



Press Release
For Immediate Release
September 20, 2012

Contact **Brian Stephens**
512-320-0222, ext. 112
stephens@cphp.org

Poverty and Uninsured Rates Remain High in Every Region of Texas

(Austin, Texas)—According to new Census Bureau data released today, poverty remained stubbornly high in every region of Texas last year, showing the continuing pain of the recession and underscoring the need for Texans to do more to protect this vulnerable population.

In urban areas of the state, one in five people lived in poverty in 2011 (e.g. a family of four making less than \$22,811 per year), according to the 2011 American Community Survey, and Texas still has four of the five poorest metro areas in the country. The situation in rural communities is similarly bleak, with nearly one in eight living in poverty in 2011. As poverty in Texas continues to trend upward, our income gap also continues to grow and is the 7th worst nationwide.

“America and Texas were built on a strong middle class and opportunities for low-income families to move up. When more and more Texans struggle just to make ends meet, our focus on opportunity for all has clearly been lost,” said Frances Deviney, senior research associate and KIDS COUNT director at the Center for Public Policy Priorities.

The data show that more than one in four Texas children lived in families that fell below the poverty line in 2011. Texas kids are one and a half times more likely than working-age adults and two times more likely than seniors to live in poverty.

“Living in poverty has the most significant effects on children’s early brain development. Fortunately, we know those effects can be buffered with quality child care and education, nutrition, and access to health care,” Deviney said.

The new ACS data show that Texas saw a slight improvement in our overall health insurance coverage rates thanks in part to provisions of the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid/CHIP for kids. Also, Texas still has the highest uninsured rate with nearly one in four living without coverage.

Today’s data highlight the wide variation in health insurance access across our state – Texas is home to four of the five U.S. metro areas with the highest share of uninsured residents.

“Too many Texans in every part of our state still do not have access to affordable health care and the economic security that coverage provides. The new data underscore the enormous benefits that will come to all communities if we take full advantage of health insurance coverage under the Affordable Care Act,” said Anne Dunkelberg, associate director of the Center for Public Policy Priorities. “Official state



estimates show the state netting over \$22 billion in federal Medicaid coverage dollars in the first four years alone, at an annual cost of less than \$1 billion for the state budget.”

This data highlights the need for private and public insurance gains planned for 2014 under the ACA. [Texas experts project that full implementation of the ACA](#) will likely cut Texas’ uninsured rates in half or more if the state makes the right choice to expand Medicaid to working-age adults. As many as 4.4 million more Texans could gain coverage through health care reform. Clearly, the ACA and Medicaid/CHIP play an important role in Texas families’ lives and well-being.

Since the beginning of the recession, Texas lawmakers have made deep cuts to health care, education, and other key services that help put low-income Texas families on the path to getting by and getting ahead.

We as a state must amp up our efforts to invest in Texas families’ futures, and give them the tools they need to provide a healthy, productive life for their children.

“You don’t get returns on investments you don’t make. Right now, we’re not investing in our future,” Deviney said. “It’s time to get back to basics and re-invest in health care; early, primary, and post-secondary education; and nutrition. It doesn’t get any more basic than that.”

For More Information

For more information or to request an interview, please contact Brian Stephens at stephens@cphp.org or 512.320.0222, ext. 112.

About the Center

The Center for Public Policy Priorities is a nonpartisan, nonprofit policy institute committed to improving public policies to make a better Texas. You can learn more about the Center at CPPP.org.

Join us across the Web

Twitter: [@CPPP_TX](https://twitter.com/CPPP_TX)

Facebook: [Facebook.com/bettertexas](https://www.facebook.com/bettertexas)

YouTube: [YouTube.com/CppVideo](https://www.youtube.com/CppVideo)