

50%



DECREASE

IN CHILDHOOD POVERTY
WITHIN A SINGLE GENERATION

A GUIDE TO REDUCING CHILDHOOD POVERTY IN DALLAS

**FOR SOURCES, PLEASE VISIT:
CHILDPOVERTYACTIONLAB.ORG/SOURCES**

1 IN 3 CHILDREN IN DALLAS LIVES IN POVERTY

“Morally and economically, allowing so many of our children to grow up so far from opportunity threatens our future. If we are willing to embrace the challenge of working collectively and strategically, Dallas can cut childhood poverty in half within a single generation.”

OVERVIEW

Approximately 105,000 children live below the poverty line in Dallas.⁽¹⁾ At a rate of 31.2%, child poverty in Dallas impacts a greater proportion of our children than in all but a handful of the largest U.S. cities.⁽²⁾ Child poverty is both a moral issue and an economic one: For children to grow up with so little in a region of such affluence challenges our most basic principles of fairness, and each child living in poverty has an average net cost to our economy of \$1.6M over their lifetime.⁽³⁾ Children who grow up in poverty are much more likely to live in poverty as adults and also to face worse education, economic, and health outcomes than their more affluent peers.

The Child Poverty Action Lab aims to reduce child poverty by 50% in Dallas within a generation through data-driven collaboration and intentional collective action. Poverty is multifaceted and complex, so to focus efforts and anchor our work, CPAL has identified five priorities linked to child poverty that significantly impact prospects for economic mobility. Each priority is associated with a long-term desired outcome, and future interventions will be designed in alignment with each outcome. Those outcomes include:



BASIC NEEDS

Increase **utilization of means-tested benefit programs** to at least 90% of eligible households.



EDUCATION

Double the **number of postsecondary credentials** granted by higher education institutions.



FAMILY

Increase the **number of children living in two-parent households** by 25%.



LIVING-WAGE JOBS

Increase **family income** by 25% for the bottom quintile of families.



SAFETY

Reduce the **incidence of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** by 50%.

CPAL's North Star goal of reducing childhood poverty by 50% within a generation will be realized by strategically and persistently working toward these five outcomes. To estimate the needed scale of impact, CPAL has established a straightforward equation that can be applied to each desired outcome:



**STRENGTH
OF INDICATOR**

Strength of Indicator measures the relationship between the indicator and the likelihood of living in poverty.



REACH

Reach is an estimate of the number of children that can be impacted by realizing the desired outcome associated with the indicator.



ACHIEVABILITY

Achievability estimates the chances of reaching the desired outcome, based on baseline data in Dallas as well as similar efforts undertaken elsewhere.



**CHILDREN
IMPACTED**

Children Impacted identifies the total number of children who benefit if the desired outcome is met.

BREAKING INTERGENERATIONAL POVERTY

To break the cycle of intergenerational poverty, every child — regardless of their race, ethnicity, or ZIP code — must have unfettered access to the tools and opportunities that lead to economic mobility. CPAL's work has the potential to impact more than half of the 105,000 children living in poverty today in the City of Dallas.

For each of CPAL's five priorities, we expect to impact between 7,525 and 26,696 children — or 76,144 (unadjusted) in total. Given the overlap in population reached within each priority, however, we adjust down the number of children impacted based on each indicator's weight relative to overall impact. According to this approach, we believe we can halve the number of children in poverty (52,500 children) within 20 years.

The table below provides calculations of each indicator’s strength, potential reach, achievability, and children impacted. To note: There is some rounding in the table below. Consequently, independent calculations made using the numbers might result in slightly different totals for Children Impacted.

PRIORITY	OUTCOME (LEADING INDICATOR)	STRENGTH OF INDICATOR	REACH	ACHIEVABILITY	CHILDREN IMPACTED	ADJUSTED IMPACT
BASIC NEEDS	Increase utilization of means-tested benefit programs to at least 90% of eligible households	15.3%	65,537	75%	7,525	5,189
FAMILY	Increase the number of children living in two-parent households by 25%	54.7%	65,070	75%	26,696	18,406
SAFETY	Reduce the incidence of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) by 50%	53.4%	34,288	75%	13,726	9,464
EDUCATION	Double the number of postsecondary credentials granted by higher education institutions	66.6%	31,685	75%	15,823	10,910
LIVING-WAGE JOBS	Increase family income by 25% in the bottom quintile of families	16.0%	103,122	75%	12,375	8,532
TOTAL					76,144	52,500
OVERAGE					24,144	
ADJUSTMENT RATE					32%	



BASIC NEEDS

LEADING INDICATOR

Utilization of means-tested benefit programs

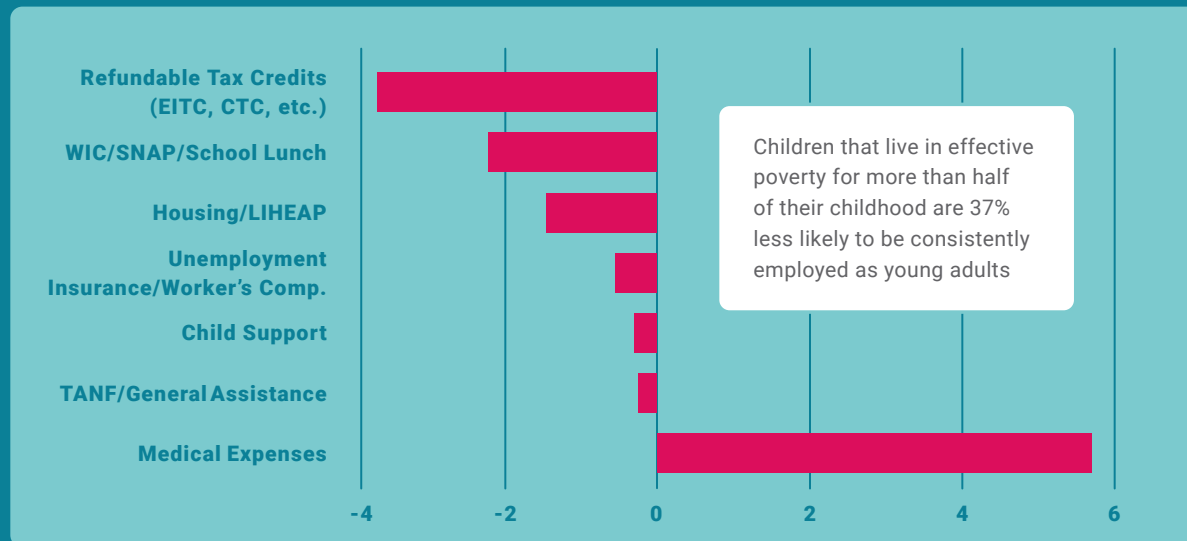
DESIRED LONG-TERM OUTCOME

Increase utilization of means-tested benefit programs to at least 90% of eligible households

Families who access means-tested benefits effectively increase their household income in the amount of the benefit; e.g., a family with a Housing Choice Voucher pays just 30% of their income toward rent, and the voucher subsidy covers the rest. The rent subsidy is, in effect, additional income to the family and should free up other income sources to be applied to expenses outside of rent. Despite the efficacy of benefit programs, utilization rates vary widely, and Dallas regularly leaves millions of allocated dollars on the table. CPAL strives to realize 90% or higher utilization rates of proven programs in Dallas.

Effects of Basic Needs Supports on Child Poverty

CHANGE IN NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN POVERTY AFTER INCLUDING EACH ELEMENT
2017, in millions



BASIC NEEDS IMPACT EQUATION

✖ 15.3% – STRENGTH OF INDICATOR

Over the past three years combined, benefit programs reduced child poverty rates by 15.3% in the United States, according to research on the impact of these programs on poverty conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.⁽⁴⁾ As we work to better understand the local impact of benefit programs, this value might change.

📶 65,537 – REACH

Research has shown that households between 50% and 100% of the Federal Poverty Level are most impacted by access to benefit programs.⁽⁵⁾ These programs don't go quite as far for families living in deep poverty — i.e., households with incomes less than half of the Federal Poverty Level. Based on data from 2015 to 2017, we estimate that there are ~65,500 children in households with incomes between 50% and 99% FPL.

🌟 75% – ACHIEVABILITY

Across a variety of benefit programs, participation in Dallas County is relatively low, so there is ample opportunity for improvement on this front; e.g., Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) utilization was just 39% in 2018 in Dallas and had been declining for 10 years, but CPAL efforts in partnership with the local and state WIC offices and IDEO.org helped to spur six straight months of growing WIC enrollment in 2019.



STRENGTH OF INDICATOR	15.3% x
REACH	65,537 x
ACHIEVABILITY	75% =
CHILDREN IMPACTED (UNADJUSTED)	7,525



FAMILY

LEADING INDICATOR

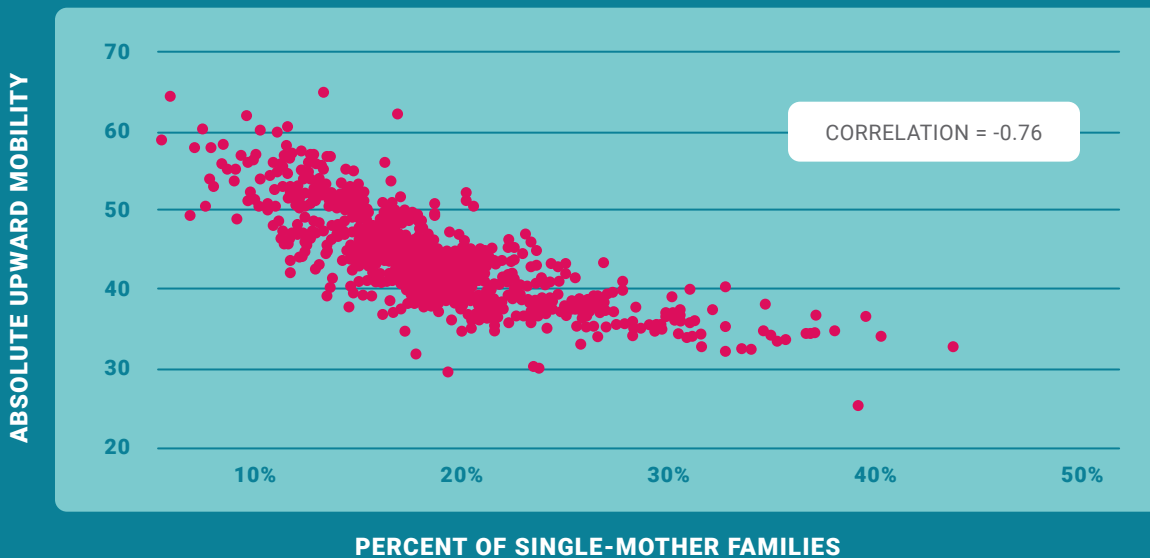
Number of children living in two-parent households

DESIRED LONG-TERM OUTCOME

Increase the number of children living in two-parent households by 25%

Raj Chetty's seminal work on the inextricable link between neighborhoods and economic mobility found that the share of single-parent households is a strong predictor of mobility for low-income children, even after controlling for other socioeconomic variables like race and parental education.⁽⁶⁾ Children who grow up in a two-parent household are much more likely to realize upward economic mobility as adults. Two-parent families can confer obvious benefits to their household and neighborhood, such as greater income for family needs and more supervision, discipline, and social-emotional support. CPAL has set a goal of increasing the number of children growing up in two-parent homes by 25% within a generation.

Neighborhood Percentage of Single-Parent Households is Highly Correlated to Adult Outcomes



FAMILY IMPACT EQUATION

✖ 54.7% – STRENGTH OF INDICATOR

Children in households with two parents are 55% less likely to be in poverty in the City of Dallas than their peers who live in households with just one parent. When we compare the rate of children living in single-parent households in poverty to two-parent households in poverty, 44.9% to 20.3% respectively in 2017, we find a ratio of 2.2 to 1. The effect that two-parent households has on the probability of living in poverty has varied over time but has increased citywide since 2015.⁽⁷⁾

YEAR	SINGLE PARENT POVERTY RATE	MARRIED COUPLE POVERTY RATE	POTENTIAL IMPACT ⁽⁸⁾
2014	52.30%	26.04%	50.22%
2015	50.26%	25.85%	48.56%
2016	48.00%	23.42%	51.20%
2017	44.88%	20.33%	54.70%

📶 65,070 – REACH

We estimate that 105,000 children live in households below the Federal Poverty Level in the City of Dallas. 63.1% (65,000) of those children live in single-parent households.

🌟 75% – ACHIEVABILITY

Dallas has one of the highest rates of single-parent households among large U.S. cities at 43.6%.⁽⁹⁾ In Texas, Dallas lags behind Austin (69.2% of children living in two-parent households), Fort Worth (63.4%), El Paso (61.8%), and San Antonio (58.8%).⁽¹⁰⁾ Given the success and proven best practices of peer cities in sustaining two-parent households, bridging the gap in Dallas is plausible.

PERCENT OF CHILDREN LIVING IN TWO-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS

San Francisco	75.78%
Austin	69.20%
Fort Worth	63.40%
El Paso	61.83%
Los Angeles	61.77%
New York City	60.01%
San Antonio	58.84%
Houston	56.34%
Dallas	56.34%
Chicago	54.74%
Washington, D.C.	47.16%
Baltimore	36.62%
Detroit	29.52%



STRENGTH OF INDICATOR	54.7% x
REACH	65,070 x
ACHIEVABILITY	75% =
CHILDREN IMPACTED (UNADJUSTED)	26,696



SAFETY

LEADING INDICATOR

Incidence of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

DESIRED LONG-TERM OUTCOME

Reduce the incidence of ACEs by 50%

Safety seeks to ensure that all children have the opportunity to flourish in a community that is free from the potential for physical and emotional harm. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic episodes occurring before age 18 that increase the risk of poor outcomes in adulthood; e.g., existing research shows that children who experience a greater number of ACEs have a higher chance of living in poverty in adulthood than those who experience no ACEs.⁽¹¹⁾ Given the national research, we anticipate that children living in households below poverty in Dallas are more likely to experience ACEs than others. By 2037, we strive for a 50% reduction in the number of ACEs reported citywide.⁽¹²⁾

SAFETY IMPACT EQUATION

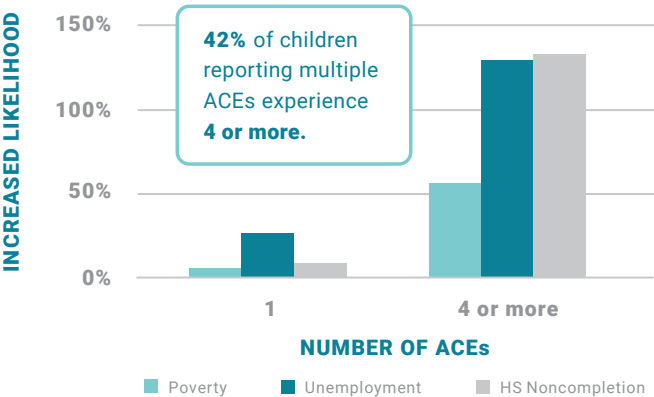
✖ 53.4% – STRENGTH OF INDICATOR

ACEs have the potential to impact all children, but children living below the poverty line have a 53% chance of experiencing two or more traumatic events. This is five times greater than trauma experienced by children living in homes with incomes greater than 400% of the Federal Poverty Level, who have just an 11% chance of experiencing multiple ACEs.⁽¹³⁾

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic events in a child’s life: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, domestic violence, parental substance abuse, mental illness, suicide or death, crime or family incarceration, physical neglect, and emotional neglect.

Childhood Trauma Increases the Odds of Adult Poverty

ADJUSTED ODDS OF POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT, HIGH SCHOOL NONCOMPLETION – 2016



📶 34,288 – REACH

All children living in households below the Federal Poverty Level (~105,000) are within scope. Approximately 66.5% of children in poverty experience multiple ACEs (68,600), so we halve this result to estimate the number of children that the Safety work needs to reach to achieve our North Star goal of cutting child poverty in half.

★ 75% – ACHIEVABILITY

Neighborhood-level poverty rates are closely connected with exposure to ACEs, and clustered neighborhoods of poverty can help narrow our work to areas where the risk of experiencing a traumatic event is greatest. By strategically focusing efforts within particular geographies, we expect to effectively and efficiently reach more families in need.



STRENGTH OF INDICATOR	53.4% x
REACH	34,288 x
ACHIEVABILITY	75% =
CHILDREN IMPACTED (UNADJUSTED)	13,726



EDUCATION

LEADING INDICATOR

Number of postsecondary credentials granted

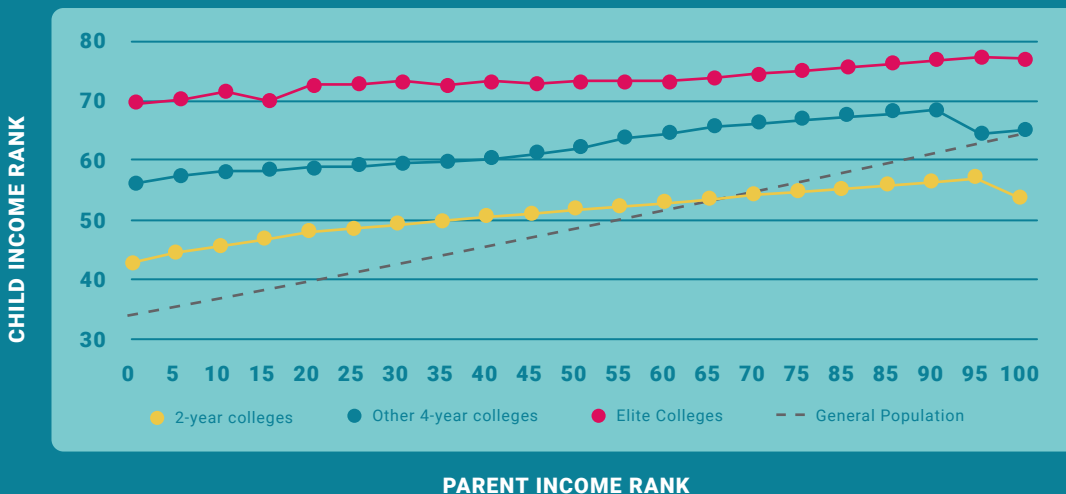
Postsecondary credentials represent certificates, two-year degrees, and four-year degrees

DESIRED LONG-TERM OUTCOME

Double the number of postsecondary credentials granted by higher education institutions

It is well-documented that postsecondary education is an engine of upward economic mobility: In 2017, the median weekly earnings of a full-time worker with only a high school degree was \$712, whereas workers with an associate's degree earned \$836/week, and workers with a bachelor's degree earned \$1,173/week.⁽¹⁴⁾ The incidence of poverty is 3.5 times lower for Americans with bachelor's degrees, and bachelor's degree holders are much more likely to be employed, to have health insurance and a retirement plan through employment, and to have asset income.⁽¹⁵⁾ Beyond the obvious pecuniary benefits of a degree, Americans with a bachelor's degree are more likely to report being in very good or excellent health, are almost four times less likely to be a regular smoker, are more likely to have a healthy diet with exercise, and realize longer life expectancy than those who have never gone to college.⁽¹⁶⁾

Postsecondary Degrees Level The Playing Field



In 2017, institutions in Dallas County awarded 25,562 certificates and degrees — a figure CPAL aspires to double by 2037.⁽¹⁷⁾ From 2015 to 2017, postsecondary credentials output grew at a rate of 1.3% — a rate that would only lead to a 25% increase in awards by 2037. To reach a 50% increase, we must realize a 3.5% annual growth rate in postsecondary credentials at local institutions over the next twenty years.⁽¹⁸⁾

EDUCATION IMPACT EQUATION

✖ 66.6% – STRENGTH OF INDICATOR

To calculate the strength of the leading indicator, we compare the difference in poverty rates between those who have completed at least a bachelor’s degree to those who have no degree: An adult with a bachelor’s degree is ~67% more likely to live above the poverty line in Dallas County.⁽¹⁹⁾⁽²⁰⁾

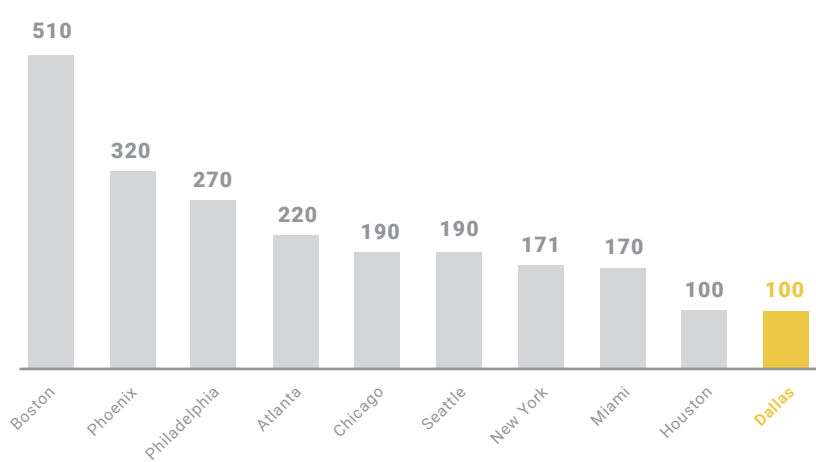
📶 31,685 – REACH

Children born in 2019 will enter college in 2037. To double the number of postsecondary credentials awarded in Dallas County by then, we need 111,636 total awards, attainable by ensuring that 31,685 children living in poverty today go on to earn a workforce certificate, associate’s degree, or bachelor’s degree.

★ 75% – ACHIEVABILITY

Postsecondary credentials (two- and four-year degrees) per capita in Dallas lag far behind other large cities at 100 postsecondary credentials per 10,000 residents. Doubling awards would put Dallas nearly on par with Chicago, Seattle, and Atlanta, cities that are reasonably within reach to emulate.

POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS PER 10,000 RESIDENTS



STRENGTH OF INDICATOR	66.6% x
REACH	31,685 x
ACHIEVABILITY	75% =
CHILDREN IMPACTED (UNADJUSTED)	15,823



LIVING-WAGE JOBS

LEADING INDICATOR

Family income

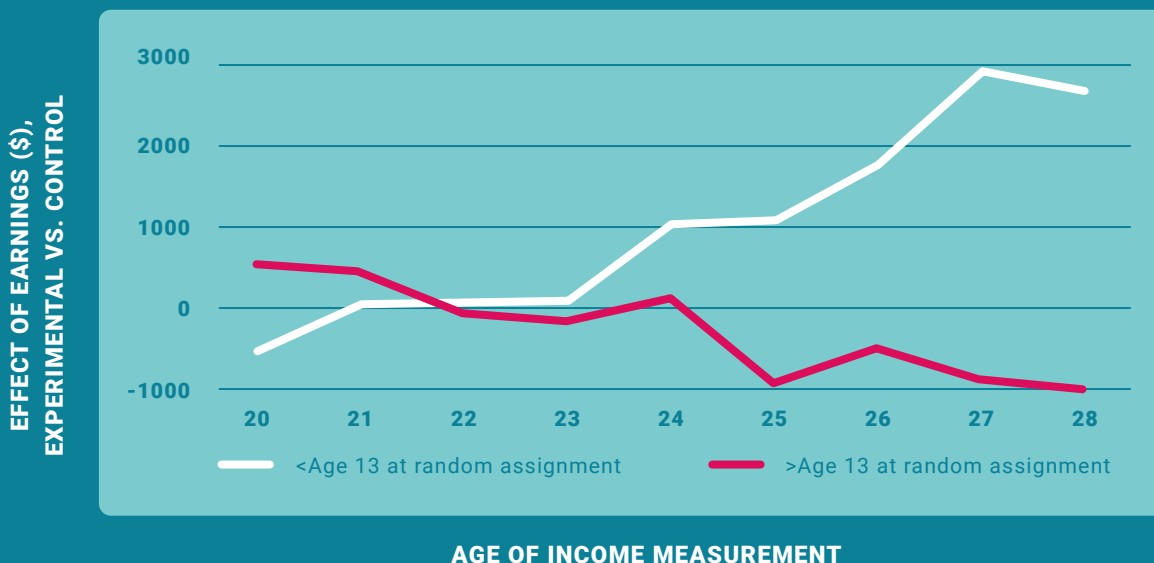
DESIRED LONG-TERM OUTCOME

Increase family income by 25% for the bottom quintile of families

Jobs that pay a living wage — i.e., a wage that allows a family to afford basic needs like food, transportation, healthcare, and childcare — are crucial for low-income families. In Dallas County, the estimated living wage for a single mother with two children is \$27.59/hour (or \$57,391 a year before taxes).⁽²¹⁾ However, households in the bottom half of earners in Dallas are making less than \$50,000 annually.⁽²²⁾ This gap between the actual wage for low-income workers and the living wage is significant and holds back upward economic mobility. CPAL has set a goal of increasing the household income of families in the bottom quintile of earners by 25% over 2017 estimates.

Childhood Circumstances Such as Neighborhood Surroundings Have a Significant Impact on Adult Earnings

For children living in poverty, their future access to living-wage jobs is dependent on the neighborhood they are growing up in and the opportunities they can access. The graph below illustrates the impact of a child's neighborhood on his future adult earnings; Raj Chetty found that children whose families were able to move to a higher-opportunity neighborhood realized significantly higher earnings when they were in their 20s.



LIVING-WAGE JOBS IMPACT EQUATION

✂ 16% – STRENGTH OF INDICATOR

Based on current data from the U.S. Census, Dallas’ overall poverty rate is ~20%, with households in the bottom income quintile earning around \$14,000 a year.⁽²³⁾ By increasing the income of these households by 25%, we would expect to see an additional \$3,500 (present value) per household in poverty, on average. With the average addition of \$3,500 to household income, ~16% of households would rise above the Federal Poverty Level.

📶 103,122 – REACH

All Dallas children living in households below the poverty threshold are within reach of this priority.

🌟 75% – ACHIEVABILITY

Dallas has recently taken important steps to increase wages and access to higher-paying jobs: Dallas County increased minimum wage for its workforce to \$15/hour, the City of Dallas minimum wage is \$13/hour and tied to cost of living, and other area companies have followed local government’s lead. Dallas County Promise, a cross-sector coalition to remove financial barriers to college access and to substantially grow college completion, is also in the process of ensuring more and more students can leverage a college education to land in higher-paying jobs. The momentum is strong and building, so growing household income for the bottom quintile of Dallas earners is within our reach.



STRENGTH OF INDICATOR	16.0% x
REACH	103,122 x
ACHIEVABILITY	75% =
CHILDREN IMPACTED (UNADJUSTED)	12,375

SIX BIG BETS FOR ACTION AT SCALE

The five priorities outlined in the Roadmap represent broad categories for our work. The actual business of retooling systems, maximizing resource allocation, and pooling collective efforts to ensure that today's children living in poverty realize upward economic mobility is about tightly defined and well-scoped initiatives and projects. Our six "Big Bets" are carefully designed to move the needle on one or more of the five priorities. They are actionable, scalable, and ripe for collaborative problem-solving:



BASIC NEEDS



EDUCATION



FAMILY



LIVING-WAGE JOBS



SAFETY

1

BENEFITS DELIVERY AND UTILIZATION

Each year in Dallas County, an estimated \$250M+ in existing resources for programs with a proven track record of reducing child poverty goes underutilized.



2

CONTRACEPTIVE ACCESS AND INFANT-MATERNAL HEALTH

The decision of how and when to have a family is tied to future financial security. Yet, low-income women face steep financial and other access hurdles to receiving reproductive healthcare options.



3

BIRTH-THREE CARE

The infant/toddler years present a high-stakes opportunity to positively influence lifelong outcomes or risk lasting achievement gaps that will lessen the impact of future investment.



4

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Children who grow up in housing that is healthy and safe, affordable, stable, and in a community that begets opportunity are more likely to realize better education, health, and economic outcomes over the course of their lifetimes.



5

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND INCARCERATION

Being jailed or losing a parent to incarceration during childhood adversely impacts future education, health, and financial outcomes. A former inmate is 7.5 times less likely to see mobility from the bottom quintile to the top quintile 20 years later.



6

TRAUMA PREVENTION AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Without intervention, trauma in childhood stunts cognitive, physical, and behavioral development. Children who experience trauma are 130% more likely to report being poor as adults.



BECOME A PARTNER

CPAL invites you to join a growing partnership of organizations and stakeholders working together to break intergenerational poverty in Dallas. CPAL will (1) proactively share new data analyses and insights with partner organizations, (2) seek opportunities to highlight and advocate for bringing greater scale to the most effective data-driven strategies being pursued by partner organizations, and (3) seek the counsel and expertise of partner organizations to address drivers of child poverty.

**TO JOIN AS A PARTNER, WE INVITE YOU TO PROVIDE YOUR INFORMATION AT
[CHILDPOVERTYACTIONLAB.ORG/PARTNER](https://childpovertyactionlab.org/partner).**

CHILD POVERTY ACTION LAB

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