CHILDREN AT RISK (C@R) is seeking an innovative, analytically rigorous Director of the Center for Social Measurement and Evaluation (CSME) who is deeply committed to building a better future for Texas children. The Director will lead the organization's research and data strategy, ensuring that evidence on the well-being of Texas children is accurate, accessible, and actionable for policymakers, partners, families, and the public. The Director will oversee mixed-methods research, guide the responsible integration of artificial intelligence into research and analysis, provide leadership for C@R's two journals, and translate complex findings into compelling data narratives that inform policy, advocacy, and programs. The Director will serve as a strategic advisor to executive leadership and collaborate closely with the policy, communications, programs, and development teams.

- Candidates must hold a master's degree or PhD and have a demonstrated record of leading applied research that combines quantitative and qualitative methods.
- This is a Houston-based hybrid position requiring office time and remote work. Travel across the state may be necessary.
- This position will report to the Deputy CEO and supervise a team of two to four researchers and analysts.

What We're Looking For:

We are seeking a research leader who can set the direction for CSME, strengthen the rigor and reach of C@R's work, and help the organization make the most of its data. The ideal candidate is:

- **Committed to Texas Children:** Brings a deep commitment to improving the lives of Texas children and a conviction that accessible, understandable data can drive meaningful change.
- **Innovative:** Seeks new and more effective approaches to research questions, methods, and products, and brings forward ideas that expand C@R's impact.
- **A Self-Starter:** Anticipates organizational needs, identifies the data required to advance priorities, and acts without awaiting direction.
- **Intellectually Honest:** Communicates clearly and objectively what the data can and cannot support, including when findings do not match expectations.
- **A Data Storyteller:** Makes data accessible to all audiences, translating complex analysis into clear narratives and visuals tailored to legislators, funders, media, partners, and families.
- **A Responsible Innovator with AI:** Understands the capabilities and limitations of AI tools and ensures human oversight, accuracy, and data privacy in all AI-assisted work.
- **Equity-Minded:** Disaggregates data, incorporates the perspectives of those most affected by an issue, and applies asset-based framing.

General Responsibilities and Essential Functions:

- **Research Strategy & Innovation:** Set and lead CSME's research agenda in alignment with organizational and policy priorities; develop new research products, methodologies, and tools.
- **Rigor & Data Governance:** Ensure that published research, rankings, and reports apply sound, defensible methodologies; protect the privacy and security of data about children and families.
- **AI Integration:** Identify, evaluate, and implement appropriate uses of AI in research and analysis, with clear standards for human review.
- **Data Storytelling & Policy Translation:** Translate findings into narratives, visualizations, dashboards, and briefs that inform policy and public understanding.

- **Journal Leadership:** Take a leading role in C@R's two journals, the Journal of Applied Research on Children (JARC) and the Journal of Family Strengths (JFS).
- **Team Leadership:** Hire, develop, and manage a team of two to four researchers and analysts.

Key Responsibilities Include:

Research Strategy & Innovation

- Set CSME's research agenda in partnership with the Deputy CEO, aligned with organizational and policy priorities.
- Design and lead mixed-methods research, including quantitative analysis, surveys, interviews, focus groups, and community-engaged methods.
- Develop innovative research products, methodologies, and tools that expand C@R's reach and impact.
- Advise executive leadership on the data required to advance policy and program priorities, including the feasibility and limitations of proposed analyses.

Rigor, Quality & Data Governance

- Ensure that published research, rankings, and reports apply sound, defensible methodologies that withstand review by school districts, state agencies, policymakers, and the media.
- Establish and oversee quality assurance procedures for all data and findings prior to publication.
- Protect the privacy of data about children and families through data-sharing agreements, de-identification, secure storage, and compliance with FERPA and other applicable requirements.
- Determine when projects require ethics review, such as Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, and secure it.

AI-Enabled Research & Analysis

- Identify, evaluate, and implement appropriate applications of artificial intelligence in research, analysis, and reporting.
- Establish standards for human review of AI-assisted work, consistent with C@R's AI policy.
- Provide guidance and training to staff on the responsible use of AI tools with organizational data.

Data Storytelling & Policy Translation

- Translate complex findings into clear, compelling narratives, visualizations, dashboards, and briefs for legislators, funders, media, partners, and families.
- Produce rapid-response analysis during the Texas legislative session and for emerging issues.
- Serve as an external spokesperson for C@R research with the media, at conferences, and in coalitions.

Journal Leadership (JARC and JFS)

- Provide strategic and editorial leadership for the Journal of Applied Research on Children (JARC) and the Journal of Family Strengths (JFS).
- Collaborate with editors, authors, peer reviewers, and academic partners to publish high-quality research on issues affecting children and families.
- Use the journals to connect academic research with policy and practice, expanding their reach and relevance for Texas children.

Program Evaluation & Organizational Support

- Develop logic models, outcome measures, and evaluation plans for C@R programs.
- Partner with the development team to write research and evaluation sections of grant proposals, develop research budgets, and support funder reporting.
- Collaborate with the policy, communications, and programs teams to integrate data and evidence into decision-making across the organization.

Partnerships

- Build relationships with universities, state agencies, and data partners to secure data access and co-produce research.
- Maintain current knowledge of Texas and federal data sources, including TEA, DFPS, HHSC, DSHS, the U.S. Census Bureau/American Community Survey, and KIDS COUNT.

Team Leadership

- Hire, coach, and develop a team of two to four researchers and analysts.
- Manage team workload, project timelines, and priorities across competing requests.
- Foster a team culture grounded in rigor, curiosity, collaboration, and continuous learning.

Qualifications:

- **Education and Experience:** Master's degree or a doctorate or other terminal degree in public policy, sociology, economics, statistics, education, public health, data science, or a related field required; at least 5 years of experience leading applied research or data analysis, including 3 years supervising staff.
- **Research & Analytical Skills:** Demonstrated experience designing and conducting mixed-methods research; strong statistical skills; experience in program evaluation, including logic models and outcome measurement, preferred.
- **Technical Skills:** Proficiency in at least one analysis tool such as R, Python, Stata, or SQL; experience building visualizations or dashboards in tools such as Power BI or Tableau; GIS experience a plus. Hands-on experience using AI tools in research or analysis, with all AI-assisted work reviewed for accuracy and data privacy.
- **Data Governance:** Experience managing sensitive or protected data, including data-sharing agreements and de-identification; familiarity with FERPA and ethics review processes.
- **Communication and Policy Translation:** Excellent written and oral communication skills; demonstrated ability to present research to non-technical audiences; experience informing public policy or working through a legislative session preferred.
- **Publishing Experience:** Experience with peer-reviewed publishing, academic journals, or editorial leadership preferred.
- **Subject-Matter Knowledge:** Experience with Texas education, child welfare, health, or early childhood data preferred.
- **Leadership and Collaboration:** Demonstrated ability to lead and develop staff, manage competing priorities, and collaborate across departments and with external partners.
- **Ethics and Professionalism:** Upholds high ethical and research standards, demonstrates sound judgment, and exercises discretion with sensitive data; passion for the organization's mission and community impact.

  Travel: Travel can be expected up to 20% of the directors work schedule.

About CHILDREN AT RISK

CHILDREN AT RISK is an active research and advocacy group dedicated to improving the quality of life of children through research, public policy analysis, community education, and collaboration. Our focus is on the whole child with significant work to champion solutions that tackle poverty, education and health disparities, and child exploitation. We are the leading source of accurate information on children's issues and an advocate and catalyst for change concerning the needs of all children. The position offers competitive compensation and benefits package.

How to Apply

Interested candidates should submit a cover letter, resume, research or writing sample, and a list of three references via e-mail to Liza Gomez, Deputy CEO, jobs@childrenatrisk.org. In your cover letter, please describe a research project you led that combined quantitative and qualitative methods and the decisions it informed. Please include the words "Director of CSME" in the subject line. The application deadline is rolling with applications being reviewed upon receipt.

Candidates who need an accommodation during the application or interview process may contact lgomez@childrenatrisk.org.

CHILDREN AT RISK is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, veteran status, religion, ancestry, color, race, ethnicity or creed.

CHILDREN AT RISK receives a high volume of resumes and reviews every candidate closely. As such, candidates will only be contacted if they are selected for an interview.