

State of Tennessee



2008

Annual Juvenile Court Statistical Report

**TENNESSEE COUNCIL OF JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT
JUDGES**

JUDGE KEN WITCHER, PRESIDENT

2008

TENNESSEE ANNUAL JUVENILE COURT STATISTICAL REPORT

PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 2009

We appreciate the juvenile court staff and clerks who provided the juvenile court statistical data necessary for the production of this report. We also acknowledge the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth for their support and encouragement.

**Supreme Court of Tennessee
Administrative Office of the Courts
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Nashville, Tennessee 37219**

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**TENNESSEE COUNCIL OF JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES
2008 ANNUAL JUVENILE COURT STATISTICAL REPORT**

THE TENNESSEE COUNCIL OF JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES

The Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (TCJFCJ), was created by the Tennessee General Assembly through legislation that was effective July 1, 1982. The TCJFCJ is the official organization of Tennessee judges having juvenile court jurisdiction.

Throughout its history the Council has represented juvenile court judges and court staff, providing an independent voice regarding issues affecting children, youth, families and communities. The Council meets semi-annually to consider matters concerning their members' official duties and obligations. The Council promotes best court practices and seeks a clearer understanding of what problems and specific challenges dependent, neglected, unruly, and delinquent children face when they come before the courts. The Council strives to increase the court's resources and legal options so they may better meet the needs of Tennessee's children and their families.

TCJFCJ EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

President:	Honorable Ken Witcher	Macon County
Vice President:	Honorable Ray Grimes	Montgomery County
Secretary/Treasurer:	Honorable Nolan Goolsby	Putnam County

DIRECTORS

Immediate Past President:	Honorable Rachel Anthony	Lauderdale County
	Honorable Betty Adams Green	Davidson County
	Honorable Dennis Humphrey	Roane County
	Honorable A. Andrew Jackson	Dickson County
	Honorable Robert Lincoln	Washington
	Honorable Larry J. Logan	Carroll County
	Honorable Jeff D. Rader	Sevier County
	Honorable Wayne Shelton	Montgomery County

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THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) assumed administrative support responsibility for the TCJFCJ in April 2005. Among the staff serving the TCJFCJ are the AOC's general counsel, a juvenile court program specialist, and a juvenile data collection team. The AOC collects juvenile court statistical data and publishes quarterly and annual statistical reports on the activities of the state's juvenile courts as part of the services they provide to the TCJFCJ. The juvenile courts and the clerks of the courts provide juvenile court data as set out in the Tennessee Code Annotated § 37-1-106(b)(3) and § 37-1-506, Report and publishing of juvenile court information, including cases, informal adjustments, pretrial diversions, and identifying information.

AOC POSITIONS

Executive Director:	Elizabeth A. Sykes
General Counsel:	David Haines
Juvenile Court Program Specialist:	Elvira Newcomb
Director, Information Technology:	Ann Lynn Walker
Juvenile Team	
Lead Systems Analyst:	Peach McComb
Juvenile Data Analyst:	Beverly Edmonds
Business Analyst:	Brenda Blythe

TENNESSEE COUNCIL OF JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES 2008 ANNUAL JUVENILE COURT STATISTICAL REPORT

2008 ANNUAL REPORT FORMAT

The 2008 Annual Juvenile Statistical Report follows a format that is based on a revision made in 2006, when it was divided into two parts to make it easier to read and use. The general state-wide statistics, graphs, and information are in the first portion of the report along with the summary information. Detailed information such as tables, trend information, and charts broken down by specific courts, sex, race, and age are in the second portion of the report. Readers will also find the information more comprehensive than in years past. The AOC has worked toward providing as much detailed juvenile court information as possible and has augmented the annual report in response to requests for more data.

The report for calendar year 2008 marks the fifth TCJFCJ annual report compiled and published by the AOC. Please call the AOC, or the specific juvenile court, for any data related questions. Please view the website for detailed statistics for each court and the 2008 Annual Juvenile Court and Statistical Report, which contains statistics from all of the juvenile courts.

<http://www.tennessee.gov/tcjfcj/reports.html>

2008 DATA LIMITATIONS

Recently developed reporting tools enabled the AOC staff to identify courts that appeared to be processing a large number of juveniles age 19 and over. Further analysis showed that the demographic information was being collected and reported on those individual's parents rather than on the children. The courts were contacted and made aware of this situation.

In some instances, court personnel required additional training to ensure that they were aware of the requirement that all data must be reported in relation to the juvenile, and that their submissions included adult demographic data. Although the juvenile court does hear some adult cases, the information collected and submitted must be from the juvenile's point of view. Other courts, mainly those with their own case management software, were unaware that the data extract being submitted contained parental demographic information rather than juvenile.

Both scenarios resulted in submissions of erroneous information. The demographic data in some courts was skewed to such a degree that the reports that were broken down by age group had unfairly weighted the depiction of how older juveniles were being handled in Tennessee. Please bear this in mind when viewing the data. The AOC staff has been working with these juvenile courts and their respective vendors to correct this reporting inaccuracy.

The AOC conducted an audit to identify other data anomalies which included a follow-up with several courts to determine why those anomalies appeared. The audit showed some juvenile courts that had under-reported the number of Judicial and Administrative Reviews conducted by their court staff. Some juvenile court case management systems did not provide accurate data updates and reporting. This meant that those courts could not report each case activity as it occurred. As a result, their statistics have been severely under-reported for many years.

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This problem was identified and the courts and software vendor were notified. While the child counts were being properly reflected in the data and remained stable, the number of contacts each juvenile had with court staff was under-reported as noted above. An extensive education effort by juvenile team staff members resulted in a 39.2% rise in reported Judicial Reviews and a 309.0% rise in reported Administrative Reviews in 2008. These numbers have continued to increase as many of the courts have begun to report their review data properly.

Tennessee has a non-unified court system which means that each court has its own methods of conducting court business. Collecting the same categories of juvenile data across all courts is a challenge. The AOC in conjunction with the Court Improvement Program (CIP) has taken steps to improve this deficiency, as noted in the Future Juvenile Court Case Management and Integrated Data Collection System portion of this report.

Caution should be exercised when comparing courts with each other. Although some juvenile courts do handle adult cases, such as contributing to the dependency or delinquency of a minor, those cases should be reported from the juvenile's perspective.

Please note that data from 2005 has not been included in the trend information charts. One of the larger juvenile courts submitted its 2005 data in a summarized format. The summarized data could not be included in the database or in the reports that used demographic information to break the data down into manageable categories. The absence of this court's information would have biased the data and given a false representation of juvenile trend factors within the State. To address this challenge, the AOC chose the trend range of 1998 through 2004 and 2006 through 2008, which showed 10 years of accumulated statistics that depicted the juvenile court data in the most meaningful way.