

Texas Health Improvement Network (THIN)

Biennial Report

2022-2024

Legislative History

The Texas Health Improvement Network (THIN) was created by the 84th legislature of the State of Texas through [statute](#) and signed into law by Governor Abbott in 2015. The purpose of THIN is to catalyze population health improvement

and increase health equity in Texas through multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional partnerships. THIN is administered by The University of Texas System, through the Office of Health Affairs.

Advisory Council

The [THIN Advisory Council](#) is a group of 33 leaders from both traditional and non-traditional sectors impacting health. (Current membership list attached.) When the Council was established in 2016 it included members representing the state health agencies, national and state health associations, Texas academic health institutions, and health philanthropy.

Acknowledging the essential roles of non-health sectors in creating the conditions for health, Council membership has expanded to include representation from organizations such as the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, the Texas Association of Regional Councils, and United Ways of Texas.

Major Activities

2015-Present

The advisory council and its associated staff focus on 4 major activities:

1. **Quarterly collaborative meetings that promote knowledge sharing.** The THIN Advisory council meets approximately once per quarter to identify Texas health priorities, discuss policy and infrastructure deeps dives and recommendations and to update one another on major projects and activities across the state. These meetings result in multiple partnerships across sectors. The THIN advisory council has had 22 meetings since its inception. The advisory council developed a strategic map (appendix 2) to guide their work and priorities.
2. **Development of Interim Charges Recommendations.** The THIN Advisory council has submitted 4 sets of interim charge recommendations since its inception. These recommendations have been provided to the Texas Legislature after each legislative session.
3. **Development of Data and Policy Analysis and Recommendations.** As the advisory council meets, they discuss priority issues, invite experts to speak, conduct research, interviews and compile detailed and vetted data and policy analysis and recommendations.

Publications from these projects are compiled and shared and they are listed on the next two page.

4. **Providing Leadership and expertise to the Healthier Texas Summit.** The Healthier Texas Summit is co-hosted with It's Time Texas (now renamed Healthier Texas), a non-profit statewide organization working to bring people, organizations and communities together to take action that supports health in Texas. The Healthier Texas Summit brings thought leaders and health champions together to connect, share innovative ideas, and cultivate cross-sector relationships essential for building a healthier Texas. The summit provides continuing education units (CEUs) to its attendees. It has drawn between 500 to over 1,200 attendees annually representing mostly community organizations, local and state government, academic research institutions and health care systems, with some attendees representing Texas businesses and K-12 schools. Costs for the Healthier Texas Summit are covered by participants' registration. *Since its inception, THIN co-hosted 9 Healthier Texas Summits.*

Past Project Publications

2015-2022

- **Partnering on a Joint Community Health Needs Assessment in Williamson County: Process and Lessons Learned.** This report documents the coordinated effort of a local health department and three non-profit hospitals serving the same region to conduct a joint Community Health Needs Assessment. Available for download [here](#).
- **Catalyzing Adoption of Telemedicine for Population Health and Health Equity in Texas.** This report summarizes key issues identified through a 2-day stakeholder meeting and provides a set of recommendations for policy makers and others committed to increasing the adoption of telemedicine in Texas. Available for download [here](#).
- **Facilitating Use of Data to Drive Population Health in Texas.** This report highlights issues and provides recommendations for policy makers and others committed to the responsible use of data resources for health improvement in Texas. Available for download [here](#).
- **Addressing Social Determinants of Health through Primary Care and Social Service Integration in Texas.** The Texas Health Improvement Network (THIN) conducted a 15-month project, funded by the Episcopal Health Foundation, to explore the current practice of healthcare and social care integration in Texas, identify key issues impacting adoption and sustainability, and develop recommendations to advance this work in Texas. Available for download [here](#). Videos of the sessions from the two-day meeting are [viewable on YouTube](#).

Specific Accomplishments for Current Biennium

2022-2024

1. Developed the following **ten recommended interim charges** for the 89th Legislature:

- Identify strategies to support health-related workforce recruitment, retention, and training.
- Report on strategies to incentivize providers, Medicaid managed care organizations, and community partners to integrate social needs screening, referrals, and outcome measures in Medicaid and CHIP.
- Examine the role a statewide perinatal database could play in driving quality improvement and priority outcomes for maternal and neonatal health.
- Identify opportunities to leverage federal dollars to improve health outcomes and reduce costs.
- Assess strategies to mitigate the impact of substance misuse in Texas.
- Evaluate environmental impacts of extreme weather on health and related vulnerabilities for at risk populations and identify ways to mitigate health risks and improve health and well-being.
- Evaluate state policy options to maximize the benefit of AI in healthcare delivery and population health management while mitigating potential harms.

- Study physical trauma and injury prevention in children.
- Study the effects of social media and electronic use on the physical and mental health of children and youth and identify strategies that would be helpful in mitigating negative effects.
- Identify ways to address the obesity epidemic and improve health outcomes.

2. Provided leadership and content expertise for two annual **Healthier Texas Summits**. The summits included state and nationally renowned keynote speakers. The summits continue to increase their content and attendance, with the 2024 summit having 57 workshops and panels and 717 registrations from all regions of Texas and some from other states.

3. Completed three projects and published their reports:

- *Strengthening Texas' Primary Care, Nursing and Behavioral Health Workforces*. The Texas Health Improvement Network launched this project in 2023 to address workforce shortages and identified policy and regulatory recommendations to address and strengthen the primary care, nursing and behavioral health

workforces in Texas, available for download [here](#).

- ▶ *Food Bank-Healthcare Partnerships in Texas: Cultivating Sustainable Partnerships with Population Health Impact.* The Texas Health Improvement Network launched this project in January 2021 to document the current status of Texas food bank-healthcare partnerships and develop recommendations to support such partnerships in the

state, available for download [here](#). The evaluation guide used for this project can be found [here](#).

- ▶ *The Potential for a Rural Community Health System (RCHS) to Improve Health Care Access and Value in Texas.* This white paper summarizes findings from a project of the Texas Health Improvement Network (THIN) that considered the potential for an RCHS in the present era, available for download [here](#).

Major Accomplishments Expected 2025-2026

1. Identify two policy projects and initiate the data collection and research process.
2. Hold quarterly THIN Advisory Council meetings and support two Healthier Texas Summits.
3. Produce interim charge recommendations, based on multi-institutional and multi-stakeholder input, for the 90th Texas Legislature.
4. Identify opportunities and seek funding to support and sustain the work of THIN.

Funding

The work of THIN has been supported through volunteer and in-kind contributions of THIN staff, THIN advisory committee members, and their organizations. Staff support has been provided by the UT System Office of Health Affairs through start-up funds provided by the UT Board of Regents in 2015. *These funds are nearly depleted, and the support of recent activities has been a challenge.* In 2019, THIN received funding from the Episcopal Health Foundation to support the project on healthcare and social care integration, and the RCHS project. Additional funding for the RCHS project came from the Texas Academy of Family Physicians, the Texas Hospital Association, the Texas Medical Association, and the Texas Organization of Rural and Community Hospitals. The Food Bank-Healthcare Partnership project was funded by Methodist Healthcare Ministries. *The project on Texas Healthcare Workforce was supported fully through UT System funds.*

Appendix A: Texas Health Improvement Network Advisory Council

Presiding Officers

Lewis Foxhall

Vice President for Health Policy
UT MD Anderson Cancer Center

David Lakey

Vice Chancellor and Chief Medical Officer
The University of Texas System

Staff

Nagla Elerian

Health Affairs
The University of Texas System

Lisa Kirsch

Senior Policy Director
Dell Medical School

Advisory Council Members

Ann Barnes

President and CEO
Episcopal Health Foundation

Nora Cox

Executive Director
Texas e-Health Alliance

Karen Batory

Vice President, Division of Public Health
and Medical Education
Texas Medical Association (TMA)

Lynn Crismon

Dean Emeritus and Behrens Centennial
Professor Emeritus of Pharmacy
Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral
Sciences
University of Texas at Austin

Eric Boerwinkle

Dean
School of Public Health
University of Texas Health Science Center at
Houston

Katrina Daniel

Chief Health Care Officer
Teacher Retirement System of Texas

Brook Boston

Director of Programs
Texas Department of Housing and
Community Affairs

Natasha Dixon

Chief Policy and Regulatory Officer
Texas Health and Human Services
Commission

Jamie Dudensing

Chief Executive Officer
Texas Association of Health Plans

Jana Eubank

Executive Director
Texas Association of Community Health
Centers

Victoria Ford

President and CEO
Texas Healthcare and Bioscience Institute

Kay Ghahremani

CEO
Texas Association of Community-based
Health Plans

Deannea Hoelscher

Austin Regional Dean
UT Health Science Center at Houston School
of Public Health

Ginny Lewis Ford

Executive Director
Texas Association of Regional Councils

Octavio N. Martinez, Jr.

Executive Director
Hogg Foundation for Mental Health

Charles Mathias

Director, Texas Consortium for the Non-
Medical Drivers of Health
Center for Health and Biosciences, Baker
Institute for Public Policy

Billy Philips

Executive Vice-President for Rural and
Community Health
Texas Tech University Health Sciences
Center

Stephen Pont

Medical Director
Center for Public Health Policy and
Practice
Texas Department of State Health
Services

Jennifer Potter

Associate Vice President for South Texas
Public Health Initiatives
Professor of Psychiatry & Behavioral
Sciences, Joe R. & Teresa Lozano Long
School of Medicine
University of Texas Health Science Center
in San Antonio

Olga Rodriguez

Chief of Staff and Associate Vice
President
Texas A&M Health

Eduardo Sanchez

Chief Medical Officer for Prevention and
Chief of the Center for Health Metrics and
Evaluation
American Heart Association

Ankit Shanghavi

Executive Director
Texas Health Institute

Shao-Chee Sim

Executive Vice President for Health
Policy, Research & Strategic Partnerships
Episcopal Health Foundation

Jennifer Shuford

Commissioner
Texas Department of State Health
Services

Lee Spangler

Executive Director of the Texas All Payor
Claims Database and Associate Professor
The University of Texas Health Science
Center at Houston

Anna Stelter

Senior Director of Policy Analysis
Texas Hospital Association

Alan Stevens

Vernon-Rampy Centennial Chair of
Gerontology
Baylor Scott & White Health, Texas A&M
College of Medicine

Ryan VanRamshorst

Chief Medical Officer
Texas Health and Human Services
Commission

Jaime Wesolowski

President and CEO
Methodist Healthcare System

Jamie Williams

Chief Executive Officer
Healthier Texas

Stephen Williams

Director
Houston Department of Health and Human
Services

Appendix B: Texas Health Improvement Network Strategic Map

