

# CENTRAL OKLAHOMA VITAL SIGNS

BARRIERS TO SUCCESS FOR  
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

VOLUME II, EDITION I  
MARCH 2012

**OF THE 43,000**  
STUDENTS ENROLLED  
IN OKLAHOMA CITY  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS,  
**90 PERCENT**  
ARE ELIGIBLE FOR  
**FREE-AND**  
REDUCED-PRICE MEALS.

Source: Oklahoma City Public Schools

CENTRAL OKLAHOMA  
**Vital Signs**



United Way of Central Oklahoma

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NATIONALLY, THE STATE OF  
OKLAHOMA HAS THE  
**14TH LARGEST**  
PERCENTAGE OF POOR CHILDREN.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey



IN 2010, AT LEAST  
**10 PERCENT**  
OF ALL CHILDREN IN OKLAHOMA HAD  
**ONE UNEMPLOYED PARENT.**

Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation

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WELCOME TO THE SECOND VOLUME OF VITAL SIGNS. IN THIS VOLUME, WE WILL PRODUCE ISSUES THAT INFORM YOU OF THE BARRIERS KEEPING MANY CENTRAL OKLAHOMANS FROM LEADING STRONGER, HEALTHIER, AND MORE PRODUCTIVE LIVES. THIS ISSUE FOCUSES ON SEVERAL OF THE OBSTACLES FACING OUR CHILDREN AS THEY STRIVE TO EARN THEIR EDUCATION AND CREATE A HEALTHY, POSITIVE FUTURE.

These obstacles, agreed upon by a committee of community volunteers and United Way staff, were chosen based on research and the demand for youth-focused services United Way of Central Oklahoma funds through its Partner Agencies.

We believe the obstacles presented in this Vital Signs are universal for all children, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or gender. We also believe that the burden of poverty serves to exacerbate each of these issues, and that special consideration must be given to children faced with the added challenge of overcoming the cyclical, multi-generational realities of poverty.

Our task as a community is to ensure that our children continue to have the opportunity to learn, that the things they are learning are constructive, and that they grow to become strong, compassionate, and productive members of society. It is our hope that by presenting some of the obstacles standing in the way of our children's education and development, and the innovative solutions others have adopted to eliminate those obstacles, we as a community may better respond on behalf of our children.

If you have comments, please call the United Way staff at 405-523-3594 or [asorrellrose@unitedwayokc.org](mailto:asorrellrose@unitedwayokc.org).

Best regards,

*Michael E. Joseph*

Michael E. Joseph  
Chair, United Way Research and Community Initiatives Advisory Committee  
Director, McAfee & Taft



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## HEALTH—NUTRITION

Six years ago, a story in *The New York Times*<sup>2</sup> warned that the current generation of American children might have shorter life expectancies than their parents due to rapidly increasing childhood obesity rates. The story featured a study published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* that said the growing prevalence and severity of childhood obesity was so vast that the associated diseases—Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, kidney failure, cancer, depression—would likely affect people at younger ages.<sup>2</sup> For children and adolescents, obesity is defined as a body mass index (BMI) at or above the 95th percentile for children of the same age and sex, whereas overweight is defined as a BMI at or above the 85th percentile and lower than the 95th percentile for children of the same age and sex.<sup>3</sup> In Oklahoma, 14 percent of high school students are obese, with an additional 16 percent overweight.<sup>4</sup>



**EIGHTY PERCENT  
OF OBESE ADOLESCENTS  
WILL CONTINUE TO BE  
OBESE AS ADULTS.<sup>1</sup>**

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1. Oklahoma State Department of Health, PHN Guideline
  2. New York Times
  3. Centers for Disease Control, Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity
  4. Centers for Disease Control, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance 2009



Like obesity, hunger can cause lifelong, negative effects on the health and development of children. For 18 percent of Oklahoma’s children, food insecurity, not obesity, is a daily reality.<sup>5</sup> The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as a condition resulting from the lack of adequate income and resources to afford food.<sup>6</sup> Feeding America reports that 35 percent of poor households have difficulty putting enough food on the table at times during the year.<sup>5</sup> In Oklahoma City, the existence of urban food deserts creates even greater obstacles for food insecure households. The USDA defines urban food deserts as small sections of a county where a large number of low-income residents live more than one mile from a supermarket or large grocery store.<sup>7</sup> One of the major obstacles posed by urban food deserts is limited access to affordable, nutritional foods such as whole grains and fresh fruits and vegetables. For many, the local gas convenience store serves as the main source for groceries. According to the USDA’s Food Desert Locator, there are 33 food deserts located within Oklahoma County.<sup>7</sup> One Oklahoma City high school, Star Spencer, is located within a food desert, while two other schools, Capitol Hill and Southeast Academy, are located within less than a mile of a food desert.

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5. Feeding America

6. United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service

7. United States Department of Agriculture, Food Desert Locator

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## HEALTH—SEXUAL HEALTH

Risky sexual behavior can cause unintended, and often costly, health issues for anyone. For young people who, in addition to developing physically, are still developing the ability to reason and make sound judgments, the results of unsafe sex can be especially life-changing. In Oklahoma, the reality of unprotected sex lies in the fact that the teen birth rate is higher than the national average in 65 of Oklahoma's 77 counties.<sup>8</sup> Nationally, Oklahoma has the fifth highest birth rate for teenagers aged 15-19 years.<sup>9</sup>

The 2006-2008 National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG)<sup>10</sup> examined the percentage of teenagers ages 15-19 who received formal sex education at a school, church, community center, or an alternate venue before the age of 18. In addition the NSFG examined the percentage of teens who had discussed the topics of sex, birth control, sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV/AIDS prevention with their parents. The survey found that the majority of teenagers received formal sex education prior to turning 18.<sup>10</sup> However, of teenagers ages 15-17, females (80 percent) were more likely than males (68 percent) to have discussed at least one of six sex education topics with their parents.<sup>10</sup> The six topics were: how to say no to sex; methods of birth control; sexually transmitted diseases; where to get birth control; how to prevent HIV/AIDS; and how to use a condom.<sup>10</sup>

In spite of the fact that a majority of teens may discuss matters relating to safe sex with their parents, the Centers for Disease Control reported in 2009 that women aged 15-19 years had the highest rates of Chlamydia and Gonorrhea compared with any other age or sex group.<sup>11</sup> In Oklahoma, 43 percent of sexually active teens said they did not use a condom during their last sexual encounter, and 77 percent did not use birth control pills.<sup>4</sup> Further complicating this issue is the fact that 20 percent of the students surveyed said they drank alcohol or used drugs before their last sexual encounter, and 18 percent have had sex with four or more people.<sup>4</sup>

**MORE THAN HALF  
OF ALL OKLAHOMA  
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS HAVE  
HAD SEXUAL INTERCOURSE.<sup>4</sup>**



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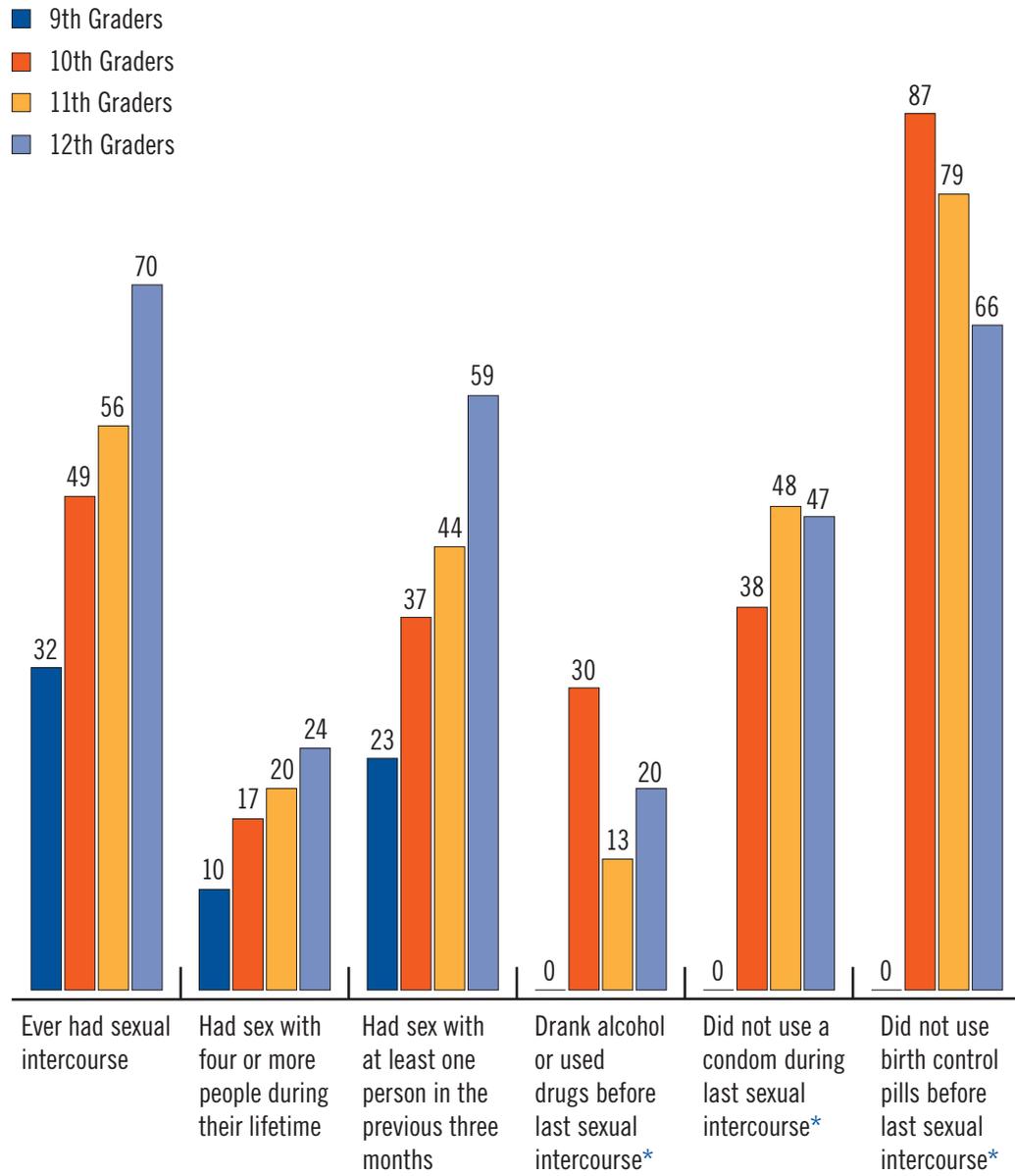
8. Oklahoma State Department of Health, Fast Pack 2009

9. Centers for Disease Control, National Vital Statistics Reports

10. Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Health Statistics

11. Centers for Disease Control, National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention

## BEHAVIORS OF SEXUALLY ACTIVE OKLAHOMA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS



Source: Centers for Disease Control, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance 2009

\* Response data not available for 9th grade students

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## MENTAL HEALTH

Mental illnesses are medical conditions that limit a person's ability to cope with the everyday demands of life by disrupting their thoughts, emotions, mood, and social relationships.<sup>13</sup> Approximately one in every four youth in the United States meets criteria for a mental disorder that will severely impair their day-to-day home life, education, and peer relationships.<sup>14</sup> According to the National Comorbidity Survey of more than 10,000 adolescents aged 13-18, the average age-of-onset for various mental disorders is age six for anxiety disorders, 11 for behavior disorders, 13 for mood disorders, and 15 for substance abuse disorders.<sup>14</sup> Approximately 14 percent of the survey participants struggled with mood disorders, a class that includes depression and bipolar disorder.<sup>14</sup>

Oklahoma is ranked nationally as one of the most mentally unhealthy states.<sup>15</sup> Young Oklahomans are not exempt from these problems.

It is estimated that 28 percent of Oklahoma high school students felt sad and hopeless enough over a two-week period to halt their usual activity.<sup>4</sup> Studies have also documented that 14 percent of Oklahoma high school students have seriously considered suicide, and six percent attempted suicide one or more times in the last twelve months.<sup>16</sup> In Oklahoma, the leading causes of suicide death for 11 to 21 year olds are by firearm (57%), suffocation (34%), poisoning (5%), and transportation (1%).<sup>12</sup>

**IN OKLAHOMA,  
SUICIDE IS THE  
SECOND LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH  
FOR 11 TO 21 YEAR-OLDS.<sup>12</sup>**

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12. Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

13. National Alliance on Mental Illness

14. Merikangas, K., et al.

15. Oklahoma State Department of Health, 2011 State of the State's Health

16. Oklahoma State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics

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# EIGHTEEN PERCENT OF OKLAHOMA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS HAVE BEEN BULLIED ON SCHOOL PROPERTY.<sup>4</sup>



## BULLYING

Bullying can negatively affect a child's self-esteem and their ability to learn and thrive. A 2010 story in *The Oklahoman*, citing statistics from the Oklahoma State Department of Education, reported that "During the 2009-10 public school year in Oklahoma, there were 15,967 incidents of bullying and 648 of those resulted in physical injury."<sup>17</sup> According to a report by the Oklahoma State Department of Health, chronic or repeated victimization by bullies is related to decreased academic performance, increased health problems such as headaches, decreased appetite, and difficulty sleeping, and an increased likelihood of anxiety and depression.<sup>18</sup>

The Oklahoma State Department of Health surveyed Oklahoma students in third, fifth, and seventh grades regarding the subject of bullying.<sup>17</sup> The study revealed that 33 percent of the students reported occasional, often, or daily involvement in bullying, either as a bully (12%), victim (14%), or both (7%).<sup>17</sup> When asked about the type of bullying experienced, 14 percent report physical bullying, 23 percent reported social, or verbal bullying, and eight percent of fifth and seventh grade students reported sexual bullying in the form of words, touches, or gestures.<sup>17</sup>

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17. Newsok.com

18. Oklahoma State Department of Health, Injury Update

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## SUBSTANCE ABUSE

The extent of youth substance abuse in Oklahoma was revealed in the 2010 Oklahoma Prevention Needs Assessment Survey conducted by the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. The survey found that more than a quarter of sixth grade students had consumed alcohol on more than one occasion in their lifetime.<sup>19</sup>

The sixth grade students reported that they received the alcohol from someone age 21 or older (32%), at home with a parent's permission (29.2%), or at home without a parent's permission (22.3%).<sup>19</sup>

The survey also found that alcohol is widely consumed by Oklahoma's high school seniors. Nearly 75 percent (73.9%) of twelfth grade students reported drinking more than one alcoholic beverage in their lifetime, while 42.9 percent had consumed alcohol in the 30 days prior to the survey.<sup>19</sup> More than a quarter (27.9%) of twelfth grade students reported binge drinking (five or more drinks in a row).<sup>19</sup>

While many teens may abstain from drinking alcohol, nearly a quarter (24.8%) of tenth grade students reported riding with someone who drove under the influence of alcohol.<sup>19</sup>

The National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse<sup>20</sup> found that teens that have used tobacco are 11 times more likely to have used marijuana than teens who abstain from tobacco. In Oklahoma, at least a quarter of all tenth (27.4%) and twelfth (35.3%) grade students have smoked marijuana in their lifetime.<sup>19</sup> Nearly a quarter (23.5%) of tenth grade students have used chewing tobacco and more than half (51.1%) of all twelfth grade students have smoked cigarettes.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, a startling number of Oklahoma high school seniors (21.9%) reported using a prescription drug such as Valium, Xanax, or Oxycontin without a doctor telling them to do so.<sup>19</sup>



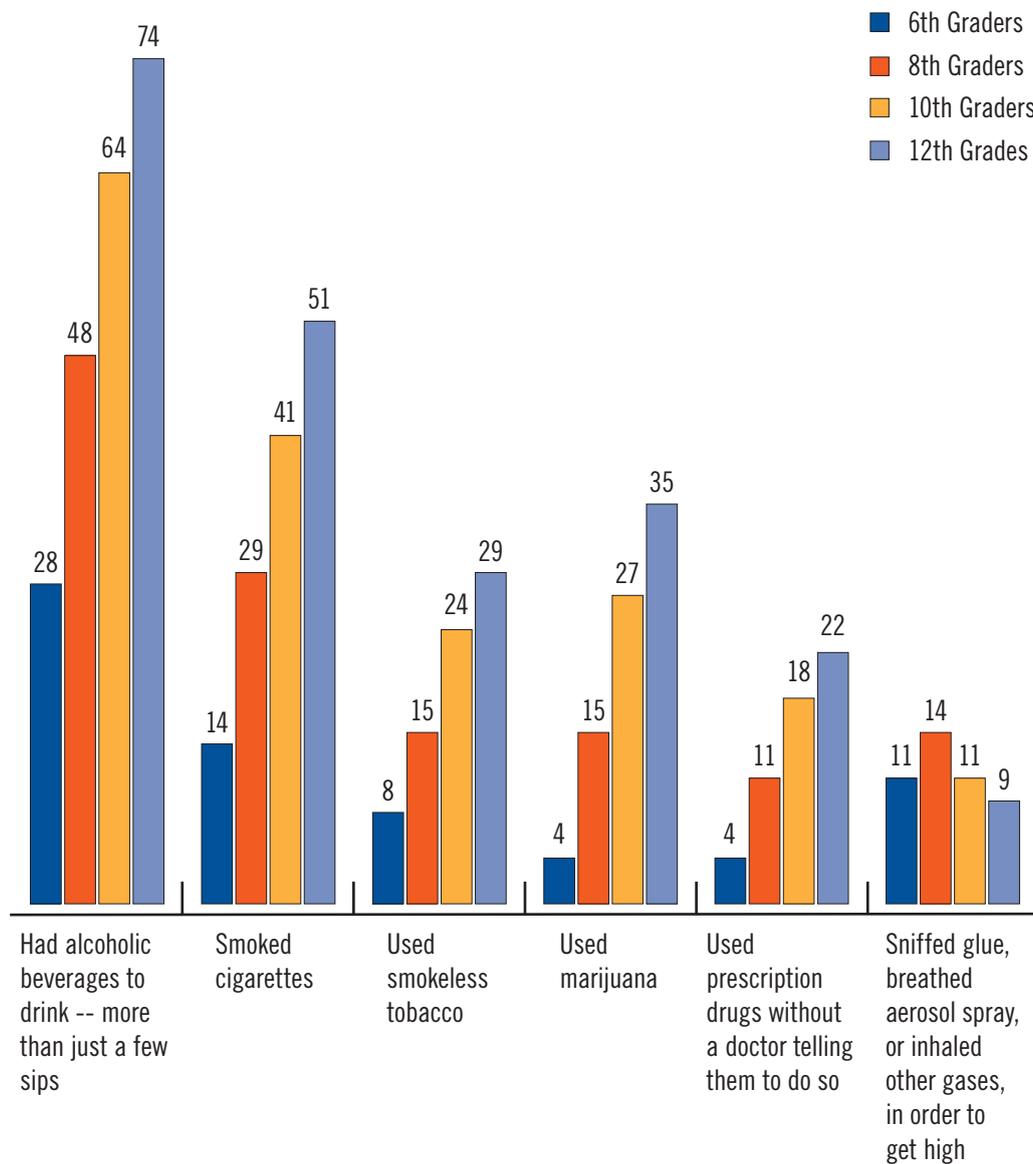
**MORE THAN  
10 PERCENT**  
(10.4%) OF OKLAHOMA HIGH SCHOOL  
**SENIORS**  
MEET THE CRITERIA OF NEEDING  
DRUG OR ALCOHOL TREATMENT.<sup>19</sup>

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19. Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

20. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University

## PERCENTAGE OF OKLAHOMA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO USED ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND OTHER DRUGS ON ONE OR MORE OCCASIONS DURING THEIR LIFETIME



Source: Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Oklahoma Prevention Needs Assessment Survey 2010

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## LITERACY

The ability to read proficiently by the third grade is a key indicator of future academic success and subsequent high school graduation. Third grade is a crucial point in a child's education because it is the grade when they transition from learning to read and begin reading to learn. The importance of this key transitional period laid the foundation for Oklahoma Senate Bill 346. Signed by Governor Mary Fallin in 2011, the bill amends the Reading Sufficiency Act with the intent to end social promotion in public schools. Beginning with students entering the first grade in the 2011-12 school year, if a student's assessed reading deficiency is not remedied by the end of third grade, the student will be retained in the third grade.<sup>22</sup> Under the new bill, no student can be held back more than twice in grades kindergarten through third.<sup>22</sup> Any student who still lacks necessary reading skills but has already been held back twice will be promoted to the fourth grade. The student will continue to receive intensive reading instruction to aid in their reading development.<sup>22</sup>

COLLEGE GRADUATES EARN NEARLY  
**THREE TIMES MORE**  
**PER YEAR THAN**  
**HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES.**<sup>21</sup>



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21. Education Week

22. Oklahoma State Legislature



The national *Double Jeopardy* study released in April 2011 confirmed the link between reading levels and high school graduation rates, as well as confirmed the detrimental effect of poverty on academic achievement.<sup>23</sup> The study found that one in six children who do not read proficiently in third grade do not graduate from high school on time.<sup>23</sup> By contrast, only four percent of students who read proficiently in the third grade fail to graduate.<sup>23</sup>

In regards to how a child's education is affected by poverty, the *Double Jeopardy* study cites that poor children may reside in neighborhoods with low-performing schools, begin school with underdeveloped language and social skills, and miss school more frequently than non-poor children because of undiagnosed or untreated health issues.<sup>23</sup> As a result of these lacking educational resources and opportunities, 32 percent of children who spend more than half of their childhood in poverty do not graduate from high school, compared to six percent of children who have never been poor.<sup>23</sup>

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23. Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Double Jeopardy*

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## POVERTY

Patrick McCarthy, President and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, has said that, “Child poverty is in some ways a leading indicator of how the country is going to be doing down the road. Nearly all of the social problems that we worry about in this county are heavily correlated with child poverty.”<sup>25</sup>

Compared to their more affluent peers, poor children are more likely to experience changes to their family structure and be raised by parents with minimal education.<sup>24</sup> Their home environments are more likely to be stressful, characterized by sudden and frequent moves, and are less likely to be cognitively stimulating.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, children who grow up in poverty are more likely to struggle academically, drop out of school, and suffer from health, behavioral, and emotional problems.<sup>26</sup> Children who experience poverty in early childhood or live in extreme and long-term poverty (below 50 percent of the poverty line) are at even greater risk of negative life outcomes.<sup>24</sup>

In Oklahoma County, more than a quarter of children lived in poverty in 2010.<sup>27</sup> Children from families headed by single mothers are nearly four times more likely to live in poverty than families headed by married couples.<sup>27</sup> By the numbers, a single parent with two young children living in Oklahoma County would need to earn \$16.74 per hour at a full-time job to cover basic expenditures without public or private assistance.<sup>28</sup> In the absence of a nearly \$17 hourly wage, 32 percent of Oklahoma County children live in households with Supplemental Security Income (SSI), cash public assistance income, or Food Stamp/SNAP benefits.<sup>29</sup> During the 2009-10 school year, nearly 72,000 children in Oklahoma County were eligible for the federal free- and reduced-price lunch program.<sup>30</sup> Of that number, 35,516 children were students in Oklahoma City Public Schools.<sup>30</sup>

**CHILD POVERTY  
IN THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA  
HAS INCREASED BY  
16 PERCENT  
SINCE 2000.<sup>24</sup>**



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24. Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011 KIDS COUNT Data Book

25. Huffington Post

26. Child Trends

27. United States Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Oklahoma County

28. Oklahoma Policy Institute

29. Oklahoma Department of Human Services

30. Oklahoma State Department of Education

## HOMELESSNESS

During uncertain economic times, more people are susceptible to situational homelessness brought on by the loss of a job or housing. Unsure of where they will sleep each night or when they will eat their next meal, homeless children face daunting challenges when it comes to attaining their education. In 2002, Congress reauthorized the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, of which Title VII-B states, “Each State educational agency shall ensure that each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths.”<sup>32</sup>

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, the term “homeless children and youth” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.<sup>32</sup> In addition to shelters, the definition includes children and youth who share housing with other persons—referred to as “doubling up” – due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason.<sup>32</sup> Nearly three-quarters of homeless children and youth “double up” each night in the home of a relative or friend.<sup>31</sup>

In Oklahoma, the number of homeless students enrolled under the McKinney-Vento Act has increased by nearly 75 percent in the past three years.<sup>31</sup> During the 2010-11 school year, the number of enrolled homeless students in Oklahoma City Public Schools increased by 215 students, for a total of 1,920 students.<sup>33</sup>



BETWEEN 2007 AND 2010, THE NUMBER OF  
**HOMELESS CHILDREN  
AND YOUTH  
ENROLLED IN  
OKLAHOMA PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
INCREASED BY  
73 PERCENT.**<sup>31</sup>

31. National Center for Homeless Education, Data Collection Summary June 2011

32. National Center for Homeless Education, McKinney-Vento Legislation

33. Oklahoma City Public Schools, Federal Programs Office

## INSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE

LANCE TACKETT  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TEACH FOR AMERICA - OKLAHOMA



Ninety-one percent of students in Oklahoma City Public Schools qualify for the federal free- and reduced-price lunch program based on family income.<sup>34</sup> Only 56 percent of low-income third graders are proficient in reading, and by the time they reach high school, only 44 percent are proficient on the English II end of course exam.<sup>35</sup> As Superintendent Karl Springer says, there is nothing wrong with our children. Rather, we need to work harder to help them overcome the additional obstacles of poverty and we must tap the collective power of our community to ensure all students achieve. We know from a myriad of classroom and school examples across the country that an excellent education is critical in creating opportunities and breaking the cycle of poverty.

In 2011, Oklahoma City Public Schools launched a partnership with Teach For America as one way to draw additional talent and develop strong leadership throughout our system. We recruit, train and develop a diverse group of graduates and young professionals who commit to teach for two years in high-need schools. Many of them continue as classroom teacher-leaders, school and district administrators, and policy makers.

This year, 50 corps members are teaching in 16 of Oklahoma City's highest-poverty schools, reaching 3,200 students. They work in classrooms ranging from pre-k, setting our youngest citizens on a path to success, to high school working alongside their colleagues to ensure more students graduate prepared for college. With over 20 years of experience, we are encouraged by our track record of effectiveness. Between 2009-2011, three states—Louisiana, North Carolina, and Tennessee—studied the effectiveness of teachers from different teacher-preparation programs, and each concluded that Teach For America teachers have a greater impact on student achievement than other new teachers. We look forward to the same trend in Oklahoma City.

**UPDATE:** On January 23, 2012, the Oklahoma City Board of Education voted to renew the Teach for America contract for the 2012-13 school year, adding 70 additional teachers to the current 50 teachers provided through Teach for America.

34. Oklahoma City Public Schools, 2009-10 Statistical Profile

35. Oklahoma City Public Schools, 2009-10 District Report Card



LORI M. DICKINSON  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FOUNDATION FOR OKLAHOMA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

INSIDER'S  
PERSPECTIVE

By luck or fate, I don't know what it is like to be a child living on the city's south side who leaves for school every day with the real fear my parents will be deported. However, I do know how amazing that child's smile is as he sits quietly in a circle of classmates listening to his pre-k teacher read a book.

I can't imagine where an 8th grade girl finds the strength to learn, make good grades, and excel when her mother is dead and her father has been arrested for molesting her. But, I still remember the pained look on her teacher's face while learning of the girl and her younger brother's circumstances two days before summer break starts. Her thoughts had to be the same as mine: "How can I save these children?"

I can't imagine the stress and fatigue of a single mother working two jobs, lacking a high school degree and raising three children. However, I've seen the pride in her eyes as she talks about her son making top grades, helping his siblings, working a job and excelling in sports. "He has the best teachers who encourage him," she says. "I just want so much more for my children than what I can provide. I'm learning how as I go, because no one showed me."

In David Matthews' book, *Reclaiming Public Education by Reclaiming Our Democracy*, he states, "We must have the public we need before we can have the schools we want." To improve education, the book argues, there must be a more engaged, more informed, and more active public.

I thought I was engaged, informed and active. Now I know better. I'm in my third year at The Foundation for Oklahoma City Public Schools. With each year – with each day – I learn truths that further my education, solidifying some of my opinions while challenging others. While the challenges are great and some days seem almost insurmountable, the children of Oklahoma City need us. They need those of us who are engaged to stay the path and keep learning. They need those who have strayed to jump back in. And they need those who have kept our public schools at arm's length to come close.

The more informed we become as a public, a city and a state – the more we educate ourselves on issues from another's point of view other than our own – the more informed our choices will be, ultimately benefitting all of Oklahoma's children.

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## INNOVATIVE RESPONSES

### OKLAHOMA FIT KIDS COALITION

The Oklahoma Fit Kids Coalition is a statewide initiative coordinated by the Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy. Since its establishment in 2003, the Coalition has been an advocate for legislation and programs that support the health of children and youth. The Coalition has seen the successful passage of the following legislation:

- Physical Education in Schools (SB 1186-2008): Requires all elementary schools to provide a weekly minimum of 60 minutes of physical education or an exercise program in addition to recess. All middle and high schools are required to offer physical education as an elective course.
- Farm to School (HB 2655-2006): Provides schools with the opportunity to purchase fresh produce and other healthy farm products from local farmers.
- Getting Junk Foods Out of Schools (HB 265-2005): Limits student access to sugary drinks and snacks during the school day.
- Healthy and Fit Schools Advisory Committees (SB 1627-2004): Creates committees of parents, local health care professionals and community leaders to study and make recommendations to their school principal regarding all aspects of their children's health.



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## CORPORATE-LED TUTORING INITIATIVES

Multiple Oklahoma City-area corporations are investing in the future of Oklahoma City by supporting employee-led tutoring programs. Employees at companies such as Chesapeake Energy, Devon Energy, INTEGRIS Health, Sandridge Energy, and Sonic, America's Drive-In contribute their time and resources to help students at nine Oklahoma City schools improve their reading skills.

In addition, a special partnership between American Fidelity Assurance and the Oklahoma City Thunder encourages elementary students to read by offering rewards through the Thunder Reading Challenge. During the 2010-11 school year, the Thunder Reading Challenge drew the participation of 117 schools representing 488 teachers and 11,076 students.

## CITY CARE'S WHIZ KIDS

Fifteen years ago, the Whiz Kids program started under the umbrella of City Care, Inc. as a way to stop the cycle of poverty and illiteracy in urban neighborhoods and among the homeless population served by City Care's other programs. What began with one school, one church, and a handful of volunteers has grown into a program that supports more than 700 children at 23 urban schools with the support of 51 local churches and over 1,000 volunteers.

Whiz Kids' success is due in part to its collaboration with other agencies, which has allowed the program to expand and increase the number of children served in Oklahoma City. These partners include the Department of Human Services, Feed the Children, Oklahoma City Public Schools, Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education GEAR UP, Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, State Department of Education Special Education Services, and University of Central Oklahoma.

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## UNITED WAY OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA

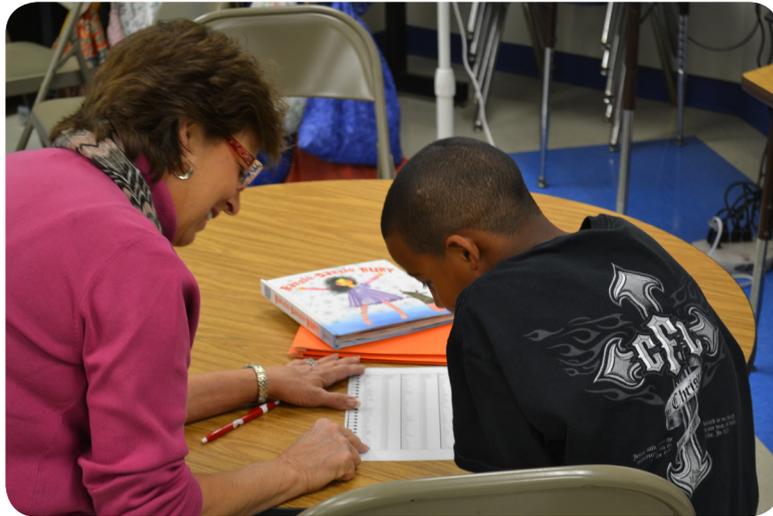
### TUTORING INITIATIVES AT KAISER ELEMENTARY AND HAYES ELEMENTARY

In 2009, approximately half of all third grade students attending Oklahoma City Public Schools were reading at a proficient level. With this in mind, in 2010, United Way of Central Oklahoma partnered with the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence and Oklahoma City Public Schools to start a tutoring initiative that would help every second grade student become proficient in reading and comprehension before entering the third grade. The initiative started at Kaiser Elementary, where more than 85 students were paired with 45 positive adult mentors. In fall 2011, the program expanded to include a second Oklahoma City Public School, Hayes Elementary, where an additional 30-45 tutors work with approximately 60 students. Volunteer tutors at both schools spend one hour each week working with two students for thirty minutes each (approximately 10 hours per semester). The ultimate goal is to see the tutoring initiative replicated throughout the Oklahoma City Public School system and have it serve a significant role in decreasing Oklahoma City's high school drop out rates.

### EDUCATION VENTURE GRANTS

In 2010, United Way of Central Oklahoma was the recipient of a bequest of approximately \$150,000. As directed by the United Way Board of Directors, the funding provided support for agencies with programs that focus on improving reading abilities at the third grade level or increasing the high school graduation rate. A total of 18 proposals were received totaling more than \$595,000. Programs were selected based on their likelihood for success with the greatest scope or impact, a demonstrated ability to measure outcomes, their current level of community support, their willingness to collaborate, and their use of best practices. Of the four agencies selected to receive Venture Grant funding, three agencies were United Way of Central Oklahoma Partner Agencies:

- City Care, Whiz Kids Tutoring and Mentoring Program, \$50,000, for academic years 2010-11 and 2011-12
  - Moore Youth & Family Services, School-Based Services, \$25,000, for academic years 2010-11 and 2011-12
  - Positive Tomorrows, After-school Tutoring and Enrichment Program, \$25,000, for academic years 2010-11 and 2011-12
  - Youth Services for Oklahoma County, Supporting Kids in Independent Living (SKIL), \$50,000, for academic years 2010-11 and 2011-12
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## PARTNER AGENCIES

United Way of Central Oklahoma supports local programs that focus on enriching the lives of children and youth all over the community. In doing so, United Way supports programs that offer well-child health screenings and immunizations, physical fitness, leadership skills, mentoring, counseling, and positive after-school care.

In 2012, 3.2 million dollars—more than a quarter of all allocable United Way dollars – are funding programs that support children. These programs are provided by 31 United Way Partner Agencies:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| American Red Cross of Central Oklahoma<br>Bethesda | Oklahoma United Methodist Circle of Care |
| Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Oklahoma              | Parents Assistance Center                |
| Boy Scouts of America, Last Frontier Council       | Positive Tomorrows                       |
| Boys and Girls Clubs of Oklahoma County            | Safe Kids Oklahoma                       |
| Calm Waters Center for Children and Families       | Salvation Army                           |
| Camp Fire USA, Heart of Oklahoma Council           | Special Care                             |
| CASA of Oklahoma County                            | Sunbeam Family Services                  |
| Celebrations Preschool                             | Tinker Air Force Base Youth Center       |
| A Chance to Change                                 | Urban League of Greater Oklahoma City    |
| Citizens Caring for Children                       | Variety Care                             |
| Coffee Creek Riding Center for the Handicapped     | YMCA of Greater Oklahoma City            |
| Girl Scouts – Western Oklahoma                     | Youth and Family Services                |
| John W. Keys Speech and Hearing Center             | Youth Cornerstone                        |
| Moore Youth and Family Services                    | Youth Services for Oklahoma County       |
| NorthCare  | YWCA of Oklahoma City                    |

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Drew Dugan, Vice-President, Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce  
Kim Henry, Executive Director, Sarkeys Foundation  
Steve Kreidler, Executive Vice President, University of Central Oklahoma  
Allison Loeffler, Evaluation Specialist, Smart Start of Central Oklahoma  
Bob Ross, President and CEO, Inasmuch Foundation  
Terri White, Commissioner, Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

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IN OKLAHOMA, THE ANNUAL COST  
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IS MORE THAN THE AVERAGE  
**IN-STATE TUITION  
AT A PUBLIC  
FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE  
(\$7,100 VERSUS \$5,762  
RESPECTIVELY).**

Source: National Association of Child Care  
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