health Sector

As part of the [national BCR collaborative's partnership with the National Association of City and County Health Officials \(NACCHO\)](#), the Dallas BCR effort is strengthening ties with local public health agencies. A key activity of this national partnership is using the Mobilizing Action through Planning and Partnership (MAPP) strategic planning process facilitated by NACCHO. BCR is leveraging the new national partnership and the MAPP process to establish and deepen links between local health departments, community, and the systems that serve community health. The Dallas BCR team's deepening engagement with Dallas County Health Department will play an important role in furthering this work.

## BCR Collaborative Learning and Technical Assistance

One of BCR's most important contributions to Dallas is that it has given its partners across a range of sectors "the language to understand what's happening," says a team member. This common language "resonates in every meeting. It helps partners understand more deeply the impact of [adverse community] environments and how to build buffers in the community." As a team member describes, "BCR is more than just programs. It's about true systems change...how to invest long term in community." With the *Resilient Strategy* complete, the Dallas team is working to implement the recommendations adopted by the City Council and effectively leverage supportive resources provided by BCR and identify strategies that will optimize the city government's impact for building resilience.

BCR also provides policy support, helping the Dallas team identify and align policy opportunities on the national, state and local levels. Some notable policy supports provided to date by BCR include facilitating a Dallas Mayor's conference call on collaboration in February, 2017; providing BCR process information that was included in the Resilient Dallas Strategy; actively working with the Chief Resilience Officer to build BCR into City of Dallas goals and initiatives. In 2018, Cheryl McCarver, a longstanding leader in the BCR efforts, presented the BCR process, resources, and examples of the work to help Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Office of Regional Operations (ORO) in Dallas and their partners create public-private partnerships, thus helping align federal and local efforts to build a resilient Dallas.

## Next Steps

In the coming year, the Dallas team will develop its work around the 'nine pillars of poverty' identified by the Mayor's Task Force on Poverty. They will also continue to build relationships, including with new community partners as well as paving the way for new leadership at the Dallas County Health Department to join in this work. The Dallas team will continue to actively engage city leaders in the Office of Community Care, the Office of Human Rights, and the Office of Welcoming Communities and Immigrant Affairs to further embed BCR's communications tools, data analysis and focus on shared priorities on addressing the nine drivers of poverty.

The Dallas team will also continue to leverage BCR's national connections to boost its local resilience work. Through the national BCR collaborative, a number of exciting partnership opportunities are being discussed. The American Psychological Association's (APA) Adult and Children Together (ACT) Raising Safe Kids Program is working to enrich the Dallas Family University curriculum with a focus on positive discipline, as requested by parents. The national BCR collaborative's connections have facilitated Dallas' participation in the KaBOOM Play Everywhere Challenge to create more spaces for children to play and be physically active in Dallas. The Dallas BCR team is exploring regional partnership opportunities with organizations and city leaders in other TX cities, including Austin, San Antonio and Houston to develop a regional approach to building resilient communities throughout Texas.

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