



Texas Matters Principle

Healthcare is about more than treating illness—it is about helping Texans live healthy, productive lives.

Strong healthcare systems promote prevention, provide access to quality care, prepare healthcare professionals, support healthy mothers and babies, respond to emergencies, improve mental health, and strengthen our communities.

Healthy people strengthen families. Healthy families strengthen communities. Investing in health is an investment in opportunity, workforce participation, and Texas' future.

What Matters Most to...?

ME

How can I and my family live healthier lives?

Good health affects nearly every part of life—from raising a family and succeeding at work to enjoying retirement. Understanding healthcare helps Texans make informed decisions about prevention, insurance, medical care, and healthy living.

US

How do strong healthcare systems strengthen our communities?

Healthy communities depend on access to quality healthcare, hospitals, emergency services, mental healthcare, and preventive care. Healthcare also supports one of Texas' largest workforces and plays a vital role in our economy.

TOMORROW

How do we build a healthier Texas for future generations?

Improving health outcomes requires investing in healthcare professionals, supporting healthy mothers and babies, strengthening rural healthcare, encouraging innovation, and expanding access to quality care. The choices we make today will shape the health of future generations.

Why This Matters

Healthcare affects every Texan. It influences our ability to live healthy lives, care for our families, succeed at work or school, and recover from illness or injury.

Healthcare is also one of Texas' largest industries and employers, supporting workforce participation, economic growth, research, and innovation.

Quality healthcare requires more than insurance. Texans also need timely access to doctors, hospitals, medications, mental health services, emergency care, and preventive services that are available and affordable.

Texas' healthcare system includes private insurance, Medicare, Medicaid, CHIP, hospitals, community health centers, and local health programs working together to serve millions of Texans.

Understanding how healthcare works helps Texans evaluate policies that affect access, affordability, quality, and health outcomes—and **vote with confidence**.

1. How do we know if Texas has a “healthy” healthcare system for all Texans?

Answer

A healthy healthcare system is measured by more than the number of hospitals, doctors, or insurance plans. It is reflected in whether Texans can access quality, affordable care, prevent disease, recover from illness, and live healthy, productive lives. These measures **provide important context for evaluating healthcare access, affordability, workforce development, maternal health, and public health across Texas.**

Health in Texas – By the Numbers

Topic	Texas by the Numbers	Why It Matters
Population	Over 31 million Texans	A growing population increases demand for healthcare services, hospitals, physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals.
Medicaid & CHIP	More than 4 million Texans receive coverage	These programs provide healthcare for many children, pregnant women, older adults, and people with disabilities.
Licensed Physicians	More than 95,000 actively licensed physicians	Physician supply affects access to primary care, specialists, and rural healthcare.
Registered Nurses	More than 300,000 licensed registered nurses	Nurses are essential to hospitals, clinics, schools, long-term care facilities, and public health.
Rural Counties	Over 170 rural counties	Many rural communities face physician shortages, no obstetricians or gynecologists, hospital financial challenges and closures, and significantly longer travel times for care.
Life Expectancy	Approximately 76 years (varies by community and demographics)	Life expectancy reflects overall health and is influenced by healthcare access, chronic disease, lifestyle, and socioeconomic factors.
Leading Causes of Death	Heart disease, cancer, accidents, stroke, and chronic lower respiratory disease	Many leading causes of death can be reduced through prevention, early detection, and effective treatment.
Mental Health	Millions of Texans experience a mental health condition during their lifetime	Mental health is an important part of overall health and affects families, schools, workplaces, and communities.

Maternal Health in Texas - By the Numbers

Births Each Year	Approximately 380,000–390,000 births annually	Every birth represents an opportunity to improve the health of both mothers and babies.
Maternal Mortality Rate	Approximately 24.2 pregnancy-related deaths per 100,000 live births (excluding deaths directly attributed to COVID-19)	Maternal mortality is one of the most closely watched measures of maternal health. It helps healthcare providers and policymakers evaluate the safety of pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care while identifying opportunities to reduce preventable maternal deaths.
Pregnancy-Related Deaths Determined to Be Preventable	The Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee has found that many pregnancy-	Understanding why these deaths occurred helps identify opportunities to improve preconception care, prenatal care, emergency obstetric care, postpartum care, maternal

	related deaths it reviewed were determined to be preventable.	mental health services, and coordination across the healthcare system. The goal is to improve outcomes for mothers and babies across Texas.
Maternal Mortality & Morbidity Review Committee	Reviews pregnancy-related deaths and identifies opportunities for improvement	Helps policymakers and healthcare providers better understand maternal health outcomes, identify contributing factors, and recommend ways to improve maternal healthcare across Texas.
Postpartum Medicaid Coverage	Extended to 12 months after childbirth	Supports continued medical care during the year following pregnancy, when many pregnancy-related complications and maternal health concerns can occur.
Maternity Care Deserts	Some communities across Texas have limited or no nearby obstetric services	Access to prenatal care, labor and delivery services, and postpartum care varies across Texas, particularly in rural communities.

Why It Matters

Healthcare measures help Texans understand whether our healthcare system is improving the health of individuals, families, and communities. Understanding these outcomes helps citizens evaluate healthcare policies, taxpayer investments, government accountability, and the choices that shape the future of healthcare in Texas—and **vote with confidence**.

2. Why is healthcare expensive?

Answer

Healthcare prices reflect many interconnected costs, including:

- Hospital and physician services
- Prescription drugs
- Medical equipment and technology
- Insurance administration
- Staffing and workforce shortages
- Emergency and intensive care
- Treatment of chronic conditions
- Malpractice and regulatory expenses
- Unpaid care
- Facility construction and maintenance

Patients may experience these costs through premiums, deductibles, copays, coinsurance, uncovered services, and taxes.

Prices also vary significantly among providers, facilities, insurance networks, and geographic areas. Understanding the total cost can be difficult because patients often do not know the negotiated price before receiving care.

Why It Matters

Healthcare costs directly impact the financial well-being of families, employers, and taxpayers across Texas. The policies elected leaders adopt and the way public resources are invested can influence the cost, quality, and accessibility of care. Understanding these factors helps Texans evaluate healthcare priorities, public investments, and **vote with confidence**.

3. What makes healthcare affordable?

Answer

Affordable healthcare means that insurance premiums and out-of-pocket expenses are manageable relative to a household's income.

Affordability can be influenced by:

- Premiums
- Deductibles
- Copays and coinsurance
- Prescription-drug prices
- Whether providers are in-network
- Public or employer subsidies
- Competition among plans and providers
- Availability of lower-cost preventive and primary care
- Protection against unexpected medical bills

Texans buying individual coverage can compare approved plans through HealthCare.gov, and some households may qualify for financial assistance. The Texas Department of Insurance also provides plan-comparison and consumer-protection information.

Why It Matters

Affordable healthcare is essential to the health and financial security of Texas families. The policies elected leaders adopt—and the way taxpayer dollars are invested—can significantly affect healthcare costs, access, and quality. Understanding these choices helps Texans evaluate healthcare priorities, public investments, and **vote with confidence**.

4. What affects access to healthcare?

Answer

Access depends on several factors:

- Insurance or another way to pay
- Availability of doctors, nurses, hospitals, dentists, and mental-health professionals
- Distance and transportation
- Appointment availability
- Provider participation in insurance networks
- Language and disability accommodations
- Reliable broadband for telehealth
- Awareness of available services
- Childcare and the ability to take time away from work

Provider shortages can affect both rural and urban communities. Federal shortage-area designations identify places or populations lacking adequate primary, dental, or mental-health professionals.

Why It Matters

Access to healthcare is about more than having insurance—it is about being able to receive timely, affordable, quality care when it is needed. Understanding the factors that affect access helps Texans evaluate healthcare policies, workforce development, infrastructure investments, and the choices that improve health outcomes—and **vote with confidence**.

5. Why do rural communities face particular healthcare challenges?

Answer

Rural hospitals and clinics often serve smaller populations spread across large geographic areas. They may have difficulty maintaining enough patient volume and revenue to support emergency departments, maternity care, specialists, advanced equipment, and around-the-clock staffing.

Rural communities may also experience:

- Physician and nursing shortages
- Long travel distances
- Limited ambulance capacity
- Older populations with greater medical needs

- Higher rates of uninsured or underinsured patients
- Difficulty recruiting and retaining professionals
- Limited broadband or transportation

Texas' state health planning documents identify access to emergency services, primary care, and insurance as significant rural concerns and note that hospital closures can lengthen travel times and reduce access to emergency care.

Why It Matters

Strong rural healthcare systems help ensure Texans have access to primary care, emergency services, maternity care, and other essential healthcare close to home. Understanding the challenges facing rural communities helps Texans evaluate healthcare priorities, workforce investments, and public policies that improve access to care across Texas—and **vote with confidence**.

6. What is preventive care?

Answer

Preventive care seeks to prevent illness or identify health problems before they become more serious. Examples include:

- Regular checkups
- Access to fresh, nutritious foods
- Vaccinations
- Blood-pressure and cholesterol screening
- Cancer screening
- Prenatal care
- Newborn screening
- Dental care
- Mental-health screening
- Counseling about nutrition, exercise, and tobacco use

Many health plans cover certain recommended preventive services without patient cost sharing, although specific benefits depend on the plan and applicable law.

Why It Matters

Preventive care is an investment in healthier people and stronger communities. By preventing illness and identifying health problems early, it can improve health outcomes while reducing long-term healthcare costs for individuals, families, employers, and the healthcare system. Understanding the value of prevention helps Texans evaluate healthcare policies, public investments, and **vote with**

confidence.

7. Why are primary care and mental-health services important?

Answer

Primary-care providers often serve as the first point of contact for routine care, chronic-condition management, referrals, preventive services, and coordination among specialists.

Mental health is also part of overall health. Untreated mental-health and substance-use conditions can affect families, schools, workplaces, homelessness, emergency rooms, and public safety.

Texas-regulated fully insured health plans generally must include mental-health and substance-use benefits and provide them at the same level as physical-health benefits, although coverage rules can differ for self-funded employer plans.

Why It Matters

Primary care and mental-health services help keep Texans healthy, reduce preventable illnesses, and improve quality of life. Investing in medical schools, residency programs, nursing education, community colleges, and other healthcare workforce training helps prepare more primary care physicians, nurses, and behavioral health professionals—especially in rural and underserved communities. Greater access to primary care can help people receive preventive care earlier, better manage chronic conditions, and reduce unnecessary visits to emergency departments. Understanding these investments helps Texans evaluate healthcare priorities, workforce development, and **vote with confidence**.

8. What roles do Medicaid and CHIP play in Texas?

Answer

Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program are jointly funded federal-state programs administered by Texas.

They provide coverage for eligible groups that include:

- Low-income children
- Certain parents and pregnant women
- Older adults

- People with disabilities
- Children whose families earn too much for Medicaid but cannot reasonably afford private coverage

Most Texas Medicaid services and all CHIP services are delivered through managed-care health plans.

Why It Matters

Medicaid and CHIP are major investments in the health of Texas families and among the largest partnerships between the state and federal governments. Understanding how these programs are funded—including how much Texas contributes, how much federal funding it receives, and the choices lawmakers make about these programs—helps Texans evaluate healthcare policies, budget priorities, government responsibilities, and **vote with confidence**.

9. How should Texas measure health outcomes?

Answer

Useful measures can include:

- Life expectancy
- Maternal and infant mortality
- Preventable deaths
- Rates of diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic conditions
- Vaccination and screening rates
- Mental-health outcomes
- Avoidable emergency-room use
- Hospital readmissions
- Access to prenatal and primary care
- Differences in outcomes among regions and populations

Measurements should be clear, consistent, and reviewed over time. Data should also be examined by geography because statewide averages can hide significant differences among urban, suburban, rural, and border communities.

Why It Matters

Health outcomes help Texans understand whether healthcare policies and investments are achieving meaningful results. Understanding these measures helps citizens evaluate healthcare priorities, government accountability, and the choices that improve the health of our communities—and **vote with**

confidence.

10. How does healthcare affect Texas businesses and the economy?

Answer

Healthcare affects businesses through insurance costs, employee recruitment, productivity, absenteeism, and workforce retention.

Healthy employees are generally better able to work consistently and remain productive. At the same time, rising premiums and medical costs can strain employers—especially small businesses—and reduce the money available for wages, hiring, or expansion.

Healthcare itself is also a major Texas industry, supporting hospitals, clinics, research institutions, pharmaceutical companies, insurers, and millions of related jobs.

Why It Matters

A healthy workforce is essential to Texas' economic prosperity. Understanding how healthcare affects businesses, employees, and communities helps Texans evaluate healthcare policies, workforce development, and the investments that support long-term economic growth—and **vote with confidence**.

11. How can technology improve access and quality?

Answer

Technology can support healthcare through:

- Telehealth appointments
- Remote patient monitoring
- Electronic medical records
- Electronic prescriptions
- Data sharing among providers
- Earlier identification of health risks
- Online scheduling and patient education

However, technology must protect patient privacy and cannot replace every in-person examination or procedure. Its effectiveness also depends on broadband access, digital literacy, appropriate reimbursement, and provider availability.

Why It Matters

Technology is helping transform healthcare by expanding access, improving quality, and supporting better patient outcomes. Understanding how these innovations affect healthcare delivery helps Texans evaluate public policy, healthcare investments, and **vote with confidence**.

12. How does Texas rank in maternal health?

Answer

Texas has historically ranked below many other states on several maternal and infant health measures, although rankings vary depending on the organization, the years studied, and the measures used.

Maternal health is commonly evaluated using indicators such as **maternal mortality, severe maternal morbidity, infant mortality, prenatal care, and postpartum care** rather than a single ranking.

Health outcomes also vary across Texas based on factors such as access to healthcare providers, hospitals, insurance coverage, rural healthcare, chronic disease, and socioeconomic conditions.

To better understand and improve these outcomes, the **Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC)** reviews pregnancy-related deaths and severe maternal complications, identifies contributing factors, and recommends improvements to maternal healthcare.

Why It Matters

Maternal health affects mothers, babies, families, and communities. Understanding how Texas measures maternal health and where improvements are needed helps Texans evaluate maternal healthcare policies, investments, and health outcomes—and **vote with confidence**.

13. What Factors Influence Maternal Health?

Answer

Maternal health is influenced by many factors **before pregnancy, during pregnancy, at childbirth, and after birth**.

Before Pregnancy (Preconception Care)

Good health before pregnancy—including regular medical care, management of chronic conditions, proper nutrition, mental healthcare, and access to insurance—can improve outcomes for both mother and baby.

During Pregnancy (Prenatal Care)

Regular prenatal care helps monitor the health of the mother and baby, identify complications early, manage chronic conditions, and encourage healthy behaviors.

Childbirth

Safe delivery depends on access to skilled healthcare professionals, hospitals, emergency obstetric care, and timely medical treatment when complications arise.

After Birth (Postpartum Care)

The weeks and months after childbirth are critical for a mother's physical and mental recovery. Postpartum care includes follow-up medical visits, screening for postpartum depression, managing pregnancy-related conditions, breastfeeding support, and ongoing healthcare. Texas has extended Medicaid postpartum coverage to **12 months** for eligible mothers to improve continuity of care.

Maternal health is also influenced by access to healthcare providers, rural maternity services, insurance coverage, transportation, mental health services, nutrition, safe housing, childcare, family support, and socioeconomic conditions.

Why It Matters

Healthy pregnancies begin before conception and continue well after childbirth. Understanding the factors that influence maternal health helps Texans evaluate policies that support mothers, babies, healthcare providers, and communities—and **vote with confidence**.

14. What are Texas' abortion laws, and how do they relate to maternal healthcare?

Answer

Texas generally prohibits most abortions.

Senate Bill 8 (SB 8), which took effect in 2021, prohibits most abortions once fetal cardiac activity can be detected and allows private civil lawsuits against individuals who knowingly perform or assist with prohibited abortions. The law includes a **medical emergency exception** but does not include exceptions for rape or incest. Because of its private civil enforcement, SB 8

is sometimes referred to as the "**bounty hunter law**" by critics, while supporters describe it as a private civil enforcement mechanism.

Following the U.S. Supreme Court's **Dobbs** decision in 2022, Texas' **trigger law** took effect, creating additional criminal prohibitions on most abortions. Subsequent legislation, including the **Life of the Mother Act**, clarified how the medical emergency exception should be applied.

Why It Matters

Texas' abortion laws affect maternal healthcare, physician practice, and patient care in medical emergencies. Understanding the current laws and how they have evolved helps Texans evaluate maternal healthcare policies, understand the responsibilities of healthcare providers, and **vote with confidence**.

15. What Is the Medical Emergency Exception?

Answer

Texas law generally prohibits most abortions but allows an exception for a **medical emergency**.

A physician may perform an abortion when, using **reasonable medical judgment**, a pregnancy threatens the woman's life or poses a serious risk of substantial impairment of a major bodily function unless the pregnancy is terminated.

Depending on the patient's condition, examples may include:

- Ectopic pregnancy
- Serious infections
- Severe preeclampsia or eclampsia
- Other life-threatening pregnancy complications

The physician must document the medical basis for the decision in the patient's medical record.

Why It Matters

Medical emergencies during pregnancy can require immediate, life-saving care. Understanding the medical emergency exception helps Texans better understand how Texas law addresses these situations, evaluate maternal healthcare policies, physician responsibilities, and patient care—and **vote with confidence**.

16. What is the Life of the Mother Act?

Answer

The **Life of the Mother Act (Senate Bill 31)**, passed in **2025**, did not create a new exception to Texas' abortion laws. Instead, it clarified how the existing **medical emergency exception** should be applied when physicians treat pregnant women experiencing serious medical complications.

The law:

- **Clarifies** that physicians may use their **reasonable medical judgment** to provide evidence-based emergency care when a pregnancy threatens a woman's life or poses a serious risk of substantial impairment of a major bodily function.
- **Provides legal clarity** for physicians who act within the medical emergency exception.
- **Requires continuing education** by the Texas Medical Board and State Bar of Texas on the state's reproductive health laws.
- **Clarifies** that treatment for ectopic pregnancy and care following a miscarriage are **not** considered prohibited abortions.

Why It Matters

The Life of the Mother Act was intended to provide greater clarity for physicians treating pregnancy-related medical emergencies. Understanding how the law clarifies the medical emergency exception helps Texans evaluate maternal healthcare policies, physician responsibilities, patient access to emergency care, and **vote with confidence**.

17. Are There Laws Regarding the Abortion Pill in Texas?

Answer

Yes. Texas law places significant restrictions on the use and distribution of abortion-inducing medications, including **mifepristone** and **misoprostol** when they are prescribed for the purpose of ending a pregnancy.

Current Texas law includes restrictions on:

- Prescribing abortion-inducing drugs for prohibited abortions.
- Mailing or distributing abortion-inducing drugs into Texas for prohibited abortions.
- Civil and criminal penalties that may apply to those who unlawfully provide or distribute abortion-inducing medications.
- Private civil enforcement provisions enacted in more recent legislation that allow certain lawsuits against individuals involved in prohibited distribution of abortion medication.

At the same time, legal challenges involving federal regulation of mifepristone, telemedicine prescribing, and mail delivery continue in federal courts. As a result, some aspects of medication abortion remain the subject of ongoing litigation and may continue to evolve.

Why It Matters

Abortion medications are used in reproductive healthcare, miscarriage management, and other medical situations. Understanding Texas' laws helps Texans evaluate maternal healthcare policies, physician responsibilities, patient access to care, and the tradeoffs involved in public policy—and **vote with confidence**.

10. Who has responsibility over healthcare?

Answer

- Governor
- Lieutenant Governor
- Speaker of the House
- Senate Health & Human Services Committee
- House Public Health Committee
- House Select Committee on Health Care Affordability
- Your State Senator
- Your State Representative
- County Judge
- County Commissioners

Vote with Confidence

Healthcare affects every Texan—from birth through every stage of life. As you evaluate candidates and healthcare policy, consider asking thoughtful questions such as:

Access to Care

- How will this proposal improve access to healthcare?
- How will it affect rural and underserved communities?
- How will success be measured?

Affordability

- How can healthcare become more affordable for families, employers, and taxpayers?

- How should Texas balance costs with quality, innovation, and access?

Prevention & Public Health

- How can Texas encourage healthier lifestyles and prevent chronic disease?
- What investments in preventive care could improve long-term health outcomes?
- How can early intervention reduce future healthcare costs and improve quality of life?

Workforce

- How will Texas recruit and retain doctors, nurses, mental health professionals, and other healthcare workers?
- How should Texas address healthcare shortages in rapidly growing and rural communities?
- How can Texas expand access to primary care, specialty care, and emergency services?

Maternal Health

- How can Texas ensure women have access to quality healthcare **before pregnancy, throughout pregnancy, during childbirth, and throughout the postpartum period in all regions of Texas including rural communities?**
- How can Texas improve maternal and infant health outcomes?
- What can be done to improve access to prenatal care, labor and delivery services, postpartum care, and maternal mental health services?
- How can Texas address physician shortages and the loss of maternity services in rural communities?
- How should Texas evaluate the effectiveness of recent maternal health initiatives, including postpartum Medicaid coverage, maternal mortality review efforts, and improvements in emergency obstetric care?
- How should lawmakers balance maternal health, physician decision-making, patient safety, and current Texas law?
- What evidence shows that maternal health outcomes are improving, and how should success be measured over time?

Accountability

- What evidence supports this proposal?
- How will success be measured?
- What tradeoffs should Texans understand?
- How will these policies improve measurable health outcomes for Texans?

Reasonable people may support different approaches to improving healthcare. Understanding the evidence, expected outcomes, and tradeoffs helps Texans thoughtfully evaluate healthcare policy and **vote with confidence**.

Texas Matters Takeaway

Healthcare is about more than hospitals and insurance—it is about people.

Healthy mothers. Healthy babies. Healthy families. Healthy communities. A healthier Texas for generations to come.

Healthy Texans are better able to raise families, pursue careers, contribute to their communities, and enjoy a higher quality of life.

Strong healthcare systems support healthy mothers and babies, prepare skilled healthcare professionals, strengthen local hospitals, improve mental health, encourage prevention, respond to emergencies, and help communities thrive.

Healthy pregnancies begin before conception and continue well beyond childbirth. Supporting women through **preconception care, prenatal care, safe delivery, postpartum recovery, and maternal mental health** gives mothers and babies the healthiest possible start while strengthening families and communities across Texas.

As Texas continues to grow, improving health outcomes will require thoughtful leadership, medical innovation, a strong healthcare workforce, responsible stewardship of public resources, and policies that improve access, affordability, quality, and measurable outcomes. It will also require continued efforts to reduce preventable maternal and infant complications, expand access to quality care, and ensure women receive timely medical treatment throughout pregnancy and the year following childbirth.

**Explore what matters most to everyday Texans.
Understand the choices.
Vote with confidence.**

Trusted Resources

- [Texas Department of State Health Services \(DSHS\)](#)
- [Texas Health and Human Services Commission \(HHSC\)](#)
- [Texas Medical Board](#)
- [Texas Campaign for Mothers](#)
- [Texas Medical Association](#)
- [Texas Hospital Association](#)
- [Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee](#)
- [Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

- [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](#)
 - [Kaiser Family Foundation \(KFF\)](#)
 - [Texas 2036](#)
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