

Title: Child services lacking at Texas hospitals

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## Child services lacking at Texas hospitals

By Dalia Faheid

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With the commencement of the 88th Texas Legislature, the Children's Hospital Association of Texas on Wednesday briefed legislators and staff on their legislative priorities surrounding children's hospitals, as well as critical children's health care issues.

The association held the first annual "Children's Hospital Day" at the Texas State Capitol, in hopes that children's health care will be top-of-mind for lawmakers this legislative session. CHAT is a nonprofit representing seven children's hospitals in Texas.

"Children in Texas deserve to grow up as healthy as possible, and CHAT urges the legislature to support children's hospitals this legislative session," said Stacy Wilson, president of CHAT, in an op-ed submitted to

the Star-Telegram.

Here's what you should know about the state of children's health in Tarrant County and Texas.

4 million Texas children are enrolled in Medicaid

CHAT wants lawmakers to ensure that Medicaid payments are appropriate for children's hospitals.

"Unlike hospitals that treat adults, children's hospitals do not receive significant Medicare payments and therefore have fewer good payers to help cover the cost of caring for children and adolescents of varying ages and developmental stages," Wilson says.

More than half of Texas children, about 4 million, are enrolled in Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program. In Tarrant County alone, 272,445 children are enrolled in Medicaid, according to Texas Health and Human Services.

Due to the number of children enrolled in Medicaid, children's hospitals need "stability and predictability" in their Medicaid reimbursement rates to ensure that they continue providing care to children who need it, Wilson said.

Suicide surpasses child abuse, car wrecks for cause of trauma deaths among Texas children

Investment in mental health care for children and adolescents is critical, CHAT says. Children's hospitals can then expand access to needed services.

According to the 2021 Cook Children's Community Needs Assessment, one-in-three school-age children in Cook Children's eight-county service area has been diagnosed with a mental health condition.

This represents approximately 267,730 school-age children.