



Press Release

The University of Texas at Austin Launches National Center on Research and Policies Impacting the Foundational Prenatal-to-Three Developmental Period

Prenatal-to-Three Policy Impact Center to partner with states as they develop and implement evidence-informed policies that improve outcomes for infants, toddlers and their families

Nashville, August 6 – At the National Conference of State Legislatures' annual Legislative Summit today, The University of Texas at Austin, in partnership with early childhood leaders from across the country, announced the establishment of the Prenatal-to-Three Policy Impact Center at the LBJ School of Public Affairs. With initial support by the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation, the Impact Center will actively connect policy lead-ers, scholars, advocates and funders, and will facilitate ongoing conversations between those who conduct early childhood research and those who develop and implement policies that reduce disparities and strengthen the prenatal-to-three years of a child's life.

Scientific research shows this time period is the most sensitive period for the developing brain and body. Limited exposure to adversity and the presence of safe, stable, loving relationships are the keys to healthy early development. Yet this time is often challenging for parents and families, and they can benefit from a strong early childhood system of care to help their children thrive.

While most state policy leaders understand the importance of investing in our children's earliest years, state policy leaders, advocates and funders rarely have the opportunity to work collaboratively with researchers to better understand how to prioritize policies that strengthen prenatal-to-three systems of care.

The launch of the Prenatal-to-Three Policy Impact Center serves as an opportunity to initiate a collective approach to policy development directly with state legislators from across the country. Bridging research, policy and practice, the Impact Center will introduce a new collaborative approach to early childhood policy development that will help policymakers, advocates and funders translate complex academic research, interpret often nuanced program evaluations and apply these learnings to the realities of on-the-ground policy implementation.

"I applaud the pioneering work of the Prenatal-to-Three Policy Impact Center and am eager to embark on this exciting journey in early childhood policy," said former Washington State Representative Ruth Kagi, a member of the new Impact Center's National Advisory Council. "In order to spur and sustain transformational change, state legislative leaders need trusted research partners, reliable evidence, and opportunities for collaboration to identify effective solutions that support infants, toddlers, and their families."

The Impact Center, led by Dr. Cynthia Osborne, associate dean of the LBJ School of Public Affairs and director of the Child and Family Research Partnership at The University of Texas at Austin, will collaborate with early childhood leaders from across the country to provide an annual Prenatal-to-Three State Policy Roadmap to help states build effective systems of support for infants, toddlers and their families. Each year, the Impact Center will work closely with state leaders to measure progress on PN-3 policy development and will offer support for improved implementation of policies and programs. This Roadmap will also serve as a resource for advocates, providing evidence that can be leveraged to make the case for evidence-based, cost-effective supports to strengthen outcomes for young children and their families.

"Research overwhelmingly shows that the period from prenatal development to age three lays the foundation for all future learning, behavior and health. The Impact Center will convene state leaders, advocates and researchers to provide evidence-informed guidance as states develop and improve policies to effectively support infants, toddlers and their families during this sensitive period, promoting healthy beginnings, strengthening families and providing quality care environments for children," said Dr. Osborne. "I am proud to be leading such an ambitious effort that places accessible, comprehensive and reliable evidence at the center of the conversation on the development of policies that lay the essential foundation for later success in school, career and life."

The University of Texas at Austin community is also engaged in the efforts through the UT Austin Scholars Group, comprised of a diverse and multidisciplinary group of scholars who will provide additional expertise and perspective on the reviewed research by the Impact Center. This group will support the research arm of the Impact Center and further strengthen this critical connection between research and policy, reinforcing the iterative, collaborative nature of this approach.

The Impact Center's work will be guided by the National Advisory Council, which will inform the development of the PN-3 State Policy Roadmap, fostering dialogue among scholars, practitioners, state leaders, advocates and funders across sectors. To date, this council of national leaders includes:

- **Christian Altmayer**, vice president of programs at First 5 LA;
- **Joia Crear-Perry**, founder and president of the National Birth Equity Collaborative;
- **Libby Doggett**, early learning expert and consultant;
- **Greg Duncan**, professor of education at University of California at Irvine;
- **Janet Froetscher**, president of the Pritzker Family Foundation;
- **Janis Gonzales**, bureau chief and medical director for the family health bureau at the New Mexico Department of Health;
- **A.J. Griffin**, former Oklahoma State Senator;
- **Brenda Jones Harden**, professor of human development and quantitative methodology at University of Maryland College Park;
- **Iheoma Iruka**, chief research innovation officer and director of the Center for Early Education Evaluation at the HighScope Educational Research Foundation;
- **Ruth Kagi**, former Washington State Representative;
- **John King**, president and CEO of The Education Trust;
- **David Lakey**, vice chancellor for health affairs and chief medical officer at The University of Texas System;
- **Joan Lombardi**, director of Early Opportunities LLC;
- **Michael Lu**, dean of UC Berkeley School of Public Health;
- **Tammy Mann**, president and CEO of the Campagna Center;
- **Ron Mincy**, professor of social policy and social work practice at Columbia University;
- **Geoff Nagle**, president and CEO of the Erikson Institute;
- **Jessie Rasmussen**, president of the Buffett Early Childhood Fund;
- **Jack Shonkoff**, pediatrician and founding director of Harvard's Center on the Developing Child; and
- **David Willis**, Senior Fellow at the Center for the Study of Social Policy.

"This approach allows for ample opportunity for state policy leaders, advocates and funders to work with researchers to better understand the research and the implications for policies that help all children thrive," said Janet Froetscher, President of the Pritzker Family Foundation. "This is truly a unique opportunity to leverage a diverse array of viewpoints and a wealth of expertise to support state leaders as they strive to develop effective policies leading to impactful solutions that truly serve our youngest."

For more information about the Prenatal-to-Three Policy Impact Center, visit <http://childandfamilyresearch.utexas.edu>.

The University of Texas at Austin

What starts here changes the world. Like the state it calls home, The University of Texas at Austin is a bold, ambitious leader. UT Austin is the flagship school of the University of Texas System, which includes nine academic universities and six health institutions statewide. Ranked among the biggest and best research universities in the country, UT Austin is home to more than 51,000 students and 3,000 teaching faculty. Together we are working to change the world through groundbreaking research and cutting-edge teaching and learning techniques.

LBJ School of Public Affairs

The LBJ School, one of the nation's top 10 graduate public affairs schools, makes a difference, not only within the walls of academia, but also in the public and social dialogue of the world. Contributing viable solutions to society is the LBJ School's legacy and its benchmark. Its effectiveness in channeling the purpose and passion of students into professional careers is evident in the success of more than 4,300 graduates who are the living legacy of President Johnson's bold and fearless action. The University of Texas at Austin is home to the LBJ School.

About the Pritzker Children's Initiative (PCI)

The Pritzker Children's Initiative (PCI), a project of the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation, is committed to building a promising future for our country by investing in and supporting solutions in early childhood development for children prenatal to age three, with the goal of every child reaching kindergarten ready to learn. More information about PCI can be found at pritzkerchildrensinitiative.org.