TEXANS CARE for CHILDREN

NOVEMBER 2026



POLICY AGENDA FOR THE

2027 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Texas faces a number of challenges — and opportunities — heading into the 90th legislative session. We want Texas to move from having the highest children's uninsured rate in the US to ensuring all eligible kids get the health coverage they need. We urge lawmakers to reduce the state's high maternal mortality rate and ensure more moms have healthy pregnancies and healthy babies. The Legislature can give more options to parents of young children by reducing the waiting list for child care scholarships and opening the door to public pre-k to more kids. Legislators also have an opportunity to help more youth stay safely with their families — instead of entering psychiatric hospitals or foster care. The following recommendations will put Texas on a path to achieve these goals.

CHILD PROTECTION

When it's safe, keep more children with their own families instead of placing them in foster care.

- Ensure more parents have access to an attorney during CPS cases by investing in the Family Protection Program at the Texas Indigent Defense Commission (TIDC).
- Improve access to child abuse and neglect prevention and family preservation services, including the Texas Family First program, to help families stay safely together and reduce CPS removals of children from their parents.
- Ensure pregnant women and new moms who need treatment for drug and alcohol use are able to get help without fear of CPS.
- Improve oversight and accountability of Community Based Care to support children in foster care.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Give parents more options when their children's intense mental health challenges put them at risk of entering a psychiatric hospital or foster care.

- Ensure children with the most complex mental health challenges are able to get YES Waiver services.
- Invest in critical mental health services such as youth crisis outreach teams, Multisystemic Therapy teams, and the 9-8-8 suicide and crisis lifeline.
- Ensure more parents have access to Certified Family Partners (CFPs) to help them navigate and access available resources when their kids have significant mental health needs.
- Improve access to key mental health services for children by covering them under Medicaid.

HEALTHY FAMILIES

Ensure that Texans who are already eligible for health programs can use them. Strengthen support for infants, toddlers, and pregnant and postpartum women.

- Maintain strong programs to support the health of children and families, including Medicaid health insurance, Healthy Texas Women, and SNAP.
- Ensure kids, pregnant women, and other Texans who are already eligible for health care can enroll smoothly without long delays or unintended bureaucratic barriers.
- Ensure that Texans enrolled in Medicaid have access to an adequate network of participating health care providers and accurate information on their availability.
- Offer a health insurance option to low-income adults by accepting Medicaid expansion funding.
- Improve access to key maternal health services, including care provided by doulas to support healthy pregnancies and maternal mental health support.
- Ensure pregnant women and new mothers have access to drug and alcohol treatment services.
- Invest in Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) services for toddlers with disabilities and developmental delays to ensure funding keeps up with rising costs.

EARLY LEARNING

Ensure parents have options for affordable, high-quality early learning programs that nurture children during the critical early years of brain development and allow parents to go to work.

- Invest in additional child care scholarships to ensure more parents can go to work and children can attend high-quality child care.
- Extend eligibility for public pre-k to additional students, including children with disabilities.
- Increase funding for public education, including high-quality full-day pre-k.
- Review current pre-k partnership rules to protect parental choice.
- Ensure out-of-school suspensions in pre-k through 2nd grade are only used in extreme cases.

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