

ADVOCACY AT UNITED WAY OF METROPOLITAN DALLAS



United Way is in a unique position to use its experience, knowledge, relationships and community role to advance bipartisan policy solutions. It may take years – and multiple legislative sessions – to effect change, but the results can improve the trajectory of thousands in our region. United Way selects policy priorities that will support the attainment of the ten-year community goals and can be supported by all sectors of the community. Below are some of the issues we have worked on for the past couple of sessions.

ISSUE	THE CHALLENGE	OUR 2017 ASK	RESULTS	FUTURE NEED
<p>QUALITY PUBLIC PRE- KINDERGARTEN</p> <p>90% of brain development occurs by age 5.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Dallas County, only 55% of children currently enter Kindergarten ready. If students are not reading on grade level by 3rd grade, they are four times more likely to drop out of school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustain funding for the High-Quality Pre-K Grant Program at \$236 million for the next biennium. Create an Early Childhood through 3rd (EC-3) grade teaching certificate as an option to the Early Childhood through 6th (EC-6) grade certification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was zero funded; however, the budget mandates districts to use 15% of pre-K funds to meet these higher standards. House Bill 2039 by Rep. Huberty passed. Texas will no longer be the only state that lacks a specific early childhood teaching credential. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to advocate for a sustainable investment in quality early childhood programs, like formula funding. Support the creation and expansion of the Early Childhood Institute at DCCCD.
<p>WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>Jobs that are critical to the health and stability of our communities are going unfilled.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texas is facing a workforce in some key fields, like nursing and education. By 2020, Texas will be short 70,000 full-time nurses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow our local community colleges to provide a 4-year degree in select areas of high workforce need. Particularly, we need more early education teachers in Dallas County and Collin County has a shortage of nurses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senate Bill 2118 by Sen. Seliger allows community colleges to offer 4-year degree programs in areas of high-need workforce areas, like nursing and applied sciences. Sen. West & Rep. Giddings added an amendment to allow DCCCD to offer a 4-year early childhood teaching degree in applied science. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the development of 4-year degree programs for early education at DCCCD and nursing at Collin College. Follow interim charges related to workforce and job skills training. Continue to facilitate investments in training and job quality strategies and helping good programs get better through technical assistance.
<p>MENTAL HEALTH</p> <p>In Texas, jails are the largest providers of mental health treatment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 6,000 people in Dallas County are “super utilizers” of the jail and ER, with about 4,000 of them living in poverty. By targeting “super utilizers”, we could free up public safety and health workers to focus on other pressing issues, and ultimately cost taxpayers less. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide incentives for local communities to develop strategies on how to better serve those with mental illness and divert them from the criminal justice system and hospitals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both Senate Bill 292 by Sen. Huffman and House Bill 13 by Rep. Price passed (not identical) and created mental health grant programs to support local mental health collaboratives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support innovative local collaboratives, like the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute’s Smart Justice Project, which has pulled together key stakeholders in Dallas County. Track interim charges on mental health and increasing access to care.
<p>PARENT EDUCATION & CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION</p> <p>For parents living in poverty and facing other risk factors, access to support and resources becomes even more critical and can reduce the future economic burden on taxpayers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texas leads the nation in child fatalities from abuse and neglect. In 2015, Texas spent \$14.1 billion on the aftereffects of abuse and \$1.4 billion on the CPS system, of which only 6% went to prevention programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in evidence-based home visiting programs to prevent child abuse and provide parents with the skills to be their child’s first teacher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Bill 1549 by Rep. Burkett, known as The Child Protection Act, passed and requires the development of long-term strategies and goals by the state to expand prevention and early intervention services, specifically the home visiting program, to more high-risk families. The budget increases funding for home visiting programs by \$7 million to \$62 million in the next biennium. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate to maintain and expand government invest in prevention programs. Continue to serve as the fiscal agent for the Healthy Outcomes Through Prevention & Early Support (HOPES) in Dallas County and the Texas Home Visiting Program (THVP) grants in Dallas and Collin Counties, and lead efforts to better integrate with other community resources.
<p>ACCESS TO SMALL-DOLLAR CONSUMER LOANS</p> <p>Reasonably priced small-dollar consumer loans are limited, especially for those with poor credit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2012, 39% of people in our region were asset poor, or didn’t have enough savings to cover three months’ worth of expenses. When people need money, they frequently rely on payday and auto-title lenders that charge 400% APR and trap people into debt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect Dallas’ payday ordinance - which has been adopted by 42 other cities - and expand it statewide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None of the payday bills moved this session and we mostly defended the ordinance by voicing opposition to multiple anti-local control bills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to research and publicize alternatives to payday and auto-title loans and credit building opportunities. Convene and mobilize DFW advocates for policy changes at all levels of government, including support for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s new payday and auto-title lending rule.