# Foundations to Thrive

## A Travis County **Asset Mapping** Project

St. David's Foundation

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The greatest innovations often come not from brainstorms in isolation, but from connecting existing ideas in new ways.

*– Jack Shonkoff, Center on the Developing Child*

In 2017, the St. David's Foundation (SDF) made a commitment to reduce childhood adversity and build community resilience. This commitment was in response to the growing body of research showing how early brain development and early experiences are at the root of most major diseases and societal problems. While we are eager to begin this work in depth, we believe that before we start investing for tomorrow, we need to take stock of where we are today.

To inform our work, SDF engaged the Texas Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing to identify the local assets or "bright spots" within various sectors that support families and/or connect communities. We want to better understand what assets already exist that we can learn from, build on, connect with, and scale up to help create a stronger, more resilient community.

This asset map focuses on Travis County. We intend to do similar asset maps for the other Central Texas Counties in the Foundation's funding area. This report is not intended as a comprehensive list of all programs or services. Rather, this is meant to identify exceptional or unexpected local assets that serve as a starting place for future work.

This field, despite over two decades of well established research, is in many ways still in its infancy. Even among practitioners and policy makers who understand the science of childhood adversity, there is still much work to be done to develop the education, tools and protocols needed to translate this knowledge into practice. The entities (pediatricians, social workers, school principals, etc.) working in this field are, by default, innovators. While innovation is exciting, it rarely advances the field if done in isolation. This local asset map is intended to help connect innovators from various sectors. We believe the field will advance more quickly when there is cross sector engagement and a willingness to look at existing ideas in new ways.

The science around childhood adversity and brain development demands broad participation from multiple disciplines (medicine, social services, community design, education, to name a few...). We hope providing a map of local assets will help those hesitant to enter the field to know that there are resources and thought partners they can lean on. And, for those already working in this area, we hope this work demonstrates that there are colleagues across multiple sectors that they can reach out to for advice, referrals, thought-partnering and support.

This is an exciting time to be in this field. Promising work and collaborations are developing locally and across the country. We look forward to learning together to create the community we want for all of our children.

**William Buster**
Executive Vice President of Community Investments

**Kim McPherson**
Senior Program Officer

St. David's FOUNDATION

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# Foundations to Thrive:

## A Travis County **Asset Mapping** Project

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### Introduction

A growing body of research has found that prolonged exposure to trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can alter the brain development of children and lead to poor health and social outcomes later in life. Universal prevention of children's exposure to significant adversity should be a top priority in all communities. In addition to this, screening for and addressing trauma that has already occurred through various multi-level, cross-sector approaches is critical to the creation of healthy, resilient communities where children and families can thrive. However, effective approaches to preventing and addressing childhood trauma are not widely implemented. Through this research and mapping project, we identified the presence or absence of multi-level, cross-sector assets within Travis County that do the following:

1. Promote the optimal brain development and overall health and wellbeing of children ages 0-5 and their families; and
2. Promote resilience through trauma-informed efforts for children and families who are at risk for, or have experienced, trauma.

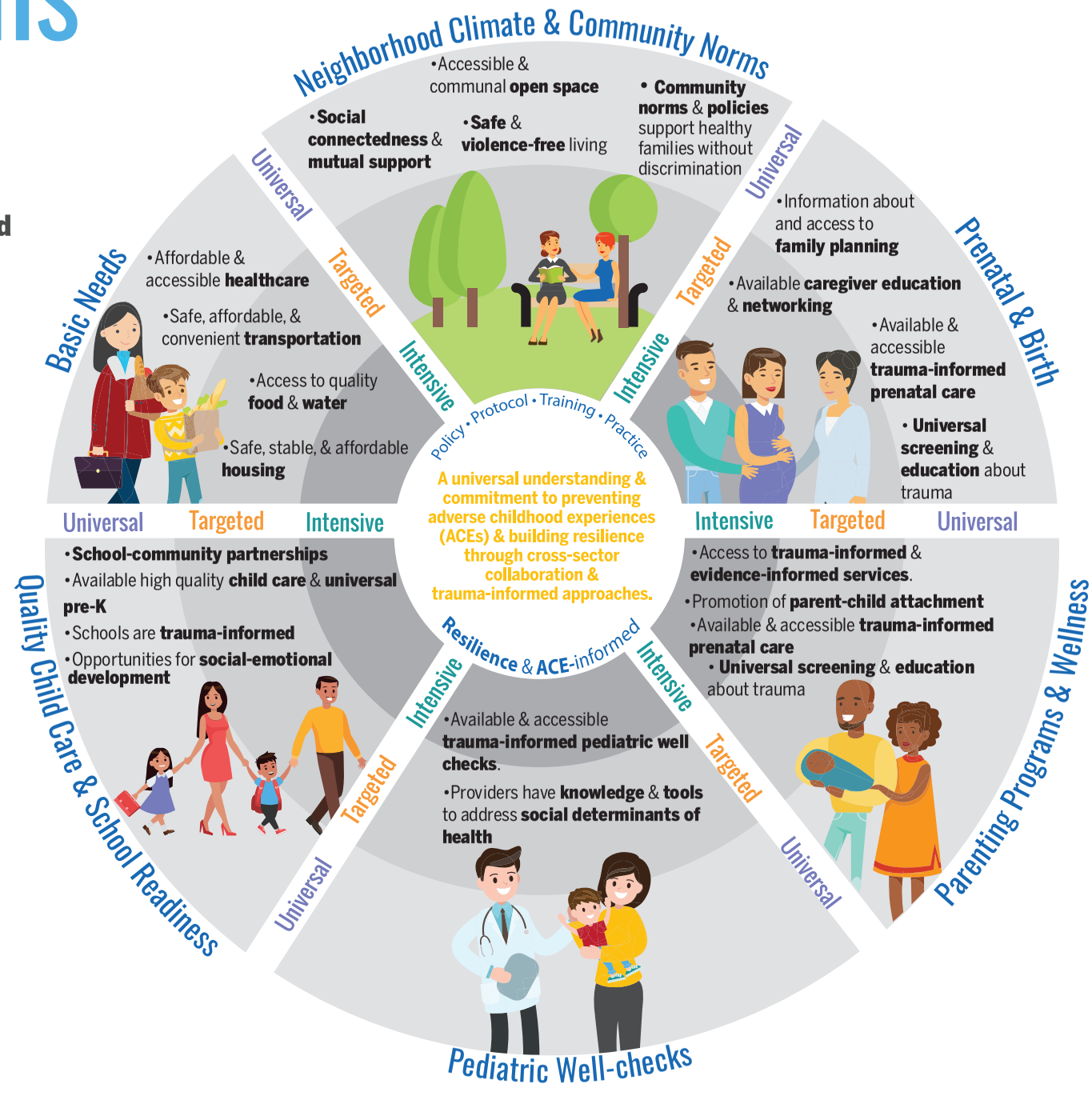
The goal of the asset map is to highlight services and resources in Travis County already supporting young children and their families. By focusing on existing strengths, the intention is to frame the conversation towards innovative linkages in resources, building on current support, and developing community-based strategies to promote well-being moving forward. Through this process, gaps, overlapping services and community challenges were also identified but are discussed in relationship to infrastructure already in place in order to expand efforts currently underway in Travis County.

The first step in understanding the assets supporting optimal child development and promoting resilience was the creation of a guiding framework for understanding multi-sector impacts on young children and families in Travis County. Thus, the Foundations to Thrive framework was developed to guide the research and findings on the asset map project. The Foundations to Thrive framework is presented and explained in the next section.

Figure 1:

# Foundations to Thrive

A framework of access points to promote **thriving children**, **supported caregivers** and **healthy**, **equitable** & **resilient communities**.



## Factors that Lead to Optimal Development for Young Children

### Foundations to Thrive Framework

Through an evidence-informed, community-based effort, the theoretical framework for Foundations to Thrive was developed depicting the factors needed to create an optimal Travis County, Texas community that would provide a solid foundation for families and children 0-5 years of age to thrive.

The Foundations to Thrive framework development began by reviewing literature focused on assessing trauma-informed and resilience-informed structures and practice. This included reviewing various established and emerging frameworks that focused on community mobilization around trauma-informed policy and practice. A detailed listing of models and frameworks reviewed can be found in Appendix B.

Each of the reviewed frameworks was informative for the development of the Foundations to Thrive framework. In the end, the guiding framework was a result of integrating comprehensive sectors impacting optimal early childhood development, with multiple levels of prevention of childhood adversity, and the promotion of community resilience. Foundations to Thrive serves as a holistic model for exploring the assets and gaps in Travis County and informed both our interview guide and the content analysis of the community reports.

The Foundations to Thrive framework (see Figure 1) depicts the ideal conditions to promote thriving children, supported caregivers, and healthy, equitable, and resilient communities. The ultimate goal of the process is for the Travis County community to have a universal understanding and commitment to preventing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and building resilience through cross-sector collaboration. In order to achieve this goal, the framework combined three targeted approaches, explained below:

1. Six Sectors for Optimal Development
2. Three Levels of Prevention
3. Community Resilience

#### Six Sectors for Optimal Development

The framework integrates six sectors which impact young children and their families: Basic Needs, Neighborhood Climate and Community Norms, Prenatal and Birth Experiences, Parenting Programs and Wellness, Pediatric Well-Checks, and School Readiness. These six sectors must come together in order for optimal development to occur in the lives of children and families of Travis County. For each sector, examples of key assets were identified that should be present in order for children ages 0 to 5 and their families to thrive. Strategies were also developed within each sector that serve a dual purpose of providing the community with a goal to obtain and creating measurable items to utilize in future needs assessments and/or efforts to track community progress

#### Three Levels of Intervention

Within each sector, it is vital for prevention to occur on multiple levels in order for truly thriving communities to develop. For this reason, the Foundations to Thrive framework incorporated an adapted version of the public health model levels of prevention in each of the six sectors of the framework (see Figure 2). The base of each sector, where most resources should be invested, is universal programs and community infrastructure. These universal services aim to prevent ACEs, promote health, and build resilience for all people in the community. The middle level of each pyramid depicts targeted programs and community infrastructure for populations at risk of ACEs. The top levels of each pyramid are intensive programs and community infrastructure for populations experiencing ACEs.[1,2,3,4] When each of these levels occurs in unison, a solid foundation to thrive will be created.

**Figure 2:**

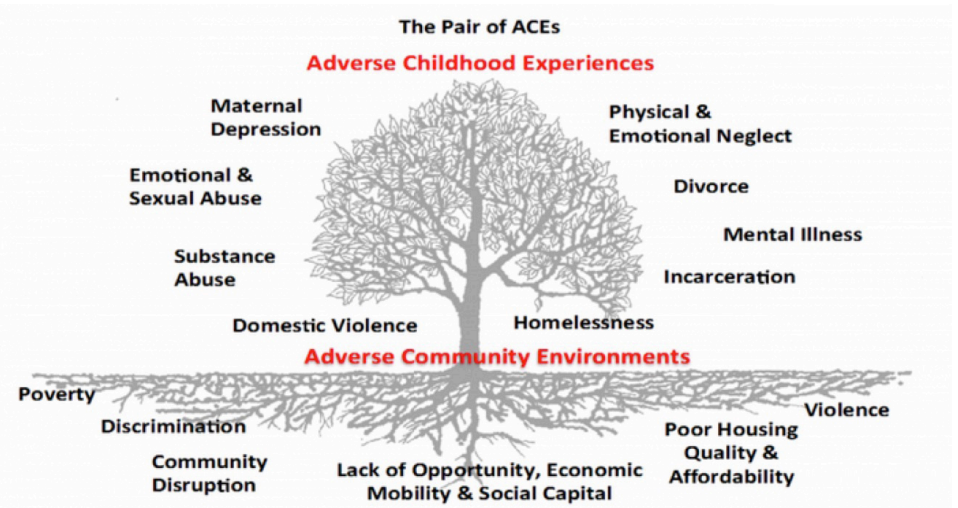
## Levels of Intervention

**The ACEs intervention Continuum.**
This figure has been modified from the public health pyramid.

## Community Resilience

The Foundations to Thrive framework expanded upon the traditional adversity models which tend to solely focus on the individual children and family member's experience of ACEs, to also include elements that build community resilience. These community resilience elements create the conditions that enable all community members to thrive. Community resilience protects members of the community from the negative outcomes that ACEs can have on an individual. It is understood that when community members experience ACEs in environments containing community adversities such as poverty, discrimination, violence, etc., then the effects of ACEs are compounded and are more likely to result in poor health outcomes and the intergenerational transmission of ACEs.[5] The Building Community Resilience model was incorporated into the Foundations to Thrive framework in order to reflect this dynamic - meaning that emphasis was placed on community infrastructure and the need for cross-sector collaboration in order to make an impact on promoting health and wellbeing.[6] As depicted in Figure 3, poverty, discrimination, community disruption, lack of opportunity, economic mobility and social capital, poor housing quality and affordability, and violence create community environments that can both lead to and exacerbate individual ACEs. In order to ensure thriving community members and community resilience, the Pair of ACEs must be addressed through cross-sector collaboration.[5,6]

**Figure 3:**




Ellis, W., Dietz, W. (2017) A New Framework for Addressing Adverse Childhood and Community Experiences: The Building Community Resilience (BCR) Model. Academic Pediatrics. 17 (2017) pp. S86-S93. DOI information: 10.1016/j.acap.2016.12.011

## Overview of Methodology

In order to address the research questions, the team developed a list of community experts and stakeholders representing the various sectors impacting children and families in Travis County. The list represented a non-random convenience sample. Using snowball sampling methods, the research team also asked identified stakeholders to recommend others that could provide novel data, and sought input from community partners on the interview list to ensure they were reaching a comprehensive understanding of the assets and gaps across sector and programming approaches. The interviews were concluded when it was determined that saturation had been reached. The research team collected information through:

» a review of 22 existing reports and their associated websites and program materials pertinent to conditions for Travis County children and families; and

» Semi-structured interviews with 29 key stakeholders across child and family serving sectors. Each interview lasted between 60-90 minutes.

A qualitative content analysis of reports and interviews was conducted by the research team to draw out content themes regarding assets and gaps in each sector of the guiding Foundations to Thrive framework. See Appendix B for more details about the methodology, including the community reports reviewed, organizations represented in interviews and the interview guide.

# Key Findings For Travis County Resilience Assets

Travis County has a wealth of innovative community members dedicated to promoting optimal health, development, and support for children and families. The highlight of this research was hearing about the strong commitment from many community providers, advocates, and planners to trauma-informed approaches and building individual, family, and community resilience. A significant part of the community has a very high level of knowledge in the prevention, screening, and treatment of trauma, and a willingness to think critically and "out of the box" for solutions. Many stakeholders described feelings of community responsibility and energy gaining momentum over the last few years to address the needs of all children to prevent exposure to adversity and build resilience. As evidence, a number of community initiatives and collaboratives are involved in multi-level, cross-sector planning efforts to build capacity and directly impact children and families, including but not limited to **Kids Living Well, Trauma-informed Care Consortium of Central Texas, E3 Alliance, Early Childhood Council, Imagine Austin, and Success by 6.**

It is worth noting that the focus of this asset mapping report was to examine the assets and opportunities for change in Travis County. Given that Austin is a dense urban city within the county, many assets are concentrated within the city of Austin. However, given recent changes and projections of the population expansion in Travis County, it is important to both reach children and families who are already outside Austin but in Travis County, and also to prepare for families continuing to move outside of the city. Thus, condensing services in the urban core can be a detriment to the larger Travis County community. This is critical to note because while Austin is larger than other cities in the county, it cannot be the sole source of resources if building community resilience in Travis County children and families is a priority. That said, due to the concentration of assets within Austin, some of the discussion points may feel more reflective of Austin, than Travis County.

The intention of this asset map project is to serve as a springboard to foster discussion about available supports to build resilient children and families available in Travis County and explore areas that could be further developed through innovative and cross-sector approaches. In the following section, findings of assets are organized by the six essential sectors necessary for optimal development of young children and their families: basic needs, neighborhood climate and community norms, prenatal and birth experiences, parenting programs and wellness, pediatric well checks, and quality child care & school readiness. Key assets found through stakeholder interviews and community reports will be discussed as well as opportunities for growth in each sector. During the research process, a number of cross-sector challenges were also noted and are detailed in Appendix A.

It is important to emphasize that the following section provides an overview of the key assets and opportunities for growth and is not meant to be a

comprehensive list of all services and programs within Travis County. **While examples are provided to illustrate particular assets, the examples are highlights and are not meant to be exhaustive as other services could serve as good examples.** Some of the highlighted assets are well established, and some are just emerging. That said, each asset was selected because it presents something novel, unexpected or particularly impactful in supporting young children and their families. Therefore, assets that are found in many communities or are expected entitlements are not included as highlights. For example, while WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children) provides invaluable support to families, one would expect to find WIC clinics in Travis County. Also, assets that provide universal prevention, defined by services or programs that are available to all or most, rather than to those who have been identified as at-risk, are noted.

Figure 4:

# Travis County ACEs Asset Map

Important principles of

## Basic Needs:

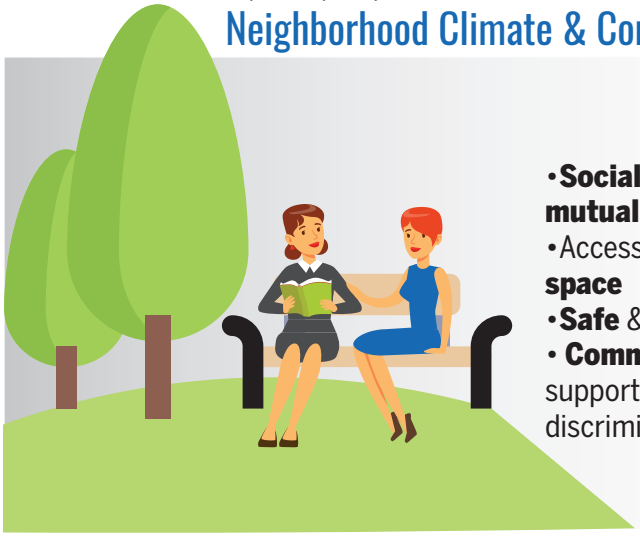
- Affordable & accessible **healthcare**
- Safe, affordable, & convenient **transportation**
- Access to quality **food** & **water**
- Safe, stable, & affordable **housing**

### Travis County Bright Spots:

- **Foundation Communities**
  *foundcom.org*
- **Sustainable Food Center Double Dollars Program**
  *sustainablefoodcenter.org*
- **United Way 211**
  *unitedwayaustin.org*

Important principles of

## Neighborhood Climate & Community Norms:



- **Social connectedness** & **mutual support**
- Accessible & communal **open space**
- **Safe** & **violence-free** living
- **Community norms** & **policies** support healthy families without discrimination

### Travis County Bright Spots:

- **Austin Parks & Recreation Department**
  *austintexas.gov/department/parks-and-recreation*
- **Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan**
  *austintexas.gov/department/imagine-austin*
- **Restore Rundberg Neighborhood Revitalization Project**
  *austintexas.gov/department/restorerundberg*

Important principles of

## Prenatal & Birth:

- Information about and access to **family planning**
- Available **caregiver education** & **networking**
- Available & accessible **trauma-informed prenatal care**
- **Universal screening** & **education** about trauma

### Travis County Bright Spots:

- **CommUnityCare Centering Pregnancy Program**
  *communitycaretx.org*
- **People's Community Clinic Tandem Teen Parenting Program**
  *austinpcc.org*
- **Mama Sana Vibrant Woman**
  *msvwatx.org*

# Travis County ACEs Asset Map

Important principles of

## Parenting Programs & Wellness

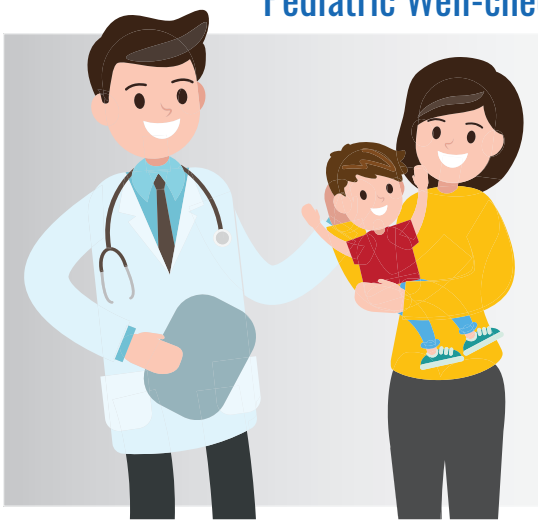
- Access to **trauma-informed** & **evidence-informed services**.
- Promotion of **parent-child attachment**
- Emphasis placed on **prevention efforts**
- **Technology** used to assist caregivers

### Travis County Bright Spots:

**SAFE Project HOPES**
*projecthopesaustin.org*

**United Way Text4baby**
*unitedwayaustin.org/parenting*

**Family House at Austin Recovery**
*austinrecovery.org*



Important principles of

## Pediatric Well-checks

- Available & accessible **trauma-informed pediatric well checks**.
- Providers have **knowledge** & **tools** to address **social determinants of health**

### Travis County Bright Spots:

**Texas Pediatric Learning Collaborative**

**Peoples Community Clinic**
*austinpcc.org*

**Any Baby Can Care Program**
*anybabycan.org*

Important principles of

## School Readiness & Quality Child Care

- Strong **School-community partnerships**
- Available high quality **child care** & **universal pre-K**
- Schools are **trauma-informed**
- Opportunities for **social-emotional development**

### Travis County Bright Spots:

**Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Project by Austin Child Guidance Center**
*austinchildguidance.org*

**AISD Department of Social and Emotional Learning**
*austinisd.org/sel*

**Community in Schools of Central Texas**
*ciscentraltexas.org*

## Key Resilience Assets for Travis County by Sector

### Basic Needs

In an optimal and resilient community, the basic needs of every community member would be met in order to provide a foundation for thriving. All members of a resilient community would have the following characteristics:

» Affordable and accessible health care

» Access to quality food and water

» Safe, affordable, and convenient transportation

» Opportunities for employment with a living wage

» Safe, stable, and affordable housing

#### Highlighted Assets in Travis County

##### Universal

- **United Way Early Childhood Pipeline of Services** – efforts to map support services in real time for children and families
- **2-1-1 and Aunt Bertha** – navigation assistance for health and human services
- **Dell Seton Medical Center at The University of Texas** – teaching hospital at forefront of healthcare innovation and population health.
- **Imagine Austin** – city planning focused on all residents having access to the amenities, transportation, services, and opportunities that fulfill their material, social, and economic needs.

##### Targeted/Intensive

- **Street Cred** – non-profit organization seeking to improve the health and future of children growing up in poverty by providing financial literacy services in pediatric hospitals and clinics
- **Double Dollar Program at Farmers Markets** – all Sustainable Food Center Farmers' Markets accept Lone Star SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), WIC (Women, Infants and Children) and FMNP(Farmers' Market Nutrition Program) benefits. These benefits are doubled through SFCs Double Dollars project.
- **Integral Care's Families with Voices** – offering children and families help with food, transportation, housing, job training, and community resources in Manor
- **Foundation Communities** – housing provided with on-site comprehensive support services
- **Central Texas Food Bank**– addresses food insecurity and also provides community-based cooking and nutrition education classes.
- **Vision Zero** – community-based approach to reducing traffic related injuries
- **Huston-Tillotson University Sandra Joy Anderson Community Health and Wellness Center** – community collaboration dedicated to helping underserved residents increase access to integrated health care
- **Integrated mental health and physical health services** – Most low income clinics like CommUnity Care, Lone Star Circle of Care, People's, El Buen Samaritano, offer some level of integrated mental health and physical health care.

- **United Way funding two-generation programming tackling intergenerational poverty in Austin** (e.g. St. Louise House)
- **Community Garden by El Buen Samaritano** – community support and healthy food supplementation for families
- **Care Coordination by Communities in Schools** – helps pay for health care, mental health evaluation, counseling, financial assistance, navigation assistance
- **Gateway Program by YWCA Greater Austin** – child care subsidies for families in crisis

**Affordable and accessible health care** is essential when a child is sick or in an emergency situation, and preventive health services positively impact the child throughout the life course. For Travis County, stakeholders and community reports depict areas in which financial barriers, lack of health insurance, and transportation barriers prohibit children and families from accessing affordable health care. In recent years there has been an effort to expand basic health care service to areas of the county with limited service. For example, expansion into Southern and Eastern neighborhoods of Travis County has occurred with the creation of Southeast Health and Wellness Center and the Health and Wellness Center at Huston-Tillotson University. Health care entities in the county have also been expanding insurance and subsidy coverage for residents needing financial help with access to health care. Finally, the recent opening of Dell Medical School has sparked innovation in health care as well as expanded the availability of care to many people in the county who previously faced barriers. Addressing health care access and affordability challenges with population- informed strategies will be a key component to ensuring the basic needs of community members are addressed.

**Safe, affordable, and convenient transportation** helps facilitate mobility and access to support services, employment, healthy food, and affordable housing. It also serves to reduce isolation and enable engagement with social networks. Many of the key stakeholders and community reports described significant transportation barriers for families in Travis County. Public transportation is burdensome due to a lack of convenient east-west routes, inefficient and time-consuming travel, and unsafe pedestrian walkways to bus stops. Furthermore, many families do not feel safe at the bus stop or on the bus, which can make them reluctant to use public transportation. Children and families also do not feel safe walking along streets without proper sidewalks and lighting, or riding bicycles where there are no bike lanes or an ethic of sharing the road. The culmination of these barriers is a heavily car-dependent community and a weak public transportation infrastructure. That said, significant conversation has occurred within the county about these barriers and Austin has emphasized a need for safer roads by enacting Vision Zero, a community-wide initiative to reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries due to traffic crashes. In addition to increased awareness, recently approved mobility bonds and long-term strategies proposed through Imagine Austin and Capital Metro are focused on reducing barriers to families accessing public transportation, including more and better bus routes, more sidewalks, good bicycle lanes, and traffic calming measures. Addressing the public transportation issues related to efficiency, accessibility, safety, and cost are key opportunities for supporting families' ability to engage in services, supports, and networks.

**Access to quality food and water** strengthens the health and wellbeing of children and families. Without quality food sources, children may either arrive to school hungry making it difficult to concentrate in classes, or may resort to choosing low quality food options, which eventually impacts the long term health of the child. Almost all stakeholders and many reports mentioned families in Travis County struggling to consistently have this basic resource in their daily lives, due to the high cost of quality food, the poor quality of food available, or absence of food sources in areas close to them. There were many efforts mentioned to fill gaps in these basic needs in Travis County. A few examples include the Double Dollar Program which encourages the use of SNAP at farmers' markets; healthy school lunch programs for children; community gardens; Central Texas Food Bank's ongoing and expanding work; and efforts to map food services in real time for children and families.

**Safe, stable, and affordable housing** allows children and families to focus on school and work, as well as on their physical and behavioral health needs rather than struggling to stay safely housed. The supply of affordable housing options in Travis County has decreased dramatically in the last 25 years. Due to this decrease, high concentrations of children and families, predominantly those experiencing poverty, have relocated to the periphery of the county where community infrastructure is lacking, barriers exist to fulfilling basic needs, and long-established neighborhoods have been disrupted. In addition, some of the available housing is more vulnerable to flooding and other natural disasters, impacting family stability in the face of environmental crisis. Housing displacement can be a significant contributor to stress and erodes social connections that help individuals withstand hardships and overcome challenges. There has been momentum by a few organizations to address the problems resulting from the growing and changing community. For example, Foundation Communities was cited frequently as an asset working to fill these particular gaps by buying land, building properties, and managing residents and services. Foundation Communities' model has been successful in housing and supporting families, while surrounding neighborhoods are also provided with a strong community partner who extends services and support into the community, ultimately resulting in a safer, more stable neighborhood for everyone. Another potential asset cited by several stakeholders is the long-range planning efforts in the CodeNEXT zoning revision process currently happening in Austin, which could affect the distribution of affordable housing across the city through equitable zoning regulations.

## Neighborhood Climate and Community Norms

Another key foundation for an optimal and resilient community lies within the neighborhood climate and community norms. Neighborhood climate and community norms refer to the beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors shared by the majority of people in the community.[8] All members of a resilient community would have the following characteristics:

» Social connectedness and mutual support

» Accessible communal and open space

» Community norms and policies support healthy families and child development without discrimination

» Safe and violence-free living.

### Highlighted Assets in Travis County

#### Universal

- **Go! Austin/¡Vamos Austin!** – community coalition to address Physical Activity, Healthy Food Access, Coordinated School Health, Early Childhood and Community Safety
- **City Parks and Recreation department programming and services**– helping children and families connect to parks and open spaces, and free or low cost summer and afterschool child care at sites across city.
- **Boys & Girls Clubs** – county wide youth development and after school programming
- **YMCA of Austin** – inclusive programming for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility
- **SAFE** – interpersonal violence prevention and intervention services
- **Mayor's Task Force on Institutional Racism**– a task force comprised of several local representatives from business, education, and criminal justice to address institutional racism in Austin
- **Coffee with a Cop initiatives** – informal community-based meetings for police and neighbors to exchange ideas and build relationships
- **Imagine Austin** – city planning focused on all residents having access to the amenities, transportation, services, and opportunities that fulfill their material, social, and economic needs.

#### Targeted/Intensive

- **Community Garden by El Buen Samaritano** – community support and healthy food supplementation for families
- **Project HOPES** – support services to help strengthen families with young children through home visiting and connection to resources
- **Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Project by Austin Child Guidance Center** – offers multi-level services to 12 childcare centers in the Austin area to improve social-emotional health of children 3-5 years old
- **Trauma-informed Care Consortium of Central Texas** – brings together professional organizations throughout Central Texas to address the trauma needs of children and families
- **Restore Rundberg** – comprehensive neighborhood revitalization effort

**Social connectedness and mutual support** promotes resilience in children and creates a safe and nurturing environment. A broader community engagement is needed among parents and primary caregivers, daycare providers, teachers, coaches, school principals, health care providers, and elected officials to better understand and foster the elements that build strong social connections. This engagement contributes to a connected environment where neighbors can call upon and depend on each other, communities keep an eye out for the protection of all of its members, children have positive relationships with members of their community beyond their direct caregivers, and attitudes of trust and care of others is present. Many stakeholders observed that community norms of child and caregiver support have been shifting towards more isolation and stigma for seeking help, as communal infrastructure, family structures, and other cultural norms are also shifting. While changing community norms and beliefs can be challenging, community-building efforts can be successful in encouraging connection, engaging neighbors, and changing social norms for mutual support and assistance – especially as it relates to parenting. Some programming in the county includes a component on developing social networks as part of the programming, and some programs have used public messaging campaigns for education and support for parenting challenges. For example, GO! Austin /¡VAMOS! Austin (GAVA) has made strides in encouraging social networks and support for healthy living. However, many opportunities exist for increased prioritization in universal messaging and community building.

**Accessible communal and open space** enable people to gather and interact thereby providing a venue for social connection, mutual support, and coordinating ongoing efforts to create and maintain community. While there are communal spaces across many neighborhoods, including those with vulnerable populations, some stakeholders expressed concern that spaces such as libraries and recreation centers are not equitably distributed throughout the county. Another benefit to accessible communal spaces is the opportunity of co-locating services and programs within the neighborhoods and community spaces where people are already going in their daily activities like stores, their housing complexes, sports events, and laundromats, for instance. Several stakeholders cited optimism for planning associated with Imagine Austin and the long-range development of "resilience hubs" in neighborhoods by combining city services and programs (such as libraries and neighborhood and recreation centers) with community activities and resource supports. In addition to communal space, having open space to play and feel connected to nature is increasingly recognized as foundational for the healthy growth and development of children. For parents, having open space can provide a strong sense of community and places to play with their children. While some areas of Travis County are rich in open and natural spaces, open spaces are scarce, unsafe or not easily accessible in other areas. As the population continues to increase in Travis County, this problem is exacerbated. Efforts to fill these gaps in natural, open spaces for play, recreation, and connection include city and county efforts to designate and cultivate open, natural spaces evenly spaced around neighborhoods and communities. One asset example is City Parks and Recreation programming and services that help children and families connect to parks and open spaces. In addition, environmental ordinances are in place not just for protecting the natural environment but also for protecting spaces and natural features that support resilience in children and families living around them.

**Safe and violence free living** supported by **community norms and policies that support healthy families and child development without discrimination**. Many respondents and several reports documented subsets of Travis County residents living in unsafe environments that contribute to chronic levels of stress. Travis County has areas of concentrated poverty, and families that live in these environments have disproportionate exposure to violence, substance use, discrimination, and crime. Interviewees reported that children and families often do not feel safe in public parks or communal areas due to various threats including the presence of criminal activity. And while child maltreatment and family violence occurs throughout the county, rates are higher in those areas with compounded risks. Another frequently mentioned threat to safety was the occurrence of police profiling and how this can lead to the targeting of certain communities while leaving other communities unpoliced. Concerns about safety and violence include both real and perceived threats that impact community behavior, trust, and relationships. Efforts to change neighborhood climate and community norms need to include healing and

restorative practices, in addition to a reduction in violence and crime. Some movement has been made to cultivate a county that is safe and free of violence. For example, revitalization efforts are occurring with Restore Rundberg and Rundberg Rising which targets a particular neighborhood with compounded risk by reducing crime rates in addition to building community connection. Also, the Community Advancement Network (CAN) has hosted community dialogue events focused on adverse childhood experiences and safety and justice. In addition, "Coffee with a Cop" events are being held in different neighborhoods in order to increase civil discourse and respectful interactions between police and residents. Community-based efforts to address discrimination and structural inequalities, like the Mayor's Task Force on Institutional Racism and Systemic Inequities, is a step in the right direction for community change and healing.

## Prenatal and Birth

Another key access point to build resilience in children and families is during the prenatal and birth period. An optimal community would have the following characteristics:

» Information about and access to family planning

» Preparation for caregiving and models for healthy adult-child interactions

» Available and accessible trauma-informed prenatal care

» Universal screening and education about trauma

### Highlighted Assets in Travis County

#### Universal

- **People's Community Clinic** – integrated and comprehensive prenatal care and Center for Adolescent health
- **Planned Parenthood** – programs and services offering information and access to family planning
- **Family Connects** – an emerging initiative through United Way and Austin Public Heath to triage families at birth for supports will launch in September 2018.

#### Targeted/Intensive

- **Nurse Family Partnership** – home visiting programs offering family planning and child spacing information, and perinatal support
- **Centering Pregnancy** – model of prenatal care, provides a support network and education for new parents
- **Sendero's A Tu Lado/By Your Side** – program offering community health promotores assisting pregnant women in preparing for caregiving

**Community Care Collaborative** – integrated approach to caring for expectant mothers in the Obstetric Redesign Pilot, receiving earlier evaluation and appropriate levels of care

**Mama Sana Vibrant Woman** – services facilitating access to quality and culturally appropriate perinatal care

**City of Austin HHS Maternal/Infant Outreach** – program support for new parents

**City of Austin HHS Peer to Peer Health Education to Prevent Teen Pregnancy**

**Engender Health** – teen pregnancy prevention

**People's Community Clinic Tandem Teen Parenting Program**

**Project HOPES** – support services to help strengthen families with young children through home visiting and connection to resources

**Information about and access to family planning** is important for adolescents, young adults, and new parents. Schools are not a consistent or comprehensive resource for this information due to constraints surrounding abstinence-only programming. Information is predominately available through peer and family conversations, and through community health care providers such as Planned Parenthood. While existing providers are knowledgeable and effective at providing information and access to methods for family planning, the number of these providers continues to decrease resulting in few remaining assets for information about and access for family planning in Travis County. However, conversations are happening in the community about how to increase access to contraception, including long-acting reversible contraception (LARCs), and some home visiting programs discuss family planning and child spacing within their curriculum. Furthermore, support is growing for comprehensive

sexual health education that is trauma-informed and culturally relevant.

**Available caregiver education and networking** is another necessary aspect of a resilient community. Travis County has some assets with respect to caregiver education and networking for expectant and new parents, such as the Centering Pregnancy model of prenatal care offered in CommUnityCare and being considered for replication in other health systems. In this model, pregnant patients consent to a group format for social connection and education on skill-building for pregnancy, birth, and early parenting. Parents take turns visiting the prenatal care provider for their regular checkups while the group runs. Some home visiting programs begin working with expectant parents and continue to provide support and education after the birth, but are limited in their reach. Another asset in our community is that some health care professionals are implementing the Period of PURPLE Crying intervention, which is a child abuse prevention program designed to educate new parents on infant crying, increase knowledge and safety behaviors, and ultimately, reduce abusive head trauma. However, this is not universally utilized for all births and therefore there is much room to grow and expand the reach of the program.

**Available and accessible trauma-informed prenatal care** is associated with healthier pregnancy and birth outcomes, particularly when provided in a manner in which expecting parents feel respected and understood. Several reports and respondents noted that early entry to prenatal care is not occurring for many pregnant women in Travis County. In addition, prenatal care provision is not distributed equitably across the county. When prenatal care is delivered, it may not be delivered in a manner that reflects important cultural considerations for patients. Reasons for a lack of engagement include that prenatal care is not a universal cultural norm, is not easily accessible for all community members, and is not offered in an environment that is supportive of women's reproductive choices. Despite these barriers to providing the optimal trauma-informed prenatal care, assets in Travis County do exist. For example, the need for culturally congruent care is being discussed in programs such as A Tu Lado that has community health promotores assisting pregnant women in preparing for caregiving. In addition, stakeholders discussed the need for equitable distribution of trauma-informed services in Travis County and some organizations have made movement toward this goal. Mama Sana Vibrant Woman facilitates access to quality and culturally appropriate prenatal and postnatal care in Travis County. Central Health is expanding infrastructure on the eastern side of the county which will assist with the current inequitable distribution of services. While comprehensive change in trauma-informed prenatal care is inconsistent, many providers are involved in discussions surrounding the need for equitable distribution of services around the county, as well as resources to pay for care and infrastructures to become trauma-informed in order to avoid re-traumatizing patients.

**Universal screening and education about trauma.** In an optimal community, universal screening and education for adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) of caregivers would occur during prenatal visits to a caregiver. In addition, all parents would be educated about child brain development and how childhood trauma can impact the overall health and wellbeing of their child throughout the lifespan. Both stakeholder interviews and community reports show that the majority of providers for pregnant women and young children in Travis County are unaware of or unequipped to implement trauma- informed approaches to providing health care, including screening, brief intervention, and community referrals for past trauma. This is a much-needed area for change in the county. In response, organizations such as the Trauma-Informed Care Consortium of Central Texas are leading the conversation with professionals and community organizations, providing trainings, and working to address the needs of children and families who have experienced trauma.

## Parenting Programs and Wellness

Parenting programs and wellness provide another avenue for building and maintaining a resilient community. Key aspects needed include the following characteristics:

» Access to trauma-informed and evidence- informed services

» Promotion of parent-child attachment

» Emphasis placed on prevention efforts

» Technology used to assist caregivers.

### Highlighted Assets in Travis County

#### Universal

- **Austin Child Guidance Center** – parenting symposia and workshops
- **Text4Baby, promotion by United Way** – free phone messaging to support parenting through first year
- **People's Community Clinic** – programs aimed at attachment (e.g. Magic of Everyday Moments, Play to Learn, Circle of Security, etc.)

#### Targeted/Intensive

- Home Visiting:
  - **Nurse Family Partnership**
  - **AVANCE**
  - **Parents as Teachers (Any Baby Can Healthy Fair Start)**
  - **Strong Start Therapeutic Early Childhood Program** – educational home visits
- **Any Baby Can** – post-partum depression and other parent support services (e.g. No Estas Solo, Triple P parenting program)
- **Project HOPES** - support services to help strengthen families with young children through home visiting and connection to resources
- **Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT) through Child Trauma Academy** – an approach to working with at-risk children that includes developmentally-informed brain science. Two local sites certified (Center for Child Protection and Casey Family Programs) and one site going through certification (Steve Hicks School of Social Work at UT)
- **SAFE Alliance** – comprehensive services for families in trauma situations
- **Austin Children's Shelter** – Family crisis, foster and adopt programs
- **PlanetSafe** – supervised visitations and custodial exchanges
- **SAFE Futures** – abuse and violence prevention, services, case management, education
- **Strong Start** – family and parent educationv
- **Centering Pregnancy and Centering Parenting at CommUnityCare**
- **Family House for Moms with Substance Abuse Issues at Austin Recovery**

- **Travis County Office of Children's Services:**
    - **Healthy Families & Children F.I.R.S.T** – home visiting
    - **Community Partners for Children** – intensive case management
    - **Youth and Family Assessment Center and Children's Partnership** – funding initiatives
    - **Parenting in Recovery** – assists parents with drug addiction recovery
    - **Reintegration Project** – assists families with children who went foster care
    - **Parents Forward** – collaboration
- **United Way's Ready Families Collaborative/ Family Support Network**
- Integral Care:
    - **Early Childhood Intervention Parent Programs**
    - **intensive case management using wraparound model**
    - **family peer support groups**
- **Integral Care Youth Empowerment Services (YES) Waiver program** – flexible funding for intensive community-based services for children/adolescents with severe emotional disturbance and their families.
- **Sibling Support by Hand to Hold** – offers books, network and peer support for helping parents with sibling issues

**Access to trauma-informed and evidence-informed services.** Parents often struggle with balancing caring for young children, maintaining self-care, completing work and household maintenance. This struggle for balance may be exacerbated when parents have mental illness and/or substance use disorders. Travis County has promising interventions available for parents needing extra support, like home visiting programs offered through NFP, PAT and AVANCE, but these services are only accessed by a small subset of the population. A substantial shift to implement universal screenings following the birth of a child to triage families and assess if services such as home visiting programs could be beneficial is an opportunity for significant impact. Many stakeholders expressed concern that parental screenings and referrals for support or treatment are not standard. Therefore, many families leave the hospital without the support they need to thrive. In regards specifically to parents struggling with mental illness and substance use, Travis County is in need of more evidence-based and trauma-informed services, especially for treating substance use disorders. While stakeholders mentioned growing efforts to provide wraparound services to families that address the behavioral health and physical health needs of the family, there are more families in need than services available. In addition, many mental illness and substance use services available do not provide childcare making it nearly impossible for parents of young children to participate and obtain the treatment necessary for recovery. Stakeholders also identified difficulties reaching families in need because parents struggling with mental illness or substance abuse hesitate to seek treatment due to fears of having children removed from homes. More work is needed to improve the quality of and access to mental illness and substance abuse services in our area. This will ensure that when parents seek care, they are able to acquire high quality care regardless of the problems they are experiencing, their economic background, their location in Travis County, and without fear of further family disruption.

**Promotion of parent-child attachment.** Caregiver education is important for understanding the significance of developing a strong parent-child attachment as it has lifelong impacts of increasing resilience within children and families. In Travis County, important gaps were mentioned in reports and by stakeholders including a lack of policy supporting caregiving for children. Specifically, there is a lack of funding and program support for providing families with caregiving support after the birth of a child. One area of increased emphasis is on "two-generation" approaches that aim to provide support to both the parent and the child, while also nurturing their relationship. Additionally, the county has several programs designed to support the social, emotional, and intellectual development of children and parents like The Magic of Everyday Moments offered at People's Community Clinic, Parents as Teachers, Triple P, and Play to Learn. Overall, within these programs and others, there has been more recognition of the need to develop a two-generational approach that provides intervention for the parent

and prevention programming for the child in an effort to decrease the multi-generational transmission of trauma and support positive attachment. Emphasis placed on prevention efforts is an important upstream approach for creating resilient communities. The prevention of caregiver crisis, child maltreatment and exposure to adversity could lead to a significant increase in quality of life, and a decrease in health care expenses later in life. A crucial part of prevention involves helping caregivers prevent instances of child maltreatment, including abuse and neglect. Gaps mentioned in reports and by respondents included a systemic lack of efforts toward universal prevention of child maltreatment. Many stakeholders mentioned that Travis County does have Project HOPES (Healthy Outcomes through Prevention and Early Support) which is a collaboration of several providers in the county that offer parent home education visits and other services for families identified as at-risk. While Project HOPES does provide some comprehensive services, its reach is limited and it has faced challenges in engaging some vulnerable families. That said, Project HOPES and similar community approaches that focus on prevention are addressing a key gap in supporting children and families, and expanding targeted and universal prevention services is essential in the county. One promising area that several stakeholders discussed was a possible expansion of wide-spread screening at childbirth to assess if additional caregiver support via home visiting throughout early childhood is needed for the family through Family Connects supported by a recent Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) award in Travis County.

**Technology used to assist caregivers** can provide a convenient and accessible method of obtaining information and support. One of the main gaps mentioned regarding technology assistance to caregivers is that there is an inequitable distribution of infrastructure and technological support. Areas with higher poverty rates are often those that have less access to services due to high costs but also have less technological infrastructure and support. Despite this barrier, there are some free or low-cost ways in which families can attain information and build support networks. For example, Aunt Bertha is a website that provides families a platform to search for services and programs in their area. United Way for Greater Austin maintains the Central Texas Navigation Center that residents can use by calling the free 2-1-1 hotline which will connect them to a call specialist who can provide information about services including housing, clothing, health care, child care, education, employment, counseling, government resources, volunteer opportunities, and disaster recovery information. Nextdoor.com and Rooster Inc. provide opportunities for community members to virtually connect, share resources, and share information about local activities. Interactive applications, such as Vroom, which provides caregiver information and brain-building activities to do with their children also exist. Other interactive applications are being developed to empower parents by providing them with developmental milestone information, tracking tools to chart their child's growth and development, and screening tools recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics which can be linked to their health care provider. Finally, telehealth is expanding in our county and is being used to provide physical and behavioral health services. As technology continues to advance, the potential for more families to be reached and provided much needed information and resources is expanding.

## Pediatric Well Checks

In a resilient community, pediatric well checks would be a critical access point to ensuring and maintaining family resilience. Key aspects include the following characteristics:

» Available and accessible trauma-informed pediatric well checks

» Providers have knowledge and tools to address social determinants of health.

### Highlighted Assets in Travis County

#### Universal

- **Trauma-Informed Care Consortium of Central Texas** – increasing awareness of social determinants of health and offering guidance for trauma-informed care to healthcare providers
- **Texas Pediatric Learning Collaborative** – collaborative to promote education and awareness of trauma to pediatricians
- **Vroom** – public awareness campaign promoting materials, apps, website tools, print literature through clinics, calibrated to child age

#### Targeted/ Intensive

- **Any Baby Can's Comprehensive Advocacy & Resources for Empowerment (CARE) program** – serves families with medical case management, emotional support, crisis assistance, peer support, community referrals
- **People's Community Clinic** – provides screening and intervention related to social determinants of health
- **Pregnancy and Postpartum Health Alliance of TX** – provides training on prenatal and perinatal MH issues for providers
- Most major community clinics (**PCC, LSCC, EBS, CommUnity Care**) offer some integrated behavioral health care.

**Available and accessible trauma-informed pediatric well checks** are a key opportunity for health care providers to have crucial conversations with parents and connect them to resources that will cultivate resilience for themselves and their children. Health care providers can be one of the most important resources available for caregivers and children in their earliest years of life. Stakeholders and community reports recognized this and reported pediatric health providers as a strong and growing asset in Travis County for reaching young children and families, while simultaneously noting gaps in Travis County related to pediatric visits including difficulty accessing pediatricians. In addition, it was mentioned that cultural norms may not promote annual pediatric well check visits in the early years of a child's life. Also reported were inconsistent and inefficient referral linkages between primary care and community resources needed for the family to thrive. Therefore, while providers are an asset in our community, various barriers prevent pediatric well checks from being available and accessible to all Travis County families. However, the Texas Pediatric Learning Collaborative is an emerging resource that intends to bring pediatric providers together for learning new trauma-informed approaches and linkages to community resources.

**Providers have knowledge and tools to address social determinants of health.** Given that social determinants in early life influence a person's health throughout their lifespan, pediatric care providers have a key role in screening for and addressing health issues related to these social determinants. Community reports and key stakeholders indicate that often, pediatric health care providers are not familiar with or do not fully comprehend the impact of social determinants of health on the lifespan. Those providers who are familiar with the social determinants of health may not have the tools or training necessary to screen and provide referrals for the appropriate level of care their patients need. This is an important gap in Travis County becoming trauma-informed. Assets that do exist in Travis County include an increased awareness that pediatric health care providers need to

incorporate screening practices into their clinical practice. Both the Kids Living Well and the Trauma Informed Care Consortium of Central Texas have mobilized a coordinated effort to increase awareness of social determinants of health in Travis County. Stakeholders also mentioned examples of local clinics, such as People's Community Clinic, working to further integrate trauma-informed approaches to their practice. While efforts are being made, more coordination is necessary in order to make a culture change to trauma- informed pediatric and primary care.

## Quality Child Care & School Readiness

The final critical access point to building community resilience in youth that will be discussed in this report is related to quality child care and school readiness. Key aspects needed for resilience include the following characteristics:

» Strong school-community partnerships

» Broad understanding of brain development by caregivers and childcare providers

» Available high quality child care and universal pre-K

» Schools are trauma-informed and promote resilience

» Opportunities for social-emotional development

### Highlighted Assets in Travis County

#### Universal

- **Austin Voices for Education and Youth and associated Family Resource Centers** – supporting families and school-community partnerships
- **Communities in Schools of Central Texas** – supporting school-community partnerships and campus support services for children and families (at select schools)
- **Public library story times**
- **Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts**
- **Social-Emotional Learning content** in many school district curricula
- Local television programming designed for young children to support social-emotional development like **Sesame Street in Communities**
- County and region-wide coalition efforts to increase school readiness and quality child care:
  - **E3 Alliance**
  - **Austin Public Health Early Childhood Council**
  - **Success by 6 Coalition's School Readiness Action Plan**
  - **Community Advancement Network/United Way's Community Schools Initiative**
  - **Literacy Coalition of Central Texas**
  - **Kids Living Well**
- **Austin Association for the Education of Young Children**

#### Targeted/Intensive

- **Reach Out and Read (ROAR)** – early literacy program in primary care provider offices
- **Any Baby Can** – services designed to enhance school readiness
- **Integral Care's Early Childhood Intervention** – services geared toward youth with developmental delays or disabilities, supporting families

- **Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Project by Austin Child Guidance Center** – offers multi-level services to 12 childcare centers in the Austin area to improve social-emotional health of children 3-5 years old
- **Bans in some school districts on school suspensions** for children in pre-K through second grade
- **Trauma-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) training** for teachers and staff in AISD
- Out of School Time - efforts to ensure available and quality afterschool programming (including **Learn All the Time, Andy Roddick Foundation**)
- **AISD's Early Childhood Study Team** – tailoring and coordinating case management for early childhood
- **Early Head Start, Head Start, and pre-K programming**
- **Austin Public Health: Child Care Continuity program (with Workforce Solutions),** and **Childcare Passages Program for homeless parents**
- **Central Texas Afterschool Network**
- **Austin Community Collaboration to Enhance Student Success (ACCESS) grant**
- Housing "plus" programs with on-site academic support– **Communities in Schools partnership with HACA, Foundation Communities, Jeremiah Program**
- **Strong Start / SAFE comprehensive services** – therapeutic Early Childhood Program on-site classrooms, Parent Education, Crisis Intervention, Mental Health Services, Support Services,
- **Care Academy child care**
- **Child Inc, summer programs and family support**
- **AISD Parent Support Specialists**
- **School-based mental health centers** – school based services for child and family mental health support

**Strong school-community partnerships** provide an opportunity to create support networks and resource hubs in neighborhoods. When school-community partnerships are strong, young children and their families have a way to feel connected to the larger community, have stronger relationships to neighbors and providers, and have access to much needed resources, including for families that do not yet have school-aged children. Stakeholders provided examples of community school initiatives in Travis County to make schools a resource for more than just education and for schools to be a resource hub for the community where physicians, therapists, dentists, and other providers would use the school to provide much needed services. Services located at the school could also include parent education, including ESL, job skills training, and parenting. Several interviews and reports discussed the necessity to build relationships in the community and engage early learners to support school readiness. Many stakeholders and reports discussed gaps in school-community partnerships, specific to certain areas and neighborhoods with poor-performing schools and compounded community adversity. Local nonprofits are working to build a more cohesive and inclusive school-community partnerships. For example, Austin Voices for Education and Youth and the Family Resource Centers have been located in a few schools and are facilitating school-community partnerships. Additionally, supports from Communities in Schools of Central Texas and various school district efforts within the county provide crucial school-community partnerships, though most stakeholders expressed a need for expansion of services of successful partnership models throughout Travis County.

**Available high quality child care and universal pre-K.** When high-quality child care is available, caregivers are able to work and maintain providing basic needs for themselves and their families. Stakeholders often mentioned large gaps in availability of and access to high-quality child care. Attending pre-K is strongly associated with having

a more successful school experience in subsequent grades. Community reports have also shown a recent drop in school readiness attributed in part to limited access to and use of pre-K. While Travis County does have universal pre-K for eligible 4 year olds, not all children who could benefit are enrolled. There are strong collaborative efforts including those led by the E3 Alliance and the School Readiness Action Plan to develop cross sector collaboration to increase school readiness, including strategies for increasing pre-K enrollment through parent and community awareness. In addition, much concern was expressed regarding the development of language and literacy skills in early childhood and its relationship to school readiness and academic success. Community reports and stakeholders mentioned various barriers to supporting literacy of children and families in Travis County including a lack of educational infrastructure. Some specific programs were highlighted though for their efforts to promote literacy in youth. For example, the Reach Out and Read (ROAR) program where primary care providers give families of young children literacy guidance and an age-appropriate book during pediatric well check visits. Reading initiatives in libraries around the city of Austin were also mentioned as important assets for young children and their families. In addition, providers like Any Baby Can provide services designed to enhance school readiness and Early Childhood Intervention services are specifically geared toward youth with developmental delays or disabilities that supports families in assisting their child grow and learn. While services exist to improve literacy and school readiness programs, services are not universally available and/or not accessed by all eligible, therefore missing many children and families in need of support.

**Schools that are trauma-informed** help children and families to cultivate resilience and reduce the negative impact of adverse childhood experiences. As mentioned above, recent decreases in school readiness were reported by many stakeholders. Stakeholders attribute the lack of awareness about the impact trauma has on youth brain development and the lack of trauma-informed approaches implemented in schools as contributing factors. There is increasing awareness and understanding in Travis County around the relationship between trauma and behavior. Specifically, more focus has been placed on the understanding that disruptive behavior and poor classroom performance may be related to childhood adversity and trauma. Travis County has made movement toward consistent curriculum content to help children learn social-emotional regulation. In addition, school districts have banned school suspensions for children pre-K through second grade which is impactful as this is a key point when proactive interventions are recommended, rather than removing the child from school. In addition, training of teachers and staff on trauma-informed approaches, including the Trauma-Based Relational Intervention and restorative practices, has also been implemented further showing a prioritization of creating a trauma-informed school. Unfortunately, these practices are not integrated in every school district within Travis County and therefore, there is still much room for making schools trauma-informed.

**Opportunities for social-emotional development.** Children who are school-ready have the social and emotional skills (e.g., managing emotions, developing caring for others, building relationships, making decisions, and resolving conflict) to navigate complex school interactions. Success in school has been strongly connected to a child's ability to self-regulate their emotions and cultivate resilience. Most school districts in the county have implemented social-emotional learning (SEL) as a part of their curriculum, but many families with young children are not introduced to SEL practices until the child or an older sibling enrolls in school. Also, while many early childhood programs and child care centers have a focus on SEL for young children, many stakeholders pointed out that the quality and access to child care is inconsistent across the county, especially for vulnerable children. Ideally all children could cultivate social and emotional skills with caregivers at home and/or through quality childcare, Early Head Start, Head Start, and Pre-K. Outside of formal care, public library story times and local television programming, like Sesame Street in Communities, designed specifically for those in early childhood are other assets that can contribute to social-emotional development that are available to all. Finally, county-wide coalition efforts such as the Children's Mental Health Plan, the Early Childhood Council, and the Success by 6 Coalition's School Readiness Action Plan specifically advocate for assisting caregivers with this phase of childhood and social-emotional development.

## Recommendations for Moving Forward

**Celebrate community strengths and build upon them:** The goal of this asset map is to highlight services and resources in Travis County already supporting young children and their families. Travis County has many existing assets that can serve as a foundation for building a more resilient community. These strengths can be better leveraged with more intentional cross sector collaboration. Supports that include cross-sector approaches at multiple access points show great promise for reducing the exposure to childhood adversity and trauma.

**Continue to raise awareness:** The knowledge base in Travis County has grown regarding the fact that prolonged exposure to trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can alter the brain development of children and lead to poor health and social outcomes later in life. However, consistent messaging and education is still needed to ensure changes in multiple sectors will occur. Increasing cross-sector awareness of basic brain development and how to promote resilient children, families, and communities can create a shared language and motivation for change. Advocacy is needed for solutions that acknowledge that children experiencing poverty and discrimination are exposed to disproportionate risks to their well-being.

**Prioritize universal prevention:** While all forms of prevention and intervention are critical to build community resilience, there is a particularly ripe opportunity to build out universal prevention efforts using multi-level, cross-sector approaches. In order to significantly impact young children and their families, we need to provide a wide continuum of prevention activities that extend beyond providing direct services to those already experiencing significant adversity. Such efforts include additional resources to support basic needs, public education efforts to change social norms and behavior in caregiving, increased social connectedness and support, healthcare with tools to address social determinants of health, neighborhood activities that engage parents, and public policies that support all children and families in our community.

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## Appendix A: Cross-sector key challenges and concerns in Travis County

While examining the assets in supporting the optimal development of children in Travis County, a number of key challenges and concerns across sectors and across intervention points were identified. The first key challenge is the acknowledgement that not all children in Travis County have an equal opportunity to thrive. Structural inequities related to poverty, discrimination and de facto segregation play a strong role in decreasing access to quality services, health care, employment, education, and housing. In addition, the long history of discrimination and segregation contributes to distrust of community approaches and a hesitation in service utilization. Any efforts to address these inequities could have a significant impact on supporting the optimal development and resilience of children in the county.

The second key challenge discussed at length by key stakeholders, as well as in community reports, is the insufficient focus on universal-level prevention efforts. Universal efforts are those that present a wide continuum of prevention activities and infrastructure benefitting all members of the community, not just those identified as at- risk or experiencing risk. Universal efforts are evidenced by community-wide, cross-sector commitment to creating safe, stable, and nurturing environments that support all children and families to prevent adversity, promote health, and build resilience. While there is growing emphasis on universal prevention efforts in the county and some approaches are designed to have community-wide impact, the most significant resources are going to targeted and intensive services.

Next is the significant need for cross-sector collaboration and recognition of the intersectionality of family needs. Far too many of the services and programs are siloed and not communicating, resulting in duplicated efforts and inefficiency. The lack of coordination also creates challenges for families in accessing a continuum of care and places a significant burden on them to navigate multiple, complex systems. Increased partnerships and shared resources within and between systems that impact children and families could better streamline services and deliver support to families where and when they need it.

Many stakeholders also expressed concerns about engagement in high quality services and programming for all children and families in Travis County. While the community has a number of services designed to support children and families along the continuum of need, those agencies using evidence-based approaches and trauma-informed care are less likely to be easily accessed by vulnerable families. The challenges for families engaging in high quality services are varied, but include significant distance from where they live and work, transportation concerns, cost and acceptance of Medicaid, inflexible office hours, and services that do not match the immediate needs of the family. For example, several reports and interviews explained that many of the mental health and substance abuse services and supports for children and adults are concentrated in Central Austin, while a growing number of families are being pushed to the periphery of the county where supports and transportation are limited due to the rising costs of living. Furthermore, stakeholders expressed concern about an absence of shared understanding regarding key components to both "evidence-based" and "trauma-informed" care. While some programs using these terms are following established criteria, it is unclear if programs using "evidence-based" or "trauma-informed" language are meeting specific standards, which contributes to a lack of understanding about the quality of services accessed by families across programming sectors.

Another key concern across sectors and points of impact is a significant challenge in identifying and engaging some of the most vulnerable families in Travis County. While some of these families do seek assistance with basic needs and are then connected to social services, many are isolated from supports especially in the years prior to children beginning school. The most persistent issue presented by stakeholders is the challenge in engaging caregivers with alcohol or substance use problems. In addition to being hard to identify, few services are available for substance use treatment that is affordable, effective, and allows caregivers to continue to work and stay with their families. Caregiver alcohol and drug use has substantial impacts on young children's optimal development and exposure to adversity. The impacts are widespread but include poor birth and infant outcomes, maternal mortality, insecure attachment, household instability and loss of a caregiver due to incarceration. Just in 2016, Travis County had over 2,200 confirmed cases of neglectful supervision requiring Child Protective Services involvement, many of which were related to alcohol or drug use.7 Furthermore, several of the stakeholder interviews mentioned the challenge in meeting the needs of families experiencing multi-generational trauma,

inter-personal or family violence, or caregivers with significant mental health concerns. Of course, many of these issues often co-occur with each other and with substance use. And, all of these issues make young children significantly vulnerable to the impact of adversity, create toxic stress and can impair their development and health over the course of their lifetime. While Travis County does have services designed to intervene with families experiencing these types of significant adversity, identifying and engaging the most vulnerable families is a fundamental problem.

Another key challenge faced by many families in Travis County is fear and concern related to persecution based on immigration status, including for those that are undocumented or have mixed-status within their families. This fear can significantly impact families' comfort in engaging in supports and services, despite messaging that immigration status is not a factor in eligibility. The current political environment and increased presence of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has added considerably to the challenge in identifying and engaging vulnerable families with immigration concerns, in addition to impacting the development of social networks and the sense of neighborhood safety.

Finally, language is another key challenge faced by many vulnerable families. Many stakeholders expressed concern about needing more prevention and intervention services across sectors to meet the needs of families whose first language is not English, including (but not limited to) Spanish, Vietnamese, and Arabic. The lack of multi-lingual supports is a significant barrier to participation for many families, and also can contribute to some families' reluctance to engage in services that they perceive to be not culturally aware or responsive.

## Appendix B: Methodology

## 1. Models reviewed in development of Foundations to Thrive Framework

| **Frameworks** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Protective Factors for Populations Served by the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families: A Literature Review and Theoretical Framework | CDC - Essentials for Childhood Framework, and Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Strategies | Zero to Three: Child Maltreatment Prevention as Public Health Priority (and within that, Proactive Versus Reactive Approach to Child Maltreatment) | Strengthening Families Pathway to Improved Outcomes for Children and Families |
| Basic Epidemiology, World Health Organization (for levels of prevention) | Strong, Prosperous, and Resilient Communities Challenge (SPARCC) | Center for Health Care Strategies Key Ingredients for Successful Trauma-Informed Care Implementation | Mobilizing Action for Resilient Communities (MARC) |
| Building Community Resilience (including the Pair of ACEs Tree) and their Asset Mapping Tool | Triple P Positive Parenting Program | Ready by 21, Forum for Youth Investment/Central Texas RB21 Coalition | Walla Walla, Washington's Children's Resilience Initiative |
| PURPLE Crying | Nurse Family Partnership | The Sanctuary Model, Dr. Sandra Bloom | Strong Communities |

## 2. Local Community and Travis County Reports Reviewed

| **Report Name** | **Agencies Developing Report** |
|---|---|
| 2015-2018 School Readiness Action Plan for Austin/Travis County/Success by 6 | The School Readiness Action Plan Leadership team and a local coalition of parents, providers, advocates, public servants and civic leaders<br>[United Way for Greater Austin, Community Advancement Network, Travis County HHS & VA, Workforce Solutions, TX DHHS, Child Inc., City of Austin HHS, Chair of the CoA ECC (City of Austin Early Childhood Council), University of Texas, E3 Alliance, KLRU, Children's Optimal Health, Literacy Coalition of Central Texas, AISD, ACC] |
| Critical Health Indicators Report 2017 | Austin Public Health Department – Epidemiology and Public Health Preparedness Division |
| Ending Homelessness in Austin/Travis County: 2016 Annual Report | The Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO) |
| Focus on Poverty in Travis County 2017 | Travis County Health and Human Services, Research & Planning Division [Data is from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2011-2015] |
| Imagine Austin June 2012 | Citizens Advisory Task Force, 38 members; 7 building block work groups |
| Integral Care Annual Report: 2016 | Integral Care |

| | |
|---|---|
| Ready By 21 Dashboard | ACCESS / Austin ISD, Austin Healthy Adolescent Initiative (AHA), Austin Opportunity Youth Collaborative, Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department, CAN, Central Texas Afterschool Network (CTAN), Kids Living Well, Children's Optimal Health (COH), CommunitySync, E3 Alliance / Blueprint for Educational Change, Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO), Financial Literacy Coalition of Central Texas (FLCCT), Healthy Youth Partnership (HYP), Ready By 21 Coalition of Central Texas, Start Strong Austin Coalition, Texas State University -San Marcos, School of Social Work, The University of Texas at Austin –Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life, The University of Texas at Austin, School of Social<br><br>Work –Child and Family Research Institute, Travis County Health & Human Services and Veterans Service, Travis County Juvenile Probation Department, United Way for Greater Austin Success By 6 |
| Thinking Upstream: Mapping a Pathway to End Child Maltreatment | Dell Children's Trauma and Injury Research Center & Children's Optimal<br><br>Health |
| Travis County Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA): May 2016 | Seton, St. David's Foundation, the Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department, Central Health, and Baylor Scott & White |
| Travis County HHS 2016 Community Impact Report | Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service. |
| Travis County Plan for Children's Mental Health: February 2015 | A multi-disciplinary planning group, Kids Living Well, comprised of representatives from the city of Austin, the juvenile justice system, the child protection system, the medical and mental health systems, research institutions, the education system, and several non-profits that serve children and families in TC. |
| A Two-Generation Vision for Austin: 2016 | Spearheaded by the United Way for Greater Austin. The Two-Generation Advisory Committee includes representatives from ACC, AISD, the City of Austin, United Way for Greater Austin, Workforce Solutions-Capital Area, Travis County, and the Sooch Foundation. |
| Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice: 2015 | BBC Research & Consulting, Denver, CO |
| Austin/Travis County CHA-CHIP Comprehensive Evaluation 2011-2016 | UTHSC-Houston School of Public Health Austin Regional Campus (Alexandra Evans and Andrew Springer) |
| CAN Dashboard | Community Advancement Network (CAN), consisting of 25 partner<br><br>Organizations |
| Central Health 2016 Annual Report | Central Health and its Enterprise partners (the Community Care Collaborative [CCC], CommUnityCare Clinics, and Sendero Health Plans) |
| Central Health 2014-2016 Strategic Plan | Central Health |

| | |
|---|---|
| Mayor's Task Force on Institutional Racism and Systemic Inequities Final Report, March 2017 | Task Force Co-Chairs: Dr. Colette Pierce Burnette, CEO & President, Huston-Tillotson University and Dr. Paul Cruz, Superintendent, AISD<br><br>259 other Task Force members organized into a Steering Committee and five working groups focused on 5 key areas/sectors: 1) education, 2) real estate/ housing, 3) health, 4) finance, banking & industry, and 5) civil & criminal justice. |
| Community Services Block Grant Community Needs Assessment: 2015 | Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department |
| On the Verge: Value and Vulnerability of Austin's Nonprofit Sector | Mission Capital |

## 3. Agencies and Organizations represented by Key Stakeholder Interviews

| Organization/Agency |
|---|
| Austin Independent School District |
| E3 Alliance |
| AVANCE |
| Communities in Schools of Central Texas |
| Department of Educational Psychology, University of Texas at Austin |
| Austin Child Guidance Center |
| SAFE Alliance |
| Any Baby Can |
| Dell Children's Trauma and Injury Research Center |
| Children's Optimal Health |
| Integral Care |
| Travis County Health and Human Services |
| Center for Child Protection |
| Department of Family and Protective Services, Texas Health and Human Services |
| People's Community Clinic |
| Foundation Communities |
| CommunitySync |
| United Way |
| 126th District Court, Travis County |
| City of Austin Public Health |
| Greater Austin Black Chamber of Commerce |
| Mission Capital |
| City of Austin Office of Sustainability |
| Community Advancement Network |
| Imagine Austin |
| City of Austin Planning & Zoning Department |

## 4. Key Stakeholder Interview Guide

| Stakeholder name | |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| **Agencies / coalitions involved** | |
| **Share the framework and ask for feedback.** | |
| **Describe activities that you are involved in that you think support optimal development for children and families in Travis County?**<br><br>**(Note which are for children 0 to 5)** | |
| **In addition to the approaches mentioned above, what other services or policies are you familiar with that support children and families?**<br><br>**Probe for levels:**<br>**-universal (prevention)**<br>**-secondary (at risk)**<br>**-targeted (trauma)** | |
| **Are the assets you see universally available, somewhat limited by eligibility, or highly limited?** | |
| **Who do you collaborate with right now? Who do you desire to collaborate with more?** | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **What do you think is the best point of access for reaching children and families to accomplish promoting optimal development?** | |
| **Where do you see gaps or needs in Travis County?**<br><br>**- in education?**<br><br>**- in health and mental health?**<br><br>**- in neighborhood climate or built environment?**<br><br>**-in basic needs?** | |
| **Describe any innovative or "out of the box" approaches to support children and families in Travis County.** | |
| **Who else is doing significant work in this area that we should talk to?** | |
| **Completed by:** | |
| **Reliability check by:** | |