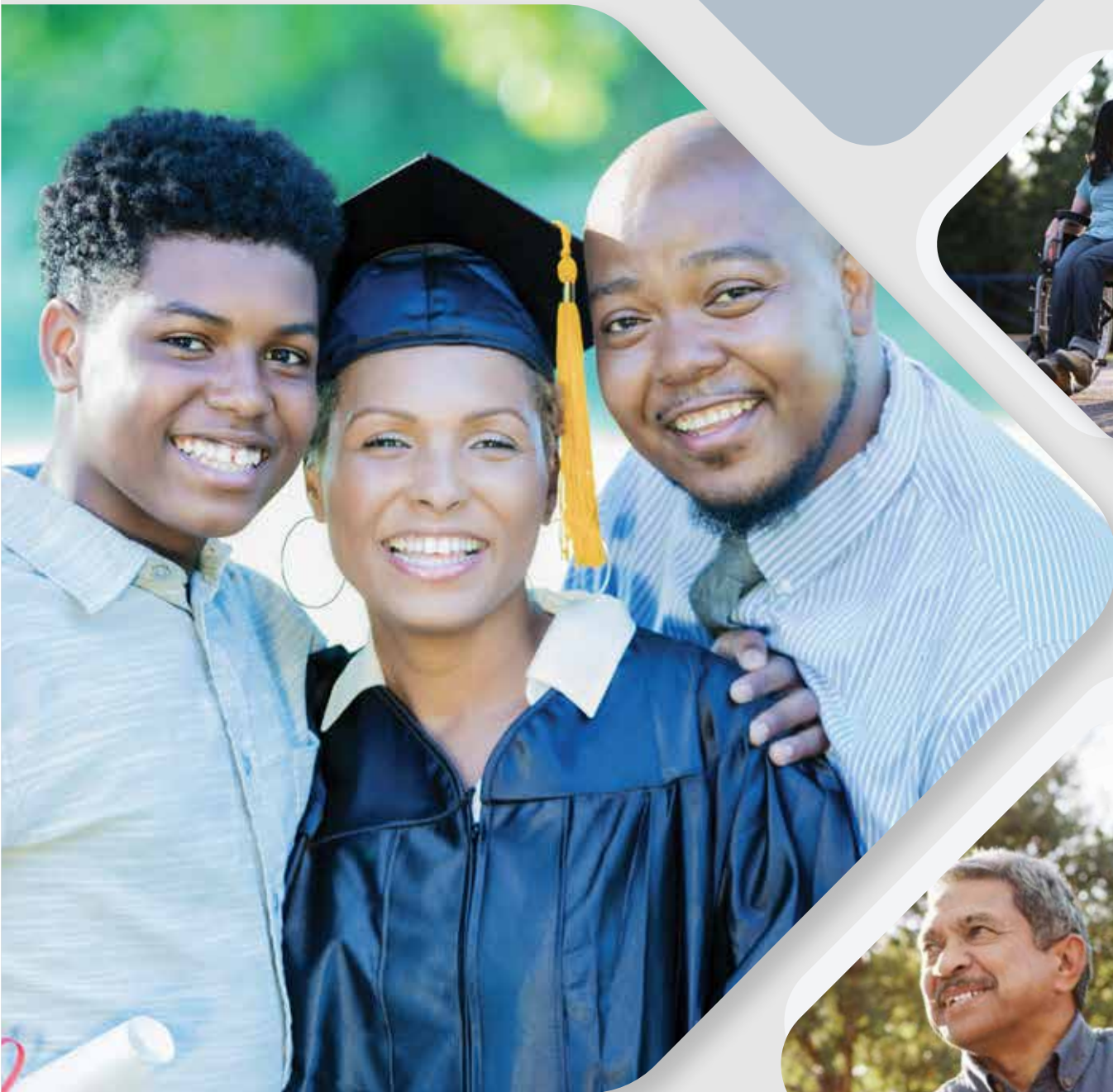


● — Tennessee Department of
HUMAN SERVICES

Annual Report 2021 — ●





Tennessee Department of Human Services Annual Report 2021

"TDHS is well-positioned to implement the kind of innovative strategies needed to pivot individuals and families from a cycle of crisis management to a future powered by their ability to take on life's challenges without the need of our services."

-Commissioner Clarence H. Carter

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A Message From

Commissioner Clarence H. Carter

Welcome to the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) 2020-2021 State Fiscal Year (SFY) Annual Report. I invite you to learn more about the department and the work we are doing to transform the way Tennessee supports its most vulnerable citizens. The TDHS annual report highlights existing programs and services; details special initiatives underway; gives a snapshot of the number of Tennesseans served; shares impact stories from TDHS customers; and throughout demonstrates our department's unified goal of growing the capability of our customers in ways that empower them to lead self-sufficient and successful lives moving forward.

I joined the Department of Human Services in January 2021, continuing a 30+ year career dedicated to serving those in need at the local, state, and national levels. My transition into the department was on the heels of a global pandemic. I was met by a high-functioning department made up of talented and dedicated servants of Tennessee. After spending the better part of this year emerged in the department and working closely with its leadership, I am confident TDHS is well-positioned to implement the kind of innovative strategies needed to pivot individuals and families from a cycle of crisis management to a future powered by their ability to take on life's challenges without the need of our services. This report demonstrates our plans for doing just that. From modernizing decades-old case management systems, implementing emergency pandemic programs, quickly



and effectively securing and delivering disaster relief following natural disasters, to administering mission-critical grant programs, maintaining the health and safety of adults and children, assisting people with disabilities excel in employment and education and so much more – TDHS has adapted the way we serve citizens across our great state, and we look forward to sharing our plans to expand our supportive reach even more.

The TDHS mission is to build strong families by connecting Tennesseans to employment, education, and support services. Our vision is to revolutionize the customer experience through innovation and a seamless network of services. The mission and vision have been embedded in our organizational culture and serve as guideposts in how programs and services are administered. Collectively as a team of nearly 4,000 employees, we strive to connect and



TN Photo Services
Tennessee State Capitol

educate our workforce, so our team assists customers in the most impactful way by locating and accessing all the benefits, goods, and services available to help propel families beyond their current circumstances.

We're currently positioned to seize a unique opportunity to "Transform Tennessee Together" through the Tennessee Opportunity Pilot Initiative. A major accomplishment of the 2020-2021 state fiscal year was the passage of the TANF Opportunity Act, which offers a pathway to self-sufficiency for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients. By infusing substantial funds into public-private partnerships and community organizations across all regions and sectors of the state, this collective initiative will result in the spend-down of the TANF reserve, plans for recurring dollars, and will strengthen

necessary protections against fraud, waste, and abuse. The TANF Opportunity Act, or TOA, provides the ability to unify the state in the collective goal of tackling poverty and demonstrating those strategies that most effectively increase the capability of Tennessee families to thrive. You can read more about this in a special section of the annual report.

TDHS is working harder than ever to help create better lives for our citizens in groundbreaking and sustaining ways. As we move forward, we will continue engaging sectors from across all regions of the Tennessee community in a unified mission for "Transforming Tennessee Together".

Sincerely,
Clarence H. Carter, Commissioner
Tennessee Department of Human Services



Mission Vision Values

DHS Mission

To build strong families by connecting Tennesseans to employment, education and support services.

DHS Vision

To revolutionize the customer experience through innovation and a seamless network of services.

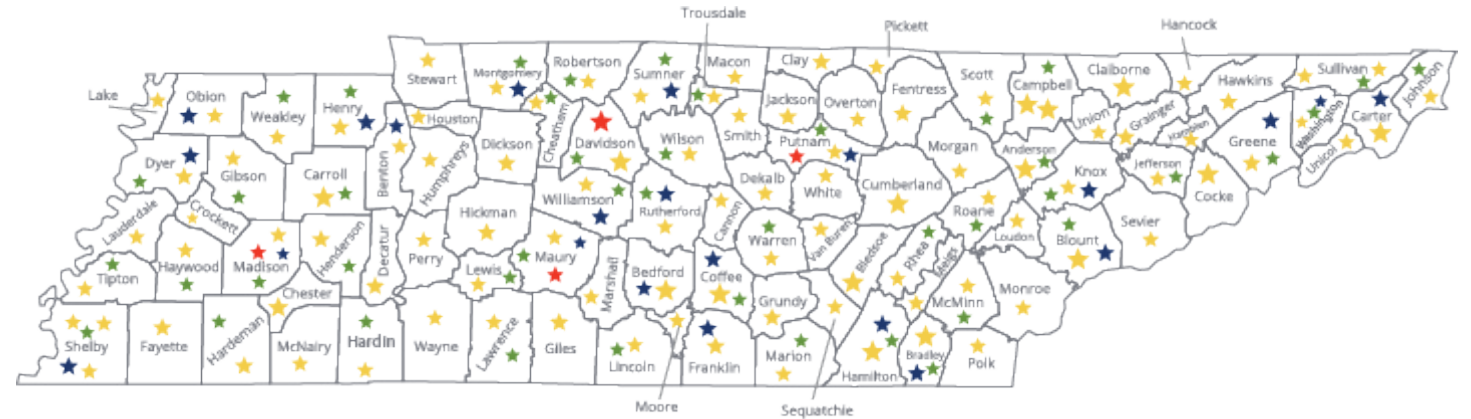
DHS Core Values

- High Performance
- Collaboration
- Continuous Improvement
- A Shared Vision
- Customer-Centered Solutions



Human Services at a Glance

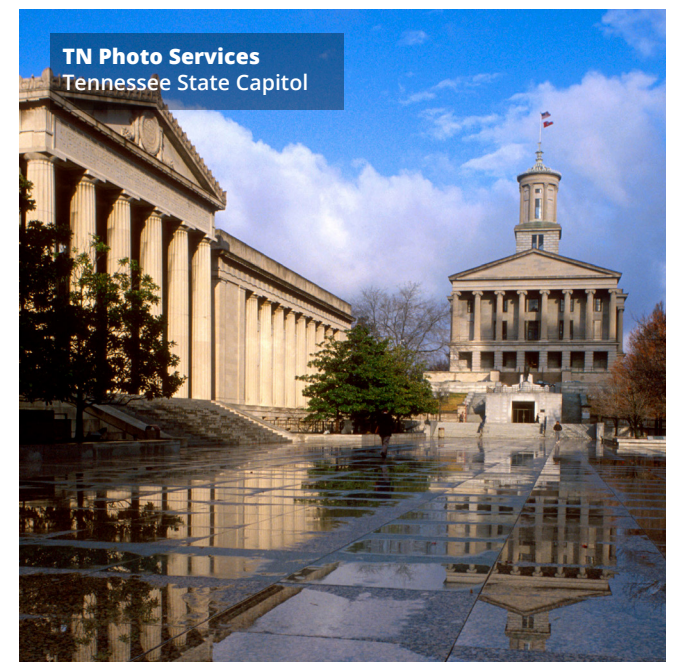
The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) consists of multiple divisions on a **mission** to build strong families by connecting Tennesseans to employment, education and support services. We have a **vision** of revolutionizing the customer experience through innovation and a seamless network of services. Our **values** center around high performance, collaboration, continuous improvement, shared vision and customer-centered solutions.



Who We Serve:

Led by a governor-appointed Commissioner and organized into multiple customer-facing and support divisions, the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) is in the business of building transformative bridges in the lives of Tennesseans. We're here to ensure that all state residents have an opportunity to reach their full potential as contributing members of our community. We achieve this goal by offering an extensive range of social services to a diverse group of almost two million Tennesseans in 95 rural and urban counties. Our broad range of customers includes custodial and non-custodial parents who participate in the Child Support Program, as well as the child care providers who may apply for licensure through TDHS. We also serve members of our community who have disabilities or are classified as blind, visually impaired, deaf and hard of hearing. Other customers include families living below the poverty line who may need assistance in obtaining nutrition or other resources to move beyond their current circumstances. We serve these groups and more, however our mission is always the same: build strong families by connecting Tennesseans to employment, education and support services.

- ★ DHS Central and District Offices
- ★ Child Support Offices
- ★ Family Assistance and Child Care Offices
- ★ Rehabilitation Centers and Offices





Executive Team Leaders

Commissioner

Clarence H. Carter

Deputy Commissioner of Programs and Services

Cherrell Campbell-Street

- Division of Child Care and Community Services
- Division of Family Assistance and Child Support
- Division of Rehabilitation Services

Deputy Commissioner of Operations

Melisa Hucks

- Procurement/Facilities
- Budget
- Division of Appeals and Hearings
- Division of Quality Improvement and Strategic Solutions
- Fiscal Services (In partnership with the Tennessee Department of Finance and Administration)
- Information Technology (In partnership with the Tennessee Department of Finance and Administration)

Chief of Staff

Whitney Page

- Public Information and Legislative Office

General Counsel

Krisann Hodges

- Legal Services
- Records Management

Inspector General

Todd McKinney

- Audit Services
- Program Integrity

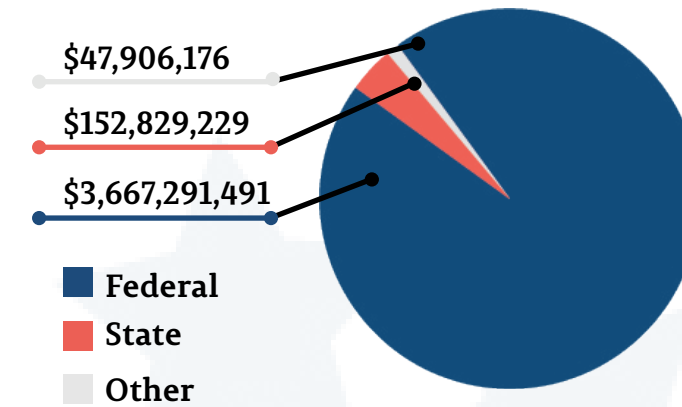
Asst. Commissioner of Human Resources, Talent Management, Learning and Development

Abby Sparks

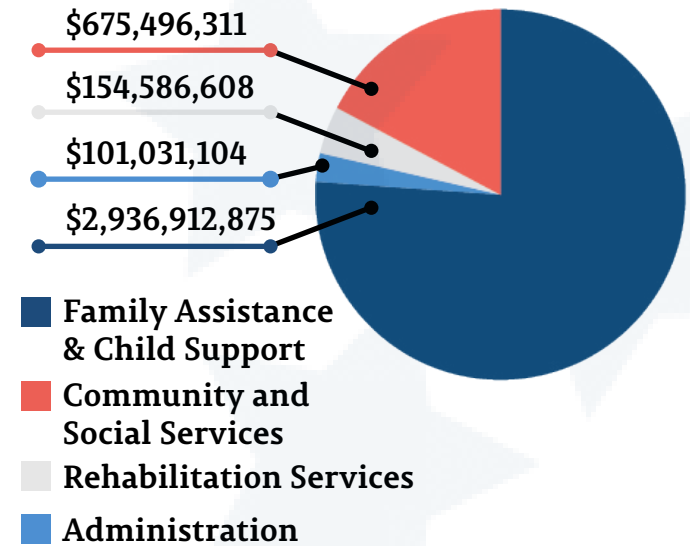
- Human Resources
- Talent Management Learning and Development

Tennesseans Served in 2020/2021

TDHS SFY 2021 Revenue



TDHS SFY 2021 Expenditures



Families First

- Families First caseload for June 2021 was approximately **13,197** households, representing a **19.7%** decrease from the previous year.
- Approximately **22,396** children served in Families First households.
- An average of **178** cases were closed per month in SFY 2021 due to employment.
- Average monthly benefit for Families First participants: **\$243.71**.

Child Support

- **\$629,178,330** in Child Support payments distributed to families in Tennessee through the Child Support Program during the 2021 state fiscal year.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP)

- More than **440,023** families served through SNAP as of June 2021, reaching **874,400** people. Total issuance of **\$131,396,377** for the month of June 2021.
- Average monthly SNAP benefit: **\$298.61**.

Adult Protective Services

- **21,169** reports of abuse received
- **8,753** investigation conducted.
- **6,917** referrals made.
- **245** emergency Assignments.

Social Services Block Grant Program

- **1,642** Tennesseans Served.

Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer Program (P-EBT)*

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government authorized the **administration of the P-EBT program in 2020 to provide financial assistance for food to children that missed meals due to school closures**. The program has continued into 2021, providing valuable food resources to Tennessee families. The following is a snapshot into the program's reach in Tennessee:

P-EBT Round 1 (Covering March, April and May of 2020)

- Approximately **765,000** students served with approximately **\$193,515,08** in benefits issued.

P-EBT Round 2 (Covering July, August and September 2020)

- Approximately **371,138** students served with approximately **\$77,328,429** in benefits issued.

P-EBT Round 3 (October 2020 through June 2021, Summer for school-aged children; Child Care P-EBT for children under school age)

- Approximately **800,603** school-aged children and **136,000** under school age children served with approximately **\$633,321,661** in benefits issued.

**Data as of August 9, 2021*

Office of Inspector General

- **\$10 million** recovered through fraud investigative activity.

Nutrition Programs*

- **37,000,000** meals provided in 2020 and **27,000,000** meals provided in 2021 by the Child and Adult Care Food Program.
- **2,600,000** meals served in 2020 and **6,300,000** meals served in 2021 by the Summer Food Service Program.

**The number of meals represents those submitted for reimbursement as of June 1, 2021. The actual number served is subject to change. As a federal program, CACFP operates on a federal fiscal year schedule.*

Community Services Block Grant Program

- **332,165** individuals and **169,953** households served by Community Action Agencies with CSBG funds.

Rehabilitation Services

- **1,383** Tennesseans with disabilities achieved their competitive, integrated employment goals through the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program.
- **4,200** students served each month.
- **170** students enrolled at the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center-Smyrna.

Child Care & Adult Care Services & Licensing

- **2,298** total Child Care facilities licensed: **1,728** Child Care Centers, **318** Group Homes.
- **241** Child Care Family Homes and **11** Child Care Drop-in Centers.
- **40** licensed Adult Day Care Centers.
- **19,348** children served through the Smart Steps Child Care Payment Assistance Program.
- **1,816** Child Care agencies enrolled in the Child Care Certificate Program.
- **30,897** school age children of essential workers served through the partnership with the YMCA.
- **60,701** Children served through the Pandemic Child Care Payment Assistance Program.
- **\$60 million** in pandemic and disaster aid distributed to child care providers.

For a more in-depth look at how these TDHS programs are working to build stronger families across Tennessee, continue reading.

Empowering Tennesseans to Reach Their Full Potential

At the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS), we view our programs and services as instruments for creating positive change in the lives of Tennesseans. Each of the department's customer-facing divisions administer life-supports that empower state residents to reach their potential as self-sufficient contributors to our community and economy.

To better serve our customers and achieve lasting positive outcomes, TDHS is in a period of transformation that will move the department towards a more integrated service delivery model referred to as "One DHS." This department-wide approach focuses on modernization that will fundamentally change the way that human services are delivered in Tennessee. Our vision of new government support will leave customers in a better position after they leave our services because a modern system is successful by reducing families dependency on government support moving forward. Across the agency, TDHS is striving to improve customer interaction by making it less bureaucratic and more customer friendly, efficient, and effective. While these modernization efforts include enhanced technology to help create a more efficient service delivery model overall, the driving force behind the initiatives is our desire to cause sustainable positive change in the lives of our customers so they no longer need assistance from TDHS. Our customers are and will remain the center of any and all improvements being made.

Family Assistance & Child Support Division Leadership

Charles Bryson

Assistant Commissioner

Lisa Francis

Director of Operations Field Services

Keisha Thaxton

Director of Operations Policy & Contracts

Sherron Brown

Director of Operations ACCENT/TCSES Solutions

Patricia Wood

Director of Operations Field Services and Contracts

Robert Duck

Director of Operations Policy and Services

Family Assistance and Child Support

The Family Assistance and Child Support Division offers programs and services that provide or support families in strengthening their households. The division includes the Families First, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance and Child Support Programs. Beyond these programs, TDHS has a number of Two-Generation Approach (2Gen) contract partners that work to break cycles of poverty by focusing support services on both the parent (or guardian) and child.

Families First

Families First, the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, is a workforce development and employment program. The program emphasizes work, training, and personal responsibility. It is temporary and has a primary focus on gaining self-sufficiency through employment. Families First helps participants reach this goal by providing temporary cash assistance, transportation, child care assistance, education, job training, employment activities, and other support and transitional services.

To be eligible for the program, participants must meet eligibility standards and agree to follow a Personal Responsibility Plan (PRP). The Personal Responsibility Plan is a document that avows participant's commitment to do certain actions to support their family and move toward self-sufficiency.

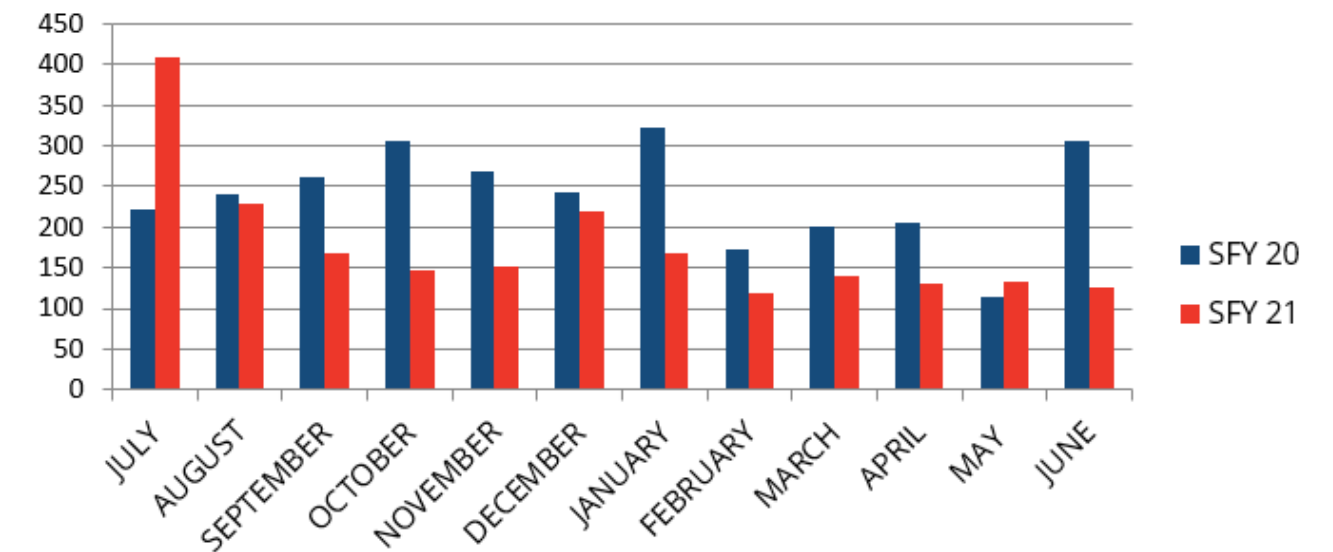
These actions include but are not limited to:

- Maintaining child health checks, immunizations, school attendance and progress;
- Work with Child Support Services to collect child support; and
- Work with an Employment and Case Management Service (ECMS) provider and take part in work and/or training for thirty (30) hours per week.

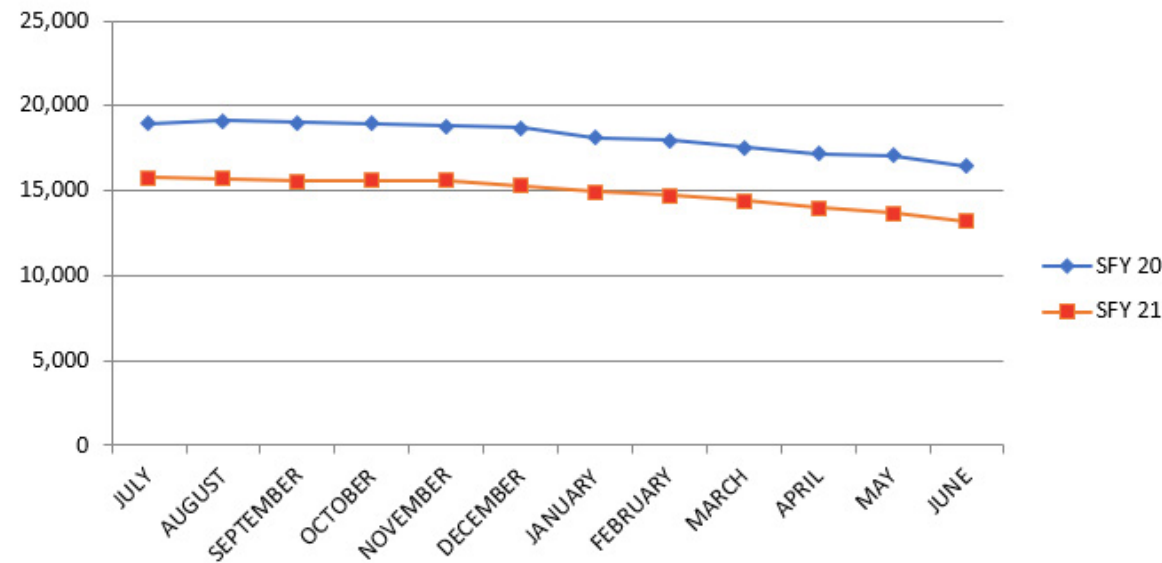
Tennesseans Served in 2020/21

- 19.7% decrease in Families First Cases for June 2021 for a total of 13,197 households served.
- 22,396 children served in Families First.
- 178 cases closed per month due to employment.
- \$243.71 average monthly benefit for Families First participants.

2020/21 Families First Cases Closed Due to Employment



Families First Casesload Data



Transformative Achievements and Customer Service Improvements

- **Meeting Federal Standards** | Each State must meet two separate work participation rates (WPR) which is a measurement on how well it succeeds in helping work eligible individuals find employment or engage in workforce development activities. Tennessee has successfully met both work participation rates.
- **Continued Transitional Support** | The Families First program continues to use the work incentive payment program to assist customers who become ineligible due to earned income as they transition off the program and into position of self-sufficiency. Since implementation in December 2018, 498 families have been approved for work incentive payments for a total of \$444,807 transitional benefits issued.
- **Adjusting Net Limits to Meet the Times** | The Families First Standard of Need, known as the Consolidated Need Standard (CNS) and is used as the program's net income limit, increased effective July 1, 2021. This increase is based on the 2019 recommendation from the University of Tennessee Boyd Center for Business and Economic Research. The gross income standard (GIS), defined as 185% of the CNS, also increased relative to the CNS increase.



A Testimony from Destanie Eubanks, a Soon to Be Health Care Administrator

When I first graduated from Dobbins Bennett High School, I had no idea how my life would change. I got married and ended up in a relationship with a guy who was holding me back from wanting to have an education. I finally ended that relationship and decided to take control of my own life and destiny. I wanted to make a better life for me and my two children.

I found out about the Families First program when I applied for TDHS benefits to help me get started in my quest for a new life. Families First helped me with guidance for my vocational education needs. My Career Coach referred me to East Tennessee State University (ETSU) Trio where they were so helpful in working with me to obtain my financial aid and point me in the right direction to finish school at ETSU.



I started my program and was put into a vocational education activity while attending school at ETSU for Business Technology Management. I was so excited when I finished my program in May of 2020, in the middle of a pandemic! I also was able to work with the Family Focused Solutions program through Families First which I received additional support while guiding my schooling during the pandemic. Families First also gave me an incentive bonus for the completion of my degree. It was money that I could definitely use for me and my two children. That was a great reward for graduation!

I then completed an internship, which helped me learn a lot about management work, which I knew could help me in the field I'd chosen. I then decided with confidence to further my education and I enrolled at a Tennessee College of Applied Technology in the fall of 2020 to study the administrative end of business in my field. I have continued school there and I am maintaining good grades and progressing well with my studies. I still continue on with the Families First program and have continued to receive support services such as dental services which I greatly needed, auto repairs, tires for my vehicle to go to school and a referral to the ETSU WIOA Adult Program where I am now co-enrolled. They have helped with books, transportation assistance and will also provide help with my cap and gown at the completion of my TCAT schooling, which I will graduate from in August 2021.

I am now in the process of working with an internship through Ballard Health in business administration and I hope to be hired on full-time after school. My life has changed in so many positive ways. I have confidence I never thought I would have. I will be able to provide for myself and my children.

Thank you so much to Families First, my Client Representative, my Career Coach and her Assistant at the Kingsport Office with helping me every step of the way and making it possible for me to believe in myself and say I will succeed!! I am striving to be a Hospital Administrator someday!

From Customer to Public Servant: A Word from Latisha Fairbanks, a former Families First Program Participant

Hi, my name is Latisha Fairbanks. I moved to Jackson County a little over three years ago. Before I moved here, I was in a very bad place. My two children and I were living in a homeless shelter for battered women in another state. During that time, I was strung out on methamphetamine, depressed, and hopeless trapped in the downward spiral of drugs and alcohol. Needless to say, CPS and DCS got involved. I lost my children. Luckily, they went to a family member that lived in Tennessee. I had definitely hit my rock bottom. I moved to Tennessee and started doing whatever it took to get my children back.

I went to an Intensive Outpatient Treatment program called CHOICES and started doing better. Step by step, I eventually started my journey of success. When I got my children back, I applied for the Families First program. As I was coming out of the lowest point in my life, the program offered me resources to help me get back up and stand on my own two feet. Today, I am proud to say that I am over three years clean and sober! Because of the Families First program, I was just offered an Eligibility Clerk position with the State of Tennessee Department of Human Services in Jackson County. A huge shout out to Sheila Parrett, Lori Looper, Staci Dunavant, Jamie Clark, Mary Hatcher, Kimberly Cobble, Robbie Phillips, and Brenda Owens for seeing more in me than I was able to see in myself! I have so much gratitude for all the people that have helped me along the way. Families First, SNAP, Family Focused Solutions, CPS, and CHOICES were huge stepping stones that landed me where I am today - successful and hopeful for the future of my children and myself.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) ensures eligible families and individuals with low income receive benefits to supplement their household monthly food budget, maintain good health, and allow them to direct more of their available income toward essential living expenses. TDHS staff determine the eligibility of applicants based on guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The primary goals of the program are to alleviate hunger and malnutrition and to improve nutrition and health in eligible households. TDHS has a dual focus on alleviating hunger and establishing or re-establishing self-sufficiency.

Tennesseans Served

- \$702,234,618 in Emergency SNAP to 4,133,110 households.
- 91% timeliness rate for initial SNAP applications.
- 874,400 people representing 440,023 Families served through SNAP in June 2021.
- 612,917 SNAP applications received.
- \$131,396,377 benefits distributed in June 2021.
- \$298.61 average monthly SNAP benefit.

Transformative Achievements and Customer Service Improvements

- **Bringing SNAP into the Online Purchasing Era** | This year, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) approved Tennessee for a program that allows SNAP benefits to be used to buy food online. SNAP participants can now shop for groceries with six online retailers: Aldi, Walmart, Amazon, Publix, Super Lo, and Food Lion. This initiative started as a COVID-19 option to assist customers in safely purchasing food during the pandemic, but in the past fiscal year, SNAP customers used benefits to purchase approximately \$3,387,185.98 in groceries online.
- **Getting a Better Understanding of Customer Trends** | The SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) program received a \$454,337 Data and Technical Assistance Grant through the United States Department of Agriculture and Food and Nutrition Services (FNS). Over the course of three years, this grant will be used to develop a statewide portal and dashboards to cultivate a comprehensive workforce approach (career pathway) for SNAP E&T participants and all workforce partners to include employers.
- **Partnering with Purpose** | During state fiscal year 2021, the SNAP E&T program onboarded fifteen (15) new third-party partners. These partners include community-based organizations and workforce development providers that assist in expanding employment opportunities and supportive services in the development of a more robust Tennessee workforce.

SNAP Employment and Training Program Helps Memphis Customer Move Beyond Unemployment to a Livable Wage

Most Tennesseans are familiar with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). However, many people are unaware that beyond receiving nutritional benefits, SNAP recipients can also participate in the SNAP Education and Training Program (SNAP E&T). This program helps eligible SNAP recipients over the age of 16 move toward financial independence by providing tuition, training, textbooks, uniforms, tools, transportation assistance, child care, job search and other employment support services.

Shanise Covington, a SNAP customer from West Tennessee, is an example of how TDHS helps Tennesseans increase financial stability through the SNAP E&T program. Shanise enrolled in the program in 2020. Previously, she found it difficult to maintain viable employment with a livable wage. After learning about the SNAP E&T program, she worked with a Program Coordinator to discover an area of interest. After obtaining her certified nursing assistant (CNA) credentials, Shanise obtained employment at a medical facility during the fall of 2020 and hopes to become a registered nurse. Her story is just one example of how the right supports can help Tennesseans reach toward higher goals.



Child Support

With offices in thirty-one judicial districts across the state, the Child Support Program provides the following core services: locating parents; establishing paternity; establishing and enforcing financial and medical support orders; and collecting and disbursing child support payments. The program focuses on family-centered services such as parenting programs, justice involved reentry services, employment assistance, and more. Child Support staff also help build healthy families by referring qualifying customers to other services available from the Department such as SNAP and Child Care Payment Assistance. The program also partners with other state agencies including the Department of Safety, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Department of Corrections, and the Department of Labor.

Tennesseans Served in 2020/21

- 85.61% of child support cases had an order for support during state fiscal year 2021 (Families cannot receive collections until an order for support is established).
- \$629,178,330 in child support payments distributed to families.

Transformative Achievements and Customer Service Improvements

- **Making It Easier to Make Payments** | The Child Support Program partnered with MoneyGram in 2017 to provide customers the option of making payments in cash at retailers across the country. Over the past four years, we've collected more than \$17 million dollars through the MoneyGram network.
- **AVA Chats with 600 Families** | Starting in April 2021, the TDHS 24/7 automated chat bot, AVA, expanded her knowledge base to frequently asked questions related to the Child Support Program. AVA is available online and more than 600 customers received assistance through with AVA.
- **Creating Learning Tools for Parents** | Child Support staff collaborated with Talent Management - Learning and Development and Public Information and Legislative Office teams to create a new video to help parents understand the Voluntary Acknowledgment of Paternity process in Tennessee. The 4-minute video provides valuable information on legal rights and other relative information to parents interested in establishing paternity for their child. This new video has been promoted on social media and also plays in the lobbies of some of our Family Assistance offices.
- **Reissuing \$745,845 in Child Support Collections** | Child Support staff worked with the state's Strategic Technology Solutions team and fiscal partners to locate customers with uncashed child support checks and ensure families received collections in a timely manner. The initial report included over 7,800 checks for more than 2,300 customers. Using methods such as text messaging to find current addresses, staff reissued \$745,845 in child support collections representing over 99% of uncashed checks.
- **Processing 1,423 Review Requests for Justice Involved Parents** | In 2020, Tennessee's Child Support Guidelines were updated to comply with new Federal rules. Modern rules permit certain incarcerated individuals the right to request a review and adjustment of a current obligation. TDHS staff used data from the Tennessee Department of Corrections to identify customers eligible for reviews.
- **Modernizing the Child Support Enforcement System** | After two years of work with Deloitte, extensive testing, and highly technical work, the Child Support Program

successfully launched its new Tennessee Child Support Enforcement System (TCSES). The new system re-factored the old 1995 system's code to Java and has a modern infrastructure that utilizes the cloud. This update was completed without interruption to customers and next phases of modernization will provide enhancements for both customers and end users.

- **Helping Justice Involved Parents** | TDHS recognizes the overwhelming hurdles justice-involved parents face. As such, TDHS has created a re-entry team that is designed to help parents during incarceration and beyond. The core of this program is designed to educate parents about their active child support cases and provide assistance with modifications and other child support matters. As part of the program, strategically assigned Child Support Re-entry Coordinators partner with the Tennessee Department of Corrections (TDC) Reentry Coordinators to help parents during and after incarceration. TDC Reentry coordinators will focus on helping incarcerated parents understand and follow child support order modifications, paternity orders, and the potential establishment of new cases. Following releases, Child Support Re-entry Coordinators will provide parents with supportive services designed to assist with barriers to a successful re-entry into society.
- **Tennessee Child Support Employment and Parenting Program (TCSEPP) Expands** | TCSEPP provides non-custodial parents with tools to overcome barriers, get stable employment, and access community resources in order to pay their child support obligation. Previously the program outreach included three Judicial Districts encompassing 6 counties (Blount, Cocke, Grainger, Jefferson, Knox, Sevier), but outreach is expanding to 11 more counties (Anderson, Campbell, Claiborne, Fentress, Hancock, Loudon, Meigs, Morgan, Roane, Scott, Union) to assist more families.
- **Connecting Parents with Legal Support** | This year, the Child Support Program collaborated with Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services (TALS), a statewide non-profit that aims to increase collaboration, support, training opportunities, resource development, and monitoring within a broad network of civil legal assistance providers throughout Tennessee. This partnership created a referral process for customers in need of legal services.

Rising to Meet Parental Obligations After Incarceration

Names Changed to Protect Customer Privacy

Parents that find themselves involved with the justice-system often leave detention with hopes of rebuilding their lives, becoming productive members of society and reconnecting with their parental responsibilities. Unfortunately, formerly incarcerated parents often face interlocking barriers that make the return to life and fulfillment of parental obligations a serious challenge. Brandon, a former inmate and parent from East Tennessee, found that COVID-19 only further complicated these barriers. Fortunately for Brandon and other justice-involved parents looking to make a "fresh start," the Tennessee Department of Human Services Child Support Program and its partners are here to help.

Shortly following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Brandon left prison to begin his return to life in a half-way house. His probationary obligations included participating in drug court each Wednesday, attending therapy on Fridays and taking randomized drug tests several times a week. Previously, Brandon's license was revoked. Reinstatement required not only paying the reinstatement fee, but also paying additional tickets and having an interlock device (breathalyzer) installed

on his vehicle. Yet, acquiring a car would require a driver's license. Unsurprisingly, Brandon's schedule and transportation situation made it difficult to work and many offices were closed as a pandemic safety measure. Facing these obstacles and with child support and other bill due dates on the horizon, Brandon felt overwhelmed even after a referral to the Tennessee Child Support Employment and Parenting Program (TCSEPP).

Part of the University of Tennessee Social Work Office and Research and Public Service, TCSEPP is a Family Assistance and Child Support division contract partner that "helps non-custodial parents (like Brandon) find ways to meet their financial obligations and reconnect with their children." The program provides transportation, employment preparation and other employment-related services. With diligence, the help of TCSEPP and the court, Brandon secured employment, and began meeting his financial obligations. After several months and many phone calls, Brandon regained his driver's license and transitioned to his own place. Although there were occasions when work was slow and Brandon needed extra TCSEPP help to manage various bills and child support payments, he continued to move toward financial stability and independence. To qualify for TCSEPP, parents must be underemployed or unemployed. At the point of submission for this publication, Brandon has successfully exited TCSEPP and continues to make progressive strides as a non-custodial parent.

Meeting the Challenge of COVID-19

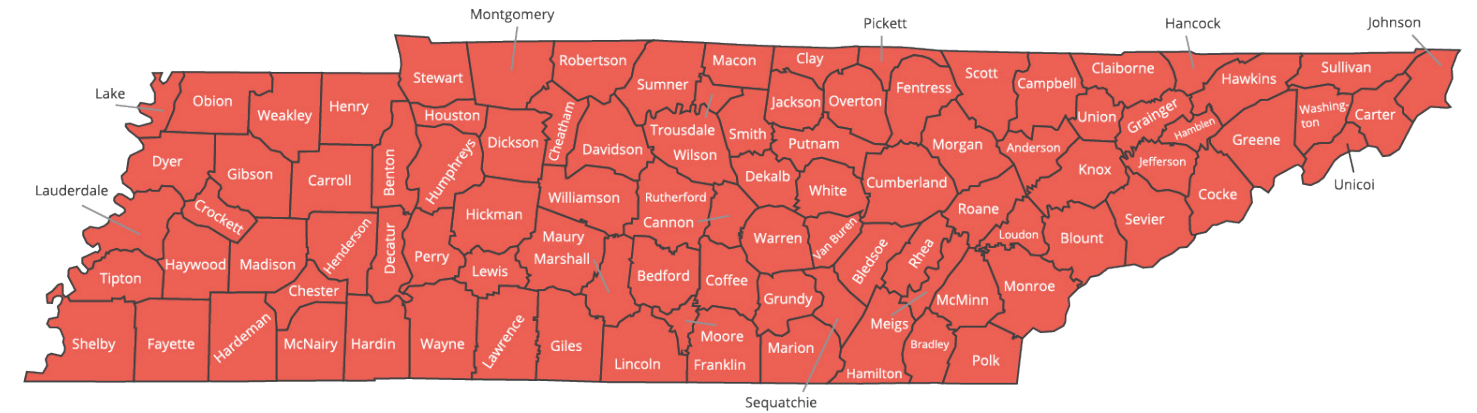
- **Providing \$702,234,618 in Emergency SNAP to 4,133,110 Households** | The Families First Coronavirus Response Act authorized emergency allotments to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households to help address temporary food needs during the pandemic. Since March 2020, SNAP households have received Emergency Allotments (EA) in an amount equal to the maximum benefit for the household size, minus their monthly base benefit. From July 2020 to June 2021 TDHS served Tennesseans in need by providing emergency SNAP allotments.
- **Keeping the Training Going** | During the pandemic 18 of our SNAP E&T partners offered virtual E&T services to our customers. These services included, but were not limited to: virtual orientations, virtual classes, and virtual Work Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) activities.
- **Using Technology to Keep Customers and Staff Safe** | Employment and Case Management Services and Family Focused Solutions providers were encouraged to utilize virtual tools and phone communication to engage customers in work activities to maintain momentum during the pandemic.

2Gen

Starting in 2013 TDHS adopted a two-generation approach that combines TDHS resources and community partnerships to break negative economic cycles for families. Short for "two generation," 2Gen refers to a service framework that emphasizes placing equal and intentional focus on both the child and their parent or caregiver. Research shows wholistic support that includes solid connections and coordination between services for all family members increases the likelihood of economic success and mobility across generations and over time. The 2Gen approach harnesses the power of innovative community collaboration

"When we invest and build up our families from birth to adulthood, we can help everyone reach their potential and enable them to fully contribute to our communities."

2GEN Program Maps Combined



- A1 Learning Connections
- Agape Child and Family Services, Inc.
- A Step Ahead Foundation Chattanooga
- A Step Ahead Foundation of Middle Tennessee
- Belmont University and The Store
- Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Middle TN
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Tennessee
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Chattanooga
- Boys & Girls Club of TN Valley (Youth Force)
- Catholic Charities of Tennessee
- Chattanooga Hamilton County Hospital Authority
- Code Crew
- Council for Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services
- Davidson County Parental Assistance Court
- East Tennessee State University
- East Tennessee State Univ. Nurse Family Partnership
- Family & Children's Service
- Families Matter Inc
- First Things First Inc
- Gideon's Army
- Girls Inc. of Chattanooga
- Goodwill of Middle Tennessee
- Greater Kingsport YMCA
- Healing Word Counseling Center
- Helen Ross McNabb Center
- Hope House Day Care Center
- Impact Management Solutions
- Knowledge Quest
- Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee
- Martha O'Bryan Center
- Meharry Medical College
- Methodist Le Bonheur Community Outreach-Green & Healthy Homes Initiative
- Mountain State Health Alliance
- Neighborhood Christian Centers
- Persevere
- Porter-Leath
- Project Return
- Salvation Army
- Save the Children
- Tennessee Department of Health - Home Visiting Program
- Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development
- Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services - TIES, Project Lifeline and SOCAT
- Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services
- United Way of Greater Nashville - Family Collective
- United Way of the Mid-South Drive to Dream & Tax VITA
- United Neighborhood Health Services
- United Way of Greater Chattanooga
- University of Tennessee - Tennessee Child Support Employment & Parenting Program
- Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency
- Urban Strategies
- YWCA of Nashville & Middle Tennessee
- 24/7 Dad Program

to move children and their caregivers towards educational success, economic security, strong social capital, and health and well-being. As part of the 2Gen approach, TDHS works with more than 60 community and state partners to deliver wholistic support services across the state.

IMPACT for Non-Custodial Parents

Names Changed to Protect Customer Privacy

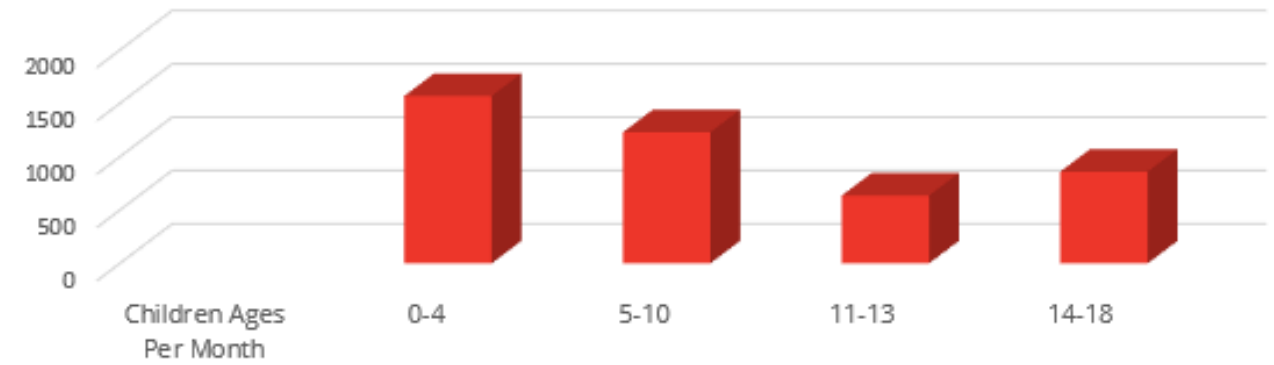
TDHS partners can be found across the state. The Non-Custodial Parent IMPACT Program at East Tennessee State University is one of the University's Community Outreach Programs. This 2Gen partner "works closely with the First, Second, and Third Judicial Districts in an effort to assist Non-Custodial Parents in achieving training and employment success while providing a nurturing environment for the parent/child bond to be developed and to thrive." In 2021, Susan, a mother in East Tennessee, received a referral by Carter County Juvenile Court due to owing child support for her daughter who was in foster care.

With significant barriers to employment such as transportation, legal, and medical issues, Susan worked with her Career Specialist to complete a job plan and began job search on January 22, 2021. After successfully enrolling in the WIOA Title 1 Out-of-School Youth Program, she received support to repair her disabled vehicle. This enabled her to accept a job opportunity working 30 hours per week starting in April, 2021. With the help of her IMPACT Family Advocate Counselor, she enrolled in Intensive Outpatient Psychotherapy and parenting classes. As part of their structure, these classes are required to petition the courts to reassume custody of her daughter. "I appreciate you and your company." Susan said of her time with IMPACT. "You guys have changed my life and definitely broke through the barriers I have been facing for the past year."

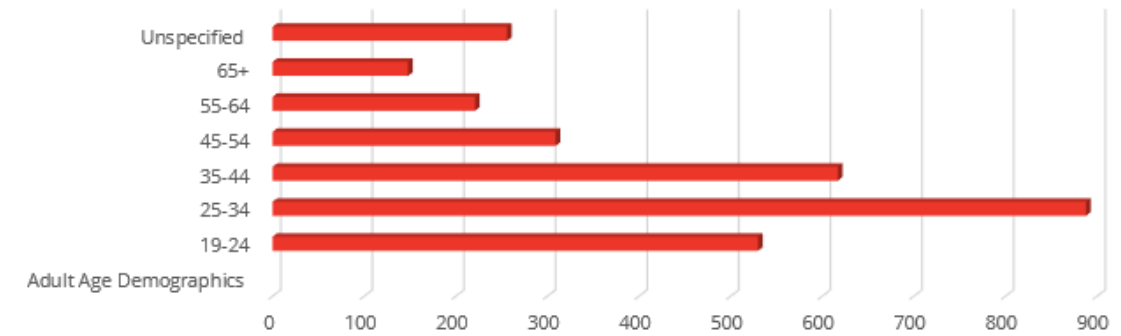
Who Our 2Gen Partnerships Serve

As part of the 2Gen model, the Tennessee Department of Human Services utilizes federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds to propel strategic community partnerships. 2Gen programming intentionally focuses equally on the parent/caregiver and child simultaneously. Transitioning away from the traditional siloed service model and embracing a coordinated system approach to wholistic services means that more Tennessee families find long-term upward mobility and well-being.

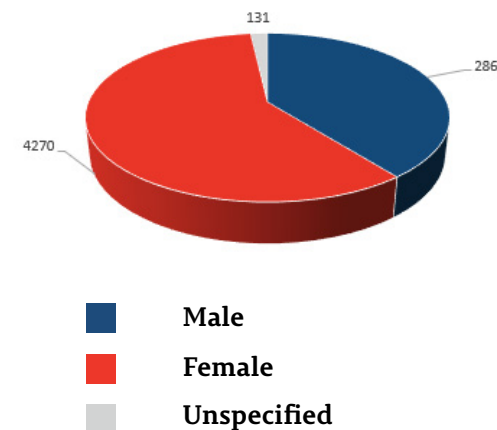
2Gen Program Participant Demographics | Monthly Averages | Child Age



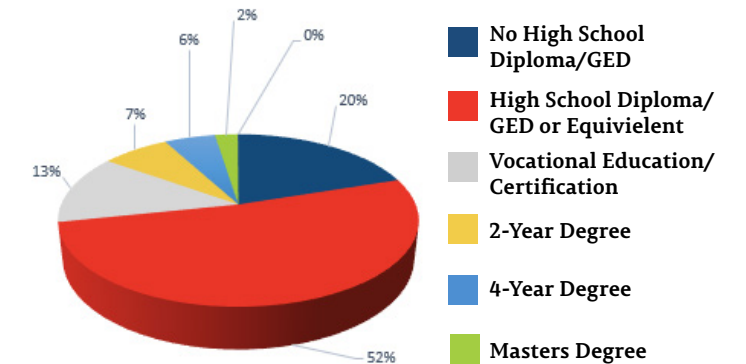
2Gen Program Participant Demographics | Monthly Averages | Adult Age



2Gen Program Participant Demographics, Monthly Averages & Participant Gender



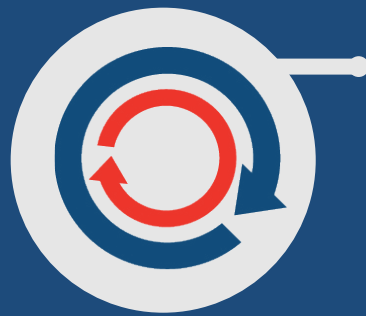
2Gen Program Participant Demographics, Monthly Averages & Education Level at Intake





TANF Opportunity Act

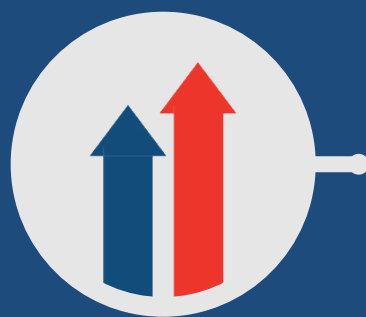
In November 2019 the speakers of both houses of the Tennessee General Assembly appointed a bipartisan group of legislators to study the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) reserve for the purpose of obtaining a better understanding of possible uses for the funds that had grown to exceed \$700 million. This group worked for more than a year with Tennessee Governor Bill Lee's administration and TDHS to craft legislation now known as the TANF Opportunity Act (Public Chapter 515). The Act arguably was the most consequential piece of legislation of 2021, passing both houses without a single vote in opposition. Governor Lee officially signed the TANF Opportunity Act into law on May 25, 2021.



Transforming the Safety Net

Government-funded social welfare programs were created with the intention of protecting vulnerable citizens from poverty and hardship. The "Safety Net" as it's called, is meant to "catch" families when current circumstances cause them to fall on hard times. The current Safety Net falls short by focusing more on the output of the benefits, goods and services rather than the outcomes of those served.

The TANF Opportunity Act offers an unprecedented opportunity to create a new vision of government support. This new vision will shift the focus from the quantity of benefits, goods and services provided to the quality of life for those served. By providing investments in public-private partnerships and community organizations across all regions and sectors of Tennessee that are dedicated to this new vision for government support, this initiative will result in the spend down of the TANF reserve, include plans for recurring dollars, and also strengthen the protections against fraud, waste and abuse.



Key Accomplishments to Incentivize Self-Sufficiency

TANF Allotment Increase: The TANF Opportunity Act increased the TANF allotment on July 1, 2021. This change boosted the monthly Families First cash assistance payment for a family of three from \$277 to \$387. The increase provided important economic



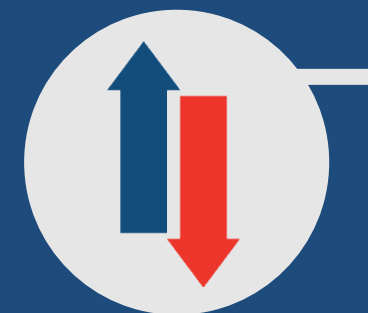
assistance for families during the COVID-19 pandemic while also keeping Tennessee fiscally conservative. The increase is only the second time Tennessee has boosted its TANF allotment since President Clinton's administration replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program with TANF in 1996.

Families First Community Advisory Board:

The TANF Opportunity Act established a 21-member Families First Community Advisory Board including representatives from state agencies, legislators, local government, private and non-profit organizations, the business industry, faith-based organizations, regional Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners, and former TANF recipients.

The board held its first meeting on August 16, 2021 and will play a significant role in establishing the Department's vision of shifting the focus from the quantity of benefits, goods, and services provided to the quality of life for those served. As part of this mission, the Families First Community Advisory Board will undertake multiple key responsibilities:

- Reviewing and approving the selection of the recipients of \$175 million through the Tennessee Opportunity Pilot Initiative, including planning and implementation grants.
- Providing input regarding the effectiveness of existing Families First and Two-Generation program policies and grant programs.
- Making recommendations to enhance the TANF program and its spending.
- Selecting Research and Technical Assistance partners to evaluate Tennessee's TANF program and ensure these funds are adequately serving the state.



Future Work to Grow the Capability of Families to Reduce Their Dependency

Tennessee Opportunity Pilot Initiative: The TANF Opportunity Act established the Tennessee Opportunity Pilot Initiative to infuse \$180 million in communities across the state with the vision of transforming the way Tennessee supports its most vulnerable citizens. The undertaking will fund 7 Pilot Initiatives over a three-year period across all regions of Tennessee. Grantees selected will be those that demonstrate

how collaborative, community-driven strategies can effectively grow the capability of families and reduce their dependency on government support.

The Tennessee Opportunity Pilot Initiative will include two phases.

- **Planning Grant Phase:** This first phase will award Planning Grants of up to \$500,000 each to assist public-private partnerships with technical assistance, visioning, initiative design, budgeting, and partnership development in preparation for submitting a pilot proposal to be considered for the larger Implementation Grants. These grants will offer an entry point for public-private groups to work together to form new ways of helping our citizens grow beyond life's current challenges.
- **Implementation Grant Phase:** The second phase will award Implementation Grants of up to \$25 million each to fund 6 pilot initiatives (2 in each grand division), as well as one pilot initiative operated by TDHS. Each will develop new partnerships and strategies to transform the way Tennessee helps families in need.



Timeline:

- Planning Grants Applications – Fall 2021
- Planning Grant Advisory Board Review – Fall 2021
- Planning Grant Contract Term (90 days) – Winter 2022
- Pilot Implementation - Winter 2022 – Winter 2025

Families First Community Grants: The TANF Opportunity Act also created the Families First Community Grants program to infuse \$50 million to organizations statewide that are committed to transforming the lives of those in need so that dependence on government support is reduced and the capability of families to become and remain self-sufficient grows as a result. This initiative will offer smaller non-profit organizations that are unable to participate in the large-scale pilots the ability to utilize TANF funding in their communities.

Timeline:

- Grant Application Period Opens January 2022
- Grants Awarded Summer 2022

Educational Opportunity Pilot | The TANF Opportunity Act authorized the creation of a two-year pilot program which provides enhanced cash assistance to individuals who are actively pursuing educational opportunities. This encourages TANF recipients to attain degrees which will help them bridge the gap to self-sufficiency.



Unspent Annual Award

The TANF Opportunity Act created a plan to ensure the TANF reserve does not continue to accumulate and any leftover funds are used to reach low-income families through partner organizations. Under the legislation, TDHS will ensure the TANF reserve does not exceed \$191 million. This amount is equal to the annual TANF block grant award and it ensures that the State will retain a reasonable reserve that can act as a rainy-day fund for changing economic conditions. Any additional reserve dollars will be allocated to the Families First Community Grant program.



Program Integrity Protections

The TANF Opportunity Act strengthened the integrity of the TANF program by establishing two mechanisms to ensure the Department continues to combat fraud, waste, and abuse.

They include:

- Increasing civil penalties for individuals using false identities to secure benefits.
- Confidential reporting of SNAP and TANF fraud to encourage reporting of such activity.

Child Care and Community Services Leadership

The Division of Child Care and Community Services includes Child Care Services, Adult Protective Services, Community Services Block Grant and the Social Services Block Grant Programs. The division works to ensure the safety and wellness of Tennessee children and vulnerable adults by standardizing care, protections and related assistance while guiding and providing aid to partnering community agencies in accordance with federal guidelines.

Child Care & Community Services Leadership

Jude White

Assistant Commissioner

Patrick Hamilton

Director of Operations

Renee Bouchillon

Adult Protective Services Director

Gwen Laaser

Child Care Services Director

Avé Trotter

Community Services Block Grant Program Director

Allette Vayda

Nutrition Program Director of Operations

Child Care Services

Through Child Care Services, TDHS exemplifies our state's commitment to promoting high quality early childhood environments that are safe, healthy and educationally rich. The subdivision advocates for the safety and wellness of children and vulnerable adults by planning, implementing, and coordinating activities and programs that promote quality, ensure the health and safety of children in licensed spaces and facilitate child care financial support for families utilizing child care. The subdivision also works with contracted partners to support high quality care

and increase access to early care and education programs. The Child Care Services division consists of two primary program areas: Child and Adult Care Licensing and the Child Care Certificate Program. Child Care Services also contracts with quality partners who work closely with child care providers with necessary services to support the success of child and adult care environments.

Tennesseans Served in 2020/21

- 19,348 children served through the Smart Steps Child Care Payment Assistance Program.
- 1,816 child care agencies enrolled in the Child Care Certificate Program.
- 30,897 school age children of essential workers served through the partnership with the YMCA.
- 60,701 children served through Pandemic Child Care Payment Assistance.
- \$60 million in pandemic and disaster aid distributed to child care providers.
- 41,496 children registered receive the monthly gift of books through partnership with Governor's Early Literacy Foundation.
- 1,289 educators from 547 different licensed agencies served through the WAGE\$ program.

Care and Adult Care Licensing

Child and Adult Care Licensing is the regulatory body that licenses and monitors child and adult care facilities across Tennessee with the goal of ensuring the safety and health of young children and vulnerable adults in care. As part of its future state, the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is undergoing a complete redesign. Under the new structure, the licensing and assessment teams merged to create a new Licensing Consultant role that will monitor compliance and evaluate quality. This aligns with goals of improving quality and strengthening business efficiencies and will support a better customer experience. The Child Care Services team believes that a relationship focused approach will lead to overall improvement so that partners, families and children in Tennessee will thrive.

Transformative Accomplishments and Customer Experience Improvement

- **Developing an E-Licensing System** | This year the division began developing Firefly, an e-licensing system that features both improved tools for tracking child care monitoring activities and a provider portal for self-service interactions. Firefly is anticipated to launch in February 2022.
- **Creating a Seamless Network of Supports** | Child Care Services is working with partners to create a seamless network of supports to maximize individual areas of expertise with the goal of creating an early care and education system where every child has the opportunity to thrive. Supports include technical assistance, training, professional development, coaching and mentoring.
- **Achieve Higher Standards Through \$4,900,000 In Grants** | This year, TDHS used Enhancement Mini Grants to foster quality improvement, licensure rules compliance and capacity enhancement among TDHS licensed agencies. Between July 2020 and June 2021, 1,264 applications were approved for a distribution of \$4,934,950.33.
- **Attracting and Keeping Child Care Talent** | TDHS continued statewide promotion of the Child Care WAGE\$® Program. This education-based salary supplement initiative encourages professional development of the child care workforce and enables licensed child care agencies to attract and retain qualified staff by providing qualification-based annual awards to care professionals.
- **Making Shared Services and Resources Available** | TDHS continued supporting licensed child care agencies with business management tools, human resource tools, program administration tools and classroom resources.
- **Re-organizing to Better Service Tennessee Families and Care Providers** | To support the new approach to quality rating and to strengthen relationships with providers, TDHS completed a major staff reorganization that merged the former assessment program into the licensing and certificate programs. Through the reorganization, TDHS also created a Pre-Licensure unit that is dedicated to helping agencies understand the licensure process and get off to a strong start.
- **Keeping Care Agencies Informed** | This year, the Department developed a monthly Child Care Newsletter to provide up-to-date information on resources, supports, guidance, changes in Child Care Services programs and related opportunities.
- **Elevating the Quality Rating Improvement System** | Recently, Child Care Services has

furthered the process of redesigning the state's 20-year-old Quality Rating Improvement System for child and adult care providers using information gathered from consultants and provider partners. The new reporting system will promote health, safety and quality of care and be a tool for parents to select child care options appropriate for their family's needs.

Child Care Certificate Program

The Child Care Certificate Program includes multiple categories of child care payment assistance, including Smart Steps. These programs provide child care payment support to families who are working, pursuing post-secondary education programs, participating in the Families First program or meet other eligibility requirements. Child care payment assistance takes a two-generational approach by promoting early learning, development and quality child care environments for children while giving parents and guardians a sense of security that allows them to focus on work or educational goals that elevate future prospects.

Transformative Achievements and Customer Service Enhancements

- **Modernizing Operations** | In November 2020, the Child Care Services began working with technology partners to facilitate efficiencies in Child Care Certificate Program payment and billing processing for participating agencies.
- **Easing the Burden on Child Care Agencies** | In SFY 2021, Child Care Services began creating a new attendance tracking system that modernizes the attendance reporting process for children enrolled in payment assistance programs. With an anticipated completion date of February 2022, the system will function using the provider portal within the e-licensing system.

Child Care Resource and Referral Centers

Child Care Resource and Referral Centers are free child care location and counseling services located in communities across the state. Parents can receive information regarding the components of quality care and what to look for when choosing quality care. This is an example of one of the contracts DHS maintains that is focused on promoting quality in child care across the state.

2020/21 COVID-19 Response

- **Distributing \$52 Million in Aid** | TDHS continued administering 2020 Disaster/Emergency Response and Recovery grants through partnership with the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee. These grants enabled TDHS licensed child care agencies impacted by COVID-19 and the March 3, 2020 tornado to remain open and operational following unexpected natural disasters.
- **Providing \$8 Million in Relief** | In 2021, TDHS approved 1,450 COVID Relief Grants applications to child care agencies. These funds supported expenditures for increasing operating expenses such as cleaning, sanitation, staff salaries, insurance, rent, and personal protective equipment according to licensed capacity and eligibility parameters.

“Availability of quality child care is critical to Tennessee communities and continuing economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. These (COVID Relief) grants will support child care providers with the financial assistance they need for expenses like cleaning, salaries, and PPE so they can continue delivering care that is safe, healthy, and educationally rich.” –TDHS Commissioner Clarence H. Carter.

- **Adjusting Monitoring Protocols** | In early 2020, the Child Care Licensing Unit suspended routine monitoring visits as a pandemic safety measure. During this time, Child Care Licensing Staff offered Technical Assistance and Guidance and tracked the impact on agencies due to COVID-19. In August 2020, The Child Care Licensing unit resumed monitoring visits through a non-invasive approach to continue to observe CDC recommended protocols. This approach incorporated a hybrid model of desk audits and a virtual visit conducted electronically.
- **Taking a Hybrid Approach to Quality Rating** | To maximize efficiency of staff operations and to minimize disruption of child care agency operations and health exposure during the pandemic, Child Care Licensing Staff developed a temporary instrument to conduct annual licensing/report card evaluation for child care agencies. This approach uses a desk audit, virtual visit and interview process as a non-invasive method of evaluating program enrichment and capturing the requirements under the assessment component. Information from these evaluations is available to parents and guardians seeking care options.
- **Keeping the Communication Channels Open** | As the state transitioned from COVID-19 Response to COVID-19 Recovery, TDHS worked to provide child care agencies with the up-to-date Adult and Child Care program information. The Department added a landing page to the Child Care Services website to post information to increase ease of information access for providers across the state.
- **Serving 30,897 School Age Children through Partnership** | The pandemic created challenges for parents working in essential fields who were in need of care for their school age children. TDHS responded to this need by contracting with the Young Men's Christian Association of Memphis and the Mid-South (YMCA) and Boys & Girls Clubs in Tennessee to provide a network of temporary/emergency child care services across the state for school age children who have at least one parent who provides essential services. The Department's funding allowed those parents access to free child care during the COVID-19 response. These programs follow basic health and safety criteria as established by the Child Care and Development Block Grant and provide services in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the context of public health guidance currently in effect for child care centers. As of June 30, 2021, there were approximately 30,897 school age children served.
- **Supporting Families During the Pandemic** | Many parents enrolled in the Child Care Certificate (Child Care Payment) Program temporarily lost their jobs due to the impact of COVID-19. TDHS helped these families retain their enrollment in the program by waiving all parent co-pay fees for all pay periods through the period of July 2020 and into the new state fiscal year.

- **60,701 Children Served through Pandemic Child Care Payment Assistance** | The Department continued the Pandemic child care Payment Assistance program to provide financial Child Care support to families identified as working in an essential services category during the pandemic State of Emergency time period. This COVID-19 Employee Child Care Payment Assistance category of care is to support families so they may continue working in essential functions. There were no income limits to qualify for this special and time limited category that supported children ages 6 weeks to 13 enrolled in licensed child care programs. This category of care served 60,701 children from the period of July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. Application support for this program ended on April 30, 2021, however, assistance for eligible families approved continued through August 2021.

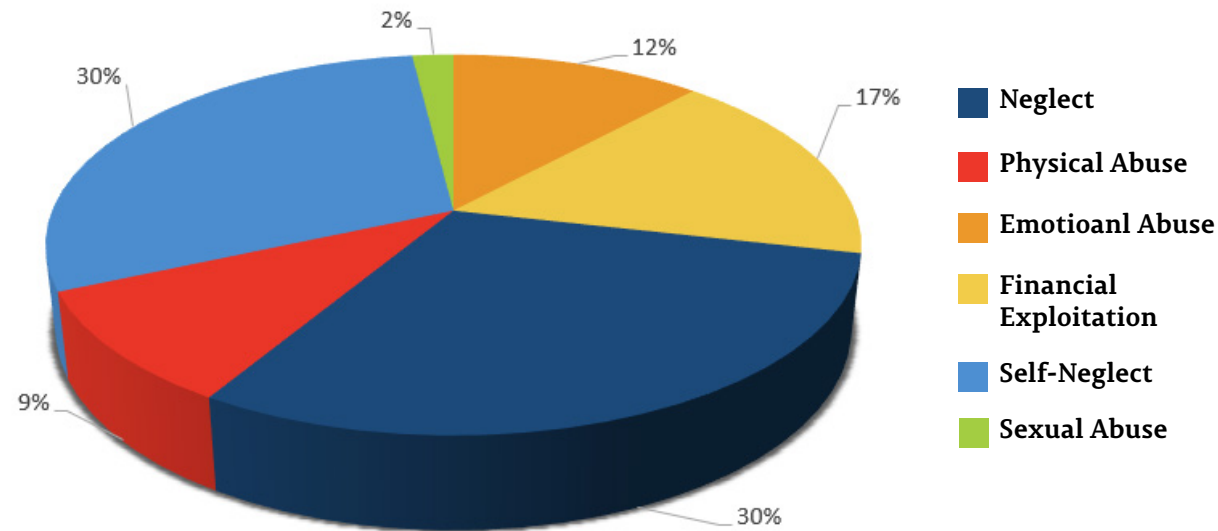
Adult Protective Services

Adult Protective Services is the Child Care and Community Services subdivision responsible for investigating reports of abuse, neglect (including self-neglect) or financial exploitation (of government funds) of adults who are unable to protect themselves due to a physical or mental limitation.

Tennesseans Served in 2020/21

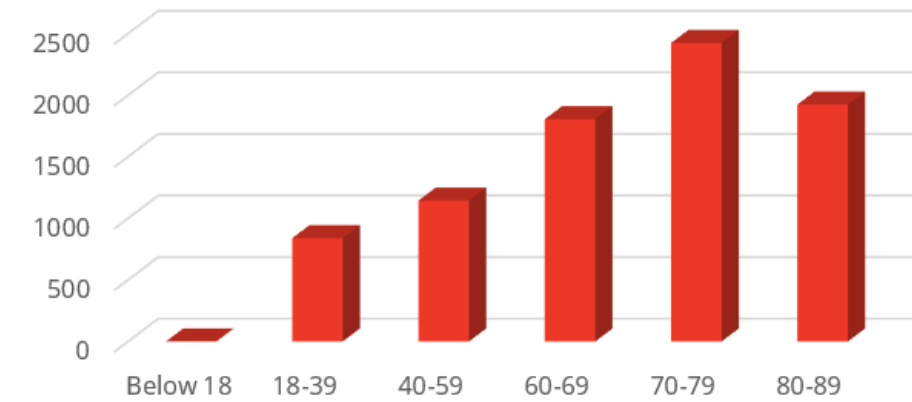
- 245 investigations resulting in emergency status.
- 21,169 received reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Allegations Reported at Intake 2020/21 Fiscal Year

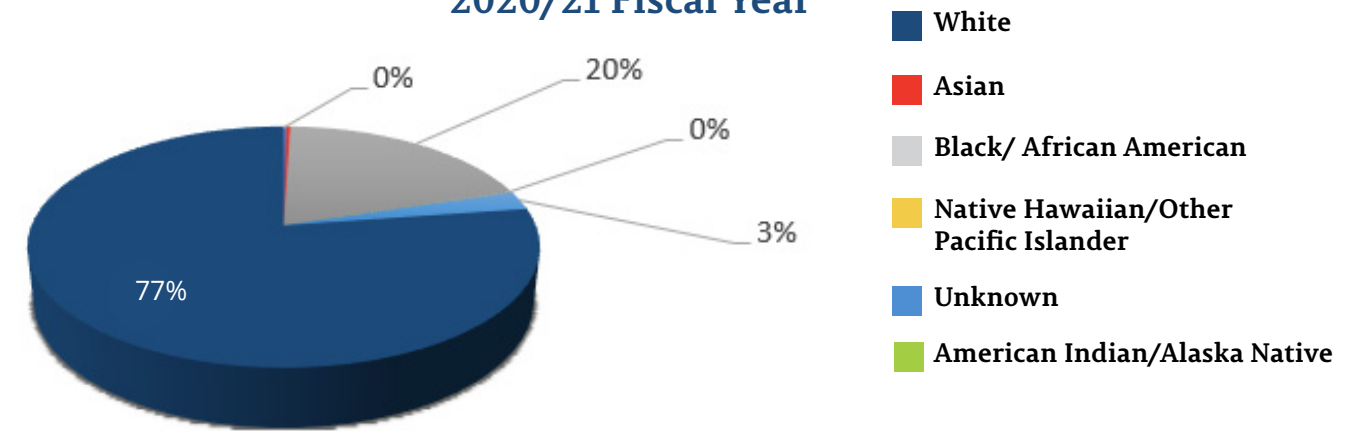


Note: There may be more than one allegation per Report. Additional allegations may be added during an Investigation.

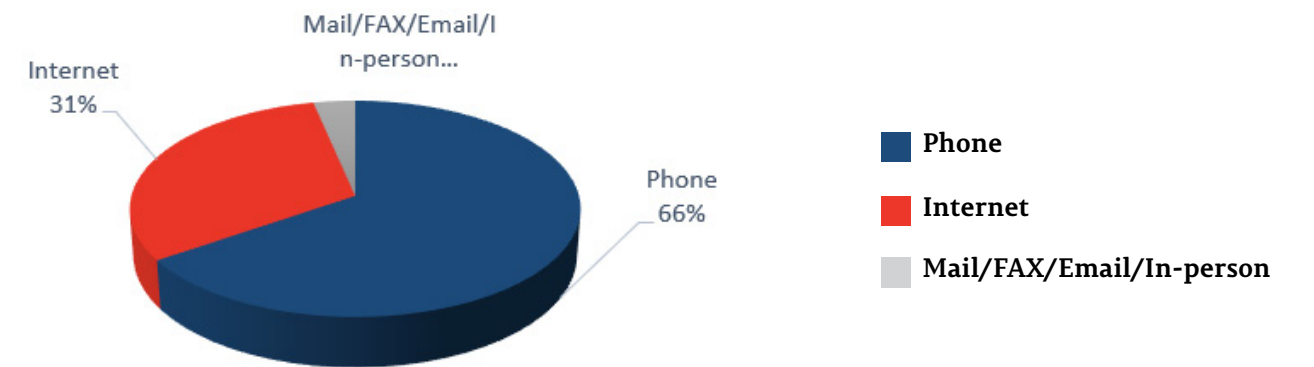
Customer Demographics | Age 2020/21 Fiscal Year



Customer Demographics | Race 2020/21 Fiscal Year



Reporting Communication Channels



Transformative Achievements and Customer Experiences Enhancement

- **Raising Elder Abuse Awareness** | Working with agencies and partners across the state, Adult Protective Services (APS) submitted and obtained the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) Proclamation to recognize WEAAD on June 15, 2021.
- **A Successful Center for Aging Research and Education Services (C.A.R.E.S) Conference** | On June 15, 2021, APS and Tennessee State University hosted a virtual C.A.R.E.S. Conference that included a presentation by National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA) Policy Director William Benson that is available for viewing on the TDHS YouTube channel.
- **Helping Older Adults Prevent Financial Exploitation** | On June 12, 2021 TDHS participated in the “Shred Event” at Fifty Forward in Nashville. As a lead up to WEAAD, participants were provided a safe, secure opportunity to shred and dispose of documents containing personal information. A total of 93 cars drove through the site to drop of materials for shredding and receive informational resource bags from APS. Members of the Elder Watch Committee joined TDHS for this event and WEAAD activities. The committee fosters information sharing and collaboration among organizations working to prevent and address elder abuse and exploitation and members include AARP Tennessee, FiftyForward, Mid-Cumberland Human Resources Agency, Metropolitan Nashville Police – Domestic Violence Division, Metro Office of Family Safety, Tennessee Department of Human Services – Adult Protective Services, MDHA and You Have the Power, and AgeWell Middle Tennessee.
- **Finding Safe Homes for Tennesseans** | Between March and June 2021, APS partnered with the Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability (TCAD), Tennessee Department of Health, Tennessee Department of Commerce & Insurance, Tennessee Department of Intellectual Developmental Disabilities, TennCare, and Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (DMHSAS) and others involved with the Interagency Unlicensed Facilities Task Force successfully to close four unlicensed homes and collaborated with partner agencies to rehome the displaced residents.
- **Reaching the Audience** | In an episode titled “The First Step Towards Justice – Reporting Elder Abuse,” APS Director Renee Bouchillon spoke about the work of APS on the Aging Matters Series from Nashville Public Television.
- **Assessing and Addressing Needs** | Using 2020 External Stakeholder surveys results, APS began sharing findings with partners and participating in regional Coordinated Community Response Committee meetings across the state to discuss the results and plans for improvement for each area.
- **Sharing the Right Tools** | The Coordinated Community Response Committee developed and published a Vulnerable Adult Protective Investigation Team (VAPIT) toolkit that contains best practices on operating VAPITs.
- **Building Staff Knowledge** | Over the course of the year APS worked to elevate staff knowledge through training sessions on the following topics: Growing Our Culture, Relationship Building, Due Process and the APS/TBI Academy.
- **Increasing Knowledge Accessibility** | This year, APS completed the E-Library section on Legal Intervention.
- **Creating a Productive Work Environment** | In addition to the TDHS Employee Engagement Survey, in March 2021, APS surveyed staff regarding opportunities to make

the APS program culture more positive and help staff feel more supported.

- **Increasing Process Efficiency** | In 2021, APS implemented the NICE Call System and committed to the Structured Decision Making (SDM) approach.
- **Documenting Procedures** | APS worked with Shelby County VAPIT and the Tennessee Department of Financial Institutions to establish Memorandums of Understanding addressing financial exploitation of vulnerable adults.
- **Redesigning Tools** | After attending the National Adult Protective Services Association conference, APS staff harnessed new knowledge to redesign the TN APS Case Review Tool.

Ensuring the Right Care

Customer Names Changed to Protect Identity and Privacy

In addition to protecting the elderly, Adult Protective Services (APS) protects adults with mental and physical disabilities. In April 2021, APS received a report on Sam, a Tennessean with severe physical and cognitive deficits who was residing in an unlicensed group home. Despite the unsuitable setting of Sam’s care, his family was resistant to relocating Sam to a more appropriate placement, and actively interfered with attempts to relocate him. After investigating Sam’s situation, APS took custody of Sam and moved him to a safe licensed facility that met his needs with the appropriate level of care.

Following his move, his family filed for conservatorship, and after many discussions an agreement was reached which gave conservatorship to his grandmother. After many hours of phone calls and visits and work by multiple APS staff, provisions were put in the order requiring a court order to relocate Sam from his current placement and Sam is now thriving in a safe, appropriate placement.



Social Services Block Grant Program

The Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) program is a federally funded grant program created under the Title XX of the Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1981. The purpose of the grant is to enable each state to furnish social services best suited to meet the needs of its residents.

Closely aligned with Adult Protective Services, Tennessee's SSBG program provides funding for elderly and vulnerable adults to receive Personal Support Services, Adult Day Services, and Specific Assistance. Personal Support Services provide limited in-home personal care designed to allow participants to remain in their own residences and maintain independence. Adult Day Services provide on-site, non-medical care in a daytime setting. Specific Assistance helps vulnerable adults maintain independence by helping to meet emergency needs for food, utilities, and other essentials. SSBG is administered through contracts with an established network of 15 non-profit and government agencies, and provides Personal Support and Specific Assistance in all 95 counties, with Adult Day Care provided in five urban centers. Services are limited to low-income elderly or disabled adults who meet federal poverty guidelines or are referred by the TDHS Adult Protective Services Program due to allegations of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.



Tennesseans Served in 2020/21

- 1,642 people served.
- 111 adult day center customers.
- 1,531 personal support services provided.

Transformative Achievements and Customer Experience Enhancements

- **Understanding Customers** | SSBG is nearing completion of a data model that tracks client services, ages, demographic profiles and other information useful for increasing customers service understanding.
- **Streamlining Services** | SSBG is working to streamline and simplify its Specific Assistance processes and evaluate the value of having a single provider with dedicated employees to serve internal and external customers.
- **Elevating Efficiency** | SSBG improved its invoice handling over the past year and continues to appraise the impact of Specific Assistance Funds administration.

2020/21 COVID-19 Response

Like many TDHS subdivisions serving vulnerable populations, the Social Services Block Grant program increased use of digital tools and adjusted procedures to continue services without compromising the safety of staff or customers. Safety measures included increasing the use of digital tools, using Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriation funds to equip customers and staff with personal protection equipment and sanitation supplies, and implementing flexibilities for service providers.

Providing Support When Family Can No Longer Do So

The Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) partners with community non-profits to provide care, personal support and adult day services for vulnerable adults referred by the Adult Protective Services subdivision.

This year, APS referred Mrs. Ernice Gonyea for help in her home after complications with a knee replacement left her bedbound. Previously Mrs. Gonyea's husband was able to give her excellent care, but over time, exhaustion and his own health concerns proved to be limiting factors. They both needed help with personal care, preparing meals, and household chores.

SSBG's coordinated with Mid-Cumberland Human Resource Agency (MCHRA), a non-profit partner, to go to the Gonyea residence on a twice a week basis and assist the couple in the ways they needed it most. Mrs. Gonyea and her husband feel better, have a healthier environment, and with MCHRA's support, are able to live independently outside of a facility.



Nutrition Programs

Although many state residents are familiar with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Tennessee Department of Human Services also administers the Child and Adult Care Food (CACFP) and Summer Food Service (SFSP) programs. These programs differ from SNAP in their focus on partnering with community organizations to provide reimbursement for meals provided to children and adults who attend care facilities or are enrolled in primary or secondary education. Both programs were modified beginning in March 2020 by federal waivers issued by USDA in response to COVID-19. The CACFP and SFSP programs are part of the emergency network providing meals to families impacted by COVID-19. These waivers will remain in place for SFSP through for August 2021 and for CACFP through June 2022.

Child and Adult Care Food Program

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides reimbursements to select institutions that serve nutritious meals to participants who meet age and income requirements. Eligible institutions include child and adult care centers, child care homes, emergency shelters and afterschool care programs for at-risk children. Eligible participants include children enrolled in child care institutions who are 12 and younger; children of migrant workers who are 15 and younger; persons of any age with one or more disabilities who are enrolled in an institution or child care facility serving a majority of persons who are 18 and younger; and adults who are enrolled in adult care institutions that serve functionally impaired adults or persons who are 60 or older.

Summer Food Service Program

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides reimbursements for nutritious meals served to participants in needy areas during periods when their schools are closed. The program primarily serves children 18 or younger in areas where poor economic conditions exist and in residential camps where children are determined individually to be eligible. Persons older than 18 who are mentally or physically disabled and who participate in school programs for the disabled are also eligible to participate. To accomplish its goals the SFSP partners with “Sponsors.” SFSP sponsorship is limited to public or private, nonprofit school food authorities; state, local, municipal or county governments; residential public or private, nonprofit summer camps; public or private, nonprofit colleges or universities administering Upward Bound Programs; and private, nonprofit organizations. Eligible feeding sites include public parks, recreation centers, schools, churches, playgrounds, residential camps and public housing complexes.

Tennesseans Served in 2020/21*

- **Child and Adult Food Program** | 37,000,000 meals provided in 2020 and 27,000,000 meals provided in 2021.
- **Summer Food Service Program** | 2,600,000 meals served in 2020 and 6,300,000 meals served in 2021.

*The number of meals represents those submitted for reimbursement as of June 1, 2021. The actual number served is subject to change. As a federal program, CACFP operates on a federal fiscal year schedule.

Transformative Accomplishments and Customer Service Enhancements

- **Going Digital** | CACFP and SFSP applications and claims submission process management moved to an online portal.
- **Helping Customers Find Current Information** | The TDHS virtual assistant, AVA, was updated to include CACFP and SFSP information for customers seeking answers online.
- **Changing the Model** | The CACFP and SFSP team transitioned to a case management model to better provide ongoing customer service to all CACFP and SFSP sponsors.
- **Easing the Burden of Training** | This year CACFP and SFSP transitioned all trainings to an online platform. Available trainings opportunities are now posted online and learners can leverage the convenience of live web-based trainings and on-demand training modules remotely.

COVID-19 Response in 2020/21

- **Administering Emergency Waivers** | In 2020, the USDA issued national waivers in response to COVID-19. These waivers fundamentally changed the way food programs operate and required significant care and administration. CACFP and SFSP staff helped to implement 93 CACFP and SFSP of these waivers.
- **Helping Operators With COVID-19 Cost** | Currently, CACFP staff are working to administer Child Nutrition Emergency Operation Costs Reimbursement Programs in an effort to help to CACFP operators manage additional costs incurred by COVID-19.

Community Services Block Grant Program

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) is a federally funded grant program created by the Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1981. The program aims to combat poverty within communities by removing the barriers to self-sufficiency clients may encounter.

The state administers the CSBG program through a network of 20 community action agencies that reach each of the state’s 95 counties. These agencies improve communities by providing a wide array of services to individuals and families with low incomes. Services include, and are not limited to: emergency utility assistance, Head Start, services for senior citizens, transportation assistance, employment assistance and more. These and other supports all work to improve the communities across the state.

CSBG Purpose Statement

“Everybody should have equal opportunity to achieve their highest potential in partnership with their families and communities.”

Transformative Achievements and Customer Service Improvements

- **Aligning Award Terms and Invoicing Processing to Elevate Impact** | Following recommendations from Tennessee Association of Community Action (TACA) recommendations, TDHS worked to align CSBG award terms to match the federal grant cycle, strengthen invoicing processes, and eliminate dependence on future supplemental contracts while taking new approaches fund allocation and administration. These and related actions improved fund utilization, minimized administrative burdens, increased efficiency, and supported reimbursement time cycles.
- **A Commitment to Open Communication** | This year the CSBG program director continued sharing program updates with partners through a weekly newsletter and utilized PILO to assist in the development of a CSBG Communication Plan for long-term enhancements to increase communication and partnerships. The Unit also hosted an Annual Report training session with TACA that incorporated a curriculum from the National Association for State Community Services Programs. Beyond these tactics, the CSBG encouraged continuity between the State Office and Association through monthly meetings, town halls and training coordination.
- **Engaging Partners** | In July 2020, CSBG Unit conducted focus groups among partner agencies to gain feedback on new invoice concepts and procedure revisions.
- **Helping Partners Succeed** | This year the CSBG Unit, with the aid of the Talent Management Learning and Development Division, fostered partner success through a series of training sessions on invoices, ACCENT, Budgeting, and other operational topics. The Unit also developed Training & Technical Assistance system. plan to help agencies maximize impact in their communities.
- **Keeping the Dates Straight** | In April 2021, CSBG staff provided a collective CSBG Agency Calendar to help with transparency and due dates for future planning to understand program activities and timing of program needs.
- **Investing in Human Resources** | After an in-depth job analysis, CSBG expanded its team

to include a DHS Block Grant Coordinator and utilized Talent Management Learning and Development expertise to engage in “Growing Our Culture” team building sessions. The Unit also transitioned to a new business model that incorporates subject matter experts.

- **Bringing Attention to the Mission** | To raise awareness during Community Action Month, the TDHS and TACA hosted a virtual Salute to Community Action Virtual Event and shared related information through social media, a Gubernatorial proclamation, and internal and external facing newsletters.

COVID-19 Response in 2020/21

- **Distributing CARES Supplemental Funds** | In 2020, TDHS received CARES Supplemental Funds. CSBG worked with the TDHS Procurement office to quickly and efficiently update draft contracts, obtain budget sheets and execute contracts in a record time of 60 days.
- **Increasing Communication** | CSBG responded to the pandemic by making a concerted effort to build relationships with community action agencies through consistent regular communication and working with TACA to host a Fund Utilization and Grant Management Listening Session for agencies. Feedback collected during this virtual engagement led the CSBG Unit to begin hosting quarterly sessions that provide an opportunity for partners to review expenditures and discuss strategies on how best to invest funds in Tennessee communities.

East Tennessee

- Anderson County Community Action Committee
- Bradley-Cleveland Community Services Agency
- Blount County Community Action Agency
- Chattanooga Human Services Department
- Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority
- Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee
- Mid-East Community Action Agency
- Mountain Valley Economic Opportunity Authority
- Southeast Tennessee Human Resource Agency
- Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency

Middle Tennessee

- South Central Human Resource Agency
- Mid-Cumberland Community Action Agency
- Metropolitan Action Commission
- Highland Rim Economic Corporation
- Clarksville/ Montgomery County Community Action Agency
- Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency

West Tennessee

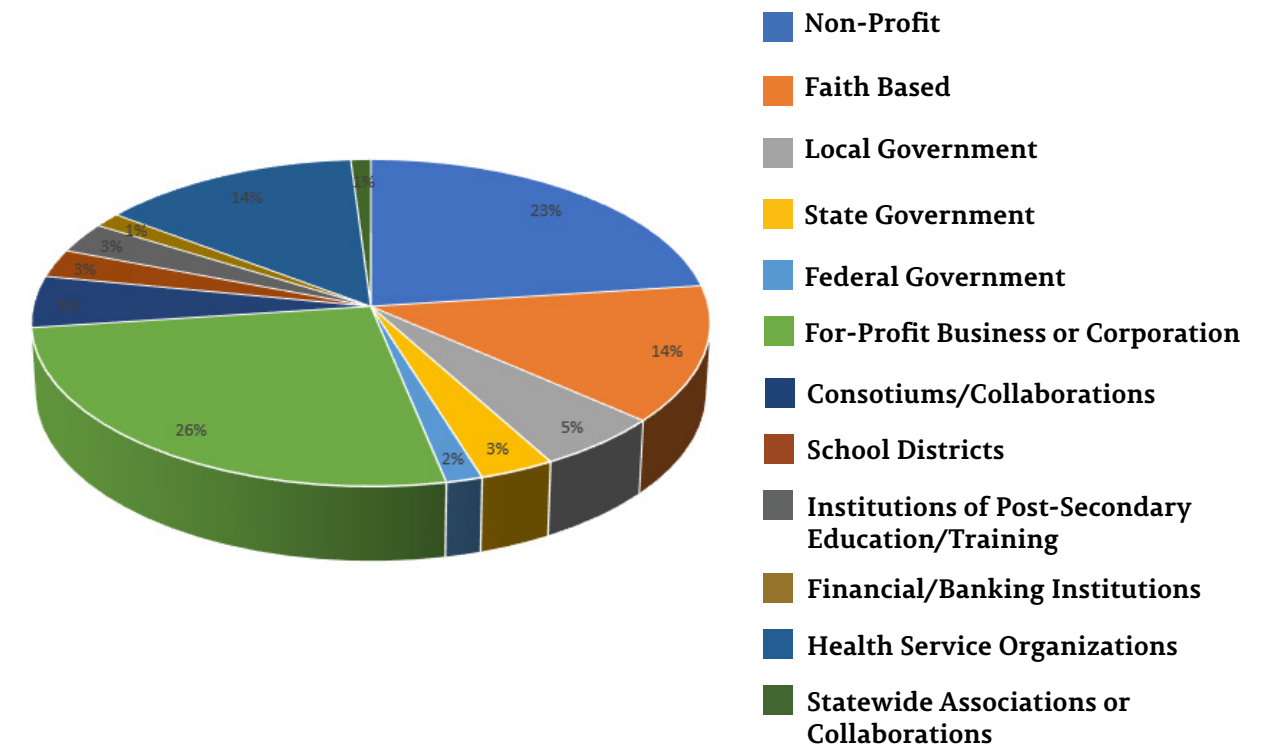
- Delta Human Resource Agency
- Northwest Tennessee Economic Development Council
- Shelby County Community Service Agency
- Southwest Human Resource Agency

Through our 20 CSBG CAAs (also referred to as Eligible Entities), TDHS actively works to expand resources and opportunities to over 2,500 public and private organizations dedicated to achieving family and community outcomes.

Supporting a Diverse Group of Partner Organizations

The Community Services Block Grant Program works with a broad spectrum of 8,624 public and private organizations to help improve Tennessee communities.

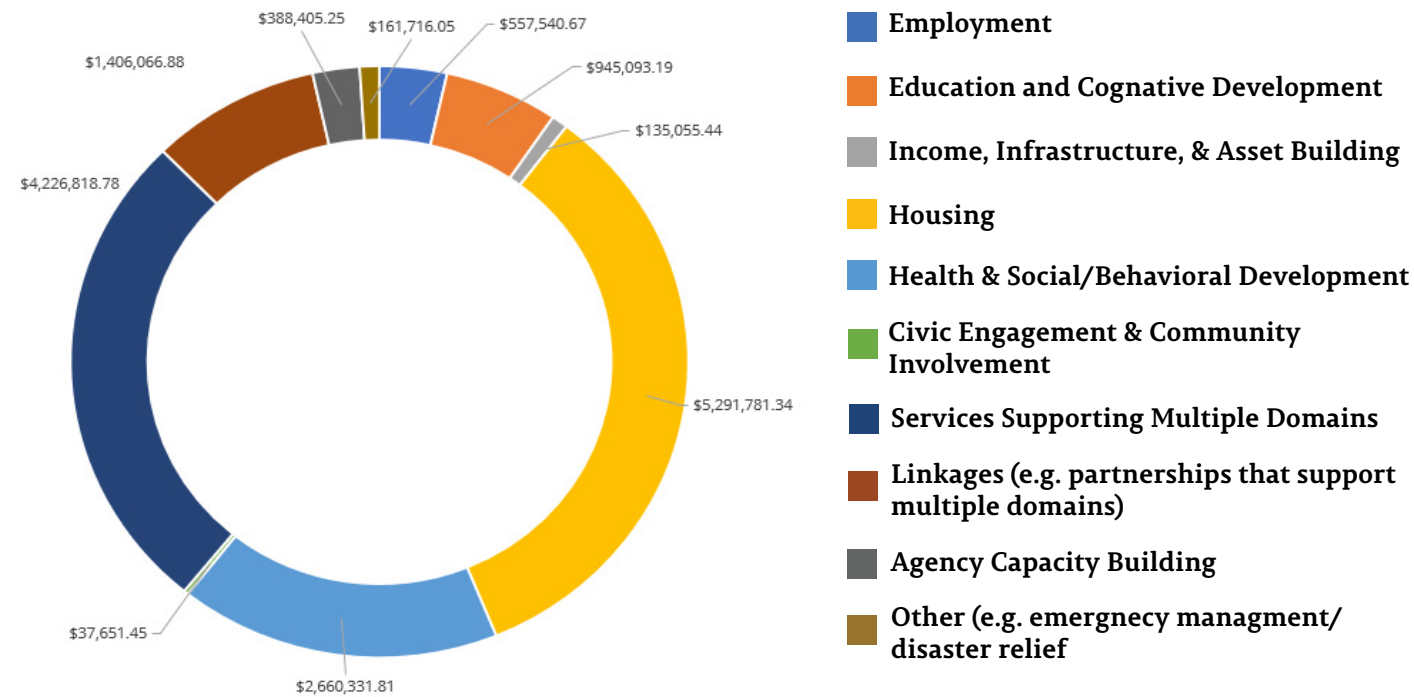
CSBG Eligible Entities



Taking a Strategic Focus

Guidelines allow Community Services Block Grant strategies to be developed in partnership with federal, state, and local resources to fill the gaps and develop innovative initiatives to meet the needs of low-income individuals. These strategies focus investments on addressing the causes and conditions of poverty by supporting education, employment, housing, health, nutrition, income management, and incorporate case management, self-sufficiency, and re-entry programs. The table below illustrates how funds will be invested in Tennessee communities.

Community Block Grant Program Investment Focus Areas



Rehabilitation Services Leadership

Mandy Johnson
Assistant Commissioner

Selina Kirkland
Tennessee Rehabilitation Centers Network Director

Kevin Wright
Community of Operations Director

James Stanfield
Disability Determination Services Director

Kim Maltempo
Strategic Business Solutions Director

Julie Johnson
Vocational Rehabilitation Program Director

Rehabilitation Services

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) supports Tennesseans with disabilities as they work to achieve their employment and independent living goals. With a commitment to strengthening communities, the division utilizes a cross section of vocational partnerships, transitional services, accessibility, self-advocacy promotion, and many individualized services. Each action is meant to ensure that no Tennessean is defined by their disability, but able to leverage their strengths, resources, abilities and capabilities to find the right setting to make a contribution to our state's community and economy.

Tennesseans Served in 2020/21

- 1,383 Vocational Rehabilitation customers achieved their employment goals, worked over 31 hours per week and earned \$12.49 per hour.
- 7,245 pre-employment transition services provided to an average of 4,200 students each month of the school year (August to May).
- 9 business services team members certified as WINDMILLS trainers.

Collaborative Impact

The state of Tennessee is full of examples of partnerships and collaborations between departments and programs that are working to align existing and new service delivery systems that strengthen coordination to achieve increased employment opportunities for Tennesseans with disabilities. Three primary examples of this cooperative spirit across state government for the Vocational Rehabilitation program are the interagency agreements with the Division of TennCare for the Employment and Community First CHOICES program, the Department of Education for the pre-employment transition services (pre-ETS), and the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services for the Individual Placements and Supports (IPS) model of supported employment. All of these partnerships are active and on-going and continue to ensure that employment services and supports for the programs' common customers are coordinated.

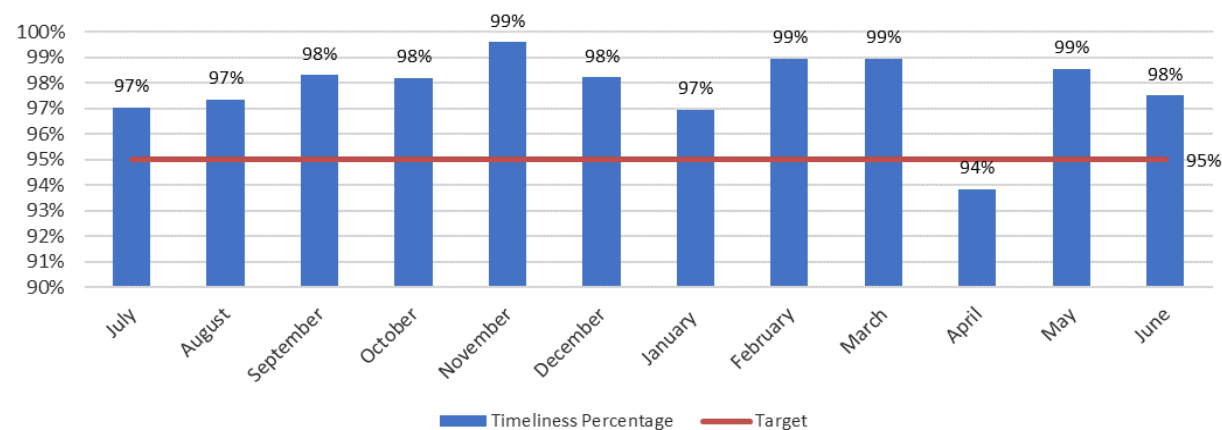
- **Improving Competitive Integrated Employment and Community First CHOICES (TennCare)** | This year DRS continued its work to support employment goals shared with the Employment and Community First CHOICES program. Following a 2017 memorandum of understanding (MOU) that outlined the roles of each agency, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, and the three managed care organizations (MCOs), the Department continued contracted initiatives to provide high quality employment services that lead to competitive integrated employment.

- **Helping Teens and Young Adults Find Work and Training** | As Tennessee began implementing plans related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Vocational Rehabilitation joined forces and established an MOU with the Tennessee Department of Education to outline provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students between the ages of 14-22. The five Pre-ETS facilitate education, training, and work experiences within the supportive high school environment. The MOU clearly identifies the roles and responsibilities of each entity and the shared responsibilities between the two.
- **Helping Tennesseans with Behavioral Health Disorders and Addictions Find Work and Independence** | This year, DRS continued partnership with the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (DMHSAS) on the Individual Placements and Supports (IPS) Program. This model of supported employment successfully in helped persons with behavioral health disorders such as mental illness, substance abuse, and co-occurring disorders obtain competitive integrated employment. Since establishing an interagency agreement in 2017, DMHSAS and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) continue to develop, expanding, and improve opportunities for competitive integrated employment for Tennesseans living with disabilities including mental health and/or substance abuse issues.

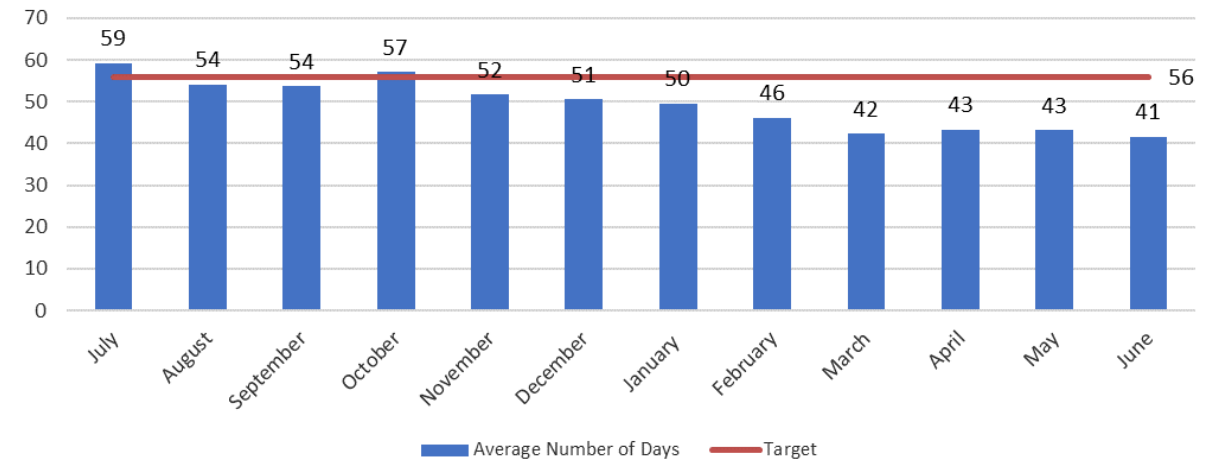
Transformative Achievements and Customer Service Improvements

- **Supporting Customers with Timely Decisions Making** | Two key metrics in enhancing the customer experience include timely eligibility decisions and the speed with which customers are engaged in their individual plan for employment (figure 1). Over the last year, VR maintained over 97% compliance with timely eligibility decisions. Even more compelling, VR set a goal to complete the individual plan for employment in 56 days – that is 34 days faster than the federal regulations require. This ensures that VR customers are engaged more rapidly in the pursuit of their employment goals. Over the last year VR met and exceeded this goal ending the year with a cumulative average of 48 days from eligibility to signed individual plan for employment.

Percentage of Eligibility Determinations Completed Timely with extensions

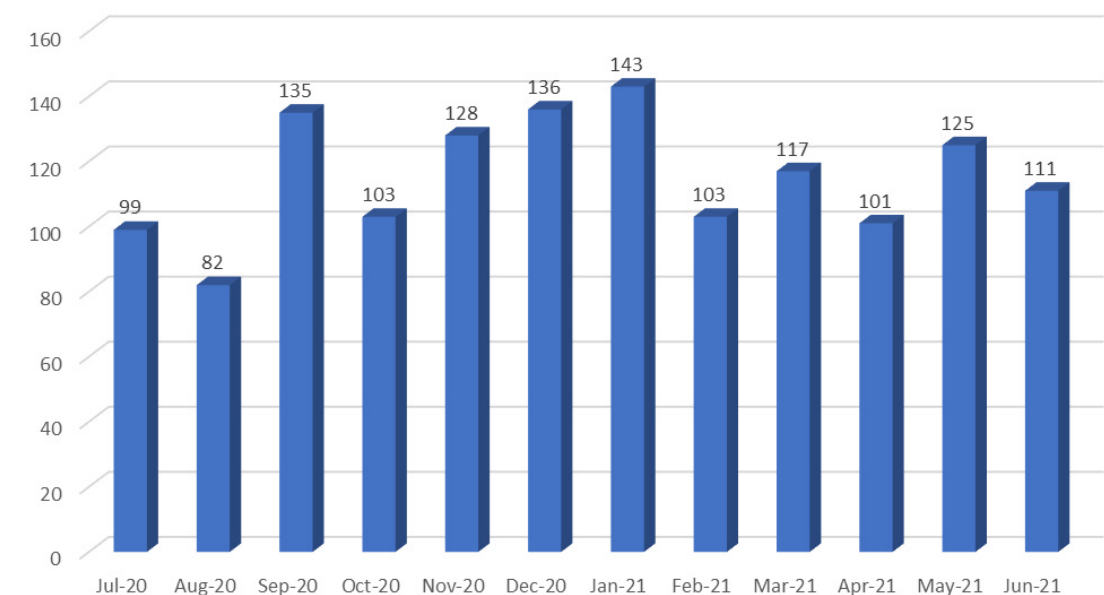


Average # Days from Eligibility Determination to signed Individual Plan for Employment



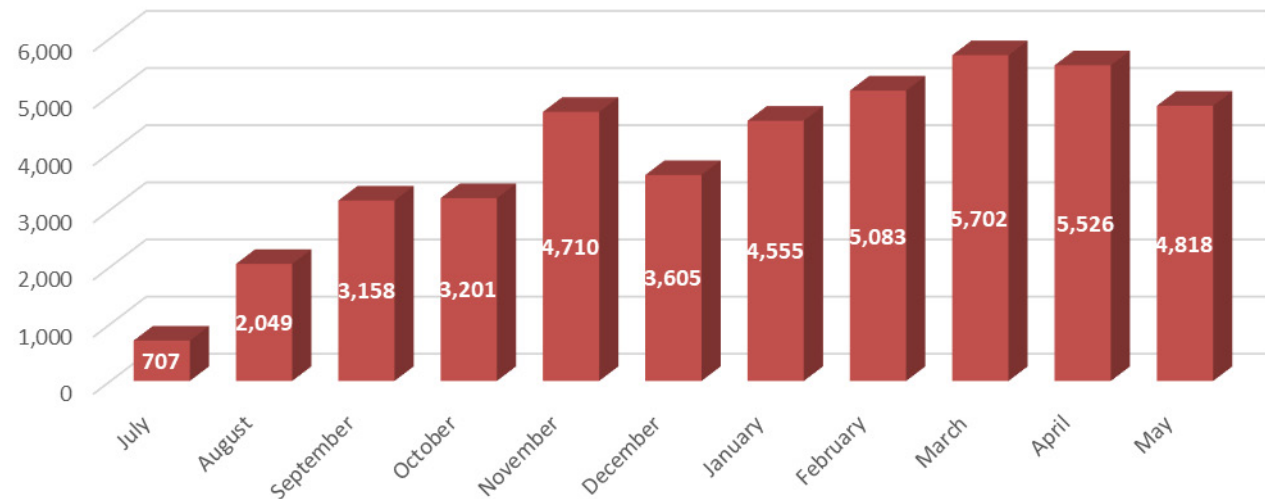
- **Tracking Successful Employment Outcomes** | In addition to tracking all individuals who are successfully employed for a minimum of 90 days, we also track the average number of hours worked per week and the average hourly wage. Despite the global pandemic and record unemployment experienced over the last year, the Vocational Rehabilitation program supported 1,383 in achieving their employment goals and these individuals worked over 31 hours a week earning \$12.49 per hour.

Average # Days from Eligibility Determination to signed Individual Plan for Employment

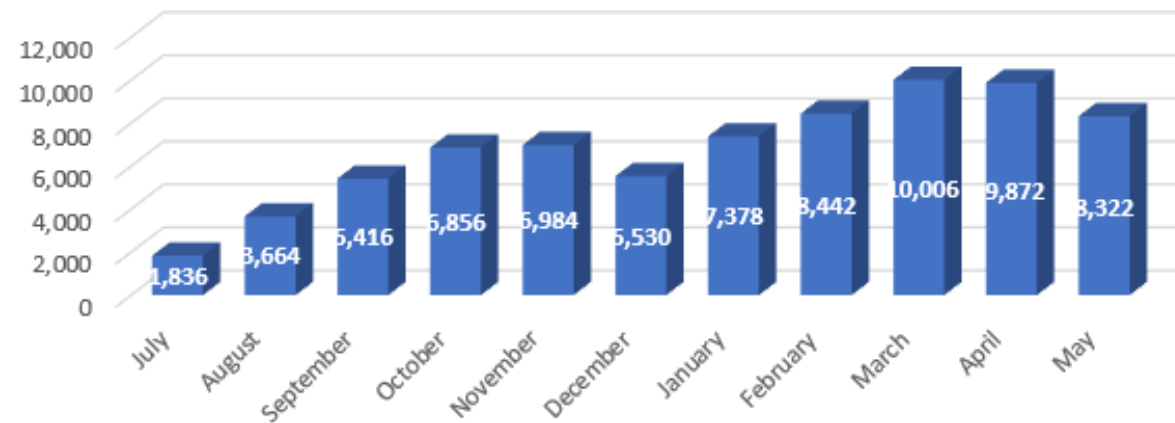


- **Providing 7,245 Pre-Employment Transition Services** | Serving students with disabilities as another key metric of the Vocational Rehabilitation program. Even in a school year that saw less in-person school days, the Vocational Rehabilitation program served an average of over 4,200 students a month providing in excess of 7,245 pre-employment transition services each month of the school year (August to May).

Pre-ETS Total Students Served



Pre-ETS Total Units of Service Provided



- **VR Meets Ava** | AVA, TDHS's virtual assistant just got SMARTER! AVA, now has content on the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. AVA helps provide customers the information they need through the TDHS website 24/7.
- **Changing Employer Perceptions of Disability through WINDMILLS** | To increase the services offered to Tennessee employers who hire individuals with disabilities, several Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Business Services Unit staff members became certified

WINDMILLS trainers. Considered to be the industry's leading disability inclusion training curriculum for employers nationwide, "WINDMILLS" is best defined as an employer-employee training tool designed to change attitudinal barriers and create a new perspective on the unique abilities of individuals. The high-impact training curriculum consists of 12 modules that promote employment and advancement of persons with disabilities by assisting those with and without disabilities to better understand the culture of disability in the workplace and change behaviors toward individuals with disabilities. To date, nine VR staff members have received training certification in the WINDMILLS curriculum. These staff members are available to deliver in-demand disability inclusion training to employers across Tennessee and help employers build their organizational competency for employing individuals with disabilities.

- **Accelerating the Transformation at Community Tennessee Rehabilitation Centers** | Although the pandemic continues to have traumatic global effects, it also created opportunities to accelerate innovative change. Transformation of the seventeen (17) Community Tennessee Rehabilitation Centers (CTRCs) operated by the Vocational Rehabilitation program is a positive example. Traditional vocational rehabilitation services utilized a center-based model that involved on-site vocational evaluation, career assessment, and vocational adjustment training. This year, VR transformed its CTCRS into community-based centers that provide a broad array of supports for individuals on their employment path. The new service delivery model emphasizes access to core vocational rehabilitation services that prepare and support individuals in going to work. In addition to core services, the model offers the opportunity to customize community-based vocational rehabilitation services to the unique needs and circumstances of the community using the R.I.S.E system. Rise is an acronym that stands for Road to Independence, Success, and Employment. Each heading represents a collection of services as follows:
 - Services within the **INDEPENDENCE** heading consist of an array of services that include life skills assessments and basic independent living skills to support VR customers.
 - Services within the **SUCCESS** heading consist of services such as self-advocacy, self-determination, assistive technology assessment and assistive technology counseling.
 - Services within the **EMPLOYMENT** heading consist of a full array of more traditional vocational rehabilitation services that include career assessment and career readiness services to support VR customers as well as Pre-ETS services, such as post-secondary counseling, work-based learning, and self-advocacy.
- **Improving Case Management with New Tools** | Through the amazing work of system admin teams, the policy teams, data migration teams, testers, and trainers, DRS now operates two new systems: Aware, a Vocational Rehabilitation case management system and a new Disability Claims Processing System (DCPS) used by Disability Determination Services (DDS). These new systems provide the foundation for future modernizations that include more efficient and user-friendly applications that will benefit TDHS customers.

Meeting the Challenge of COVID-19

- **Developing a Nationally Recognized Best Practice Guide for Service Delivery** | The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program worked to develop and deliver guidance to local education agencies and community rehabilitation provider partners on how to continue high-quality Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) through the unique circumstances of the pandemic. This effort resulted in the development of a Best Practice

Guide developed in partnership with experts from the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center and Transition TN. Now a nationally recognized guide, this publication provided general strategies, techniques, tips, and resources for providing Pre-ETS in a virtual setting.

- **Pre-Employment Transition Services Go Virtual** | The Pre-ETS team continues to promote and provide resources for the continuation of Pre-ETS services in a virtual setting. This work and the pandemic caused the number of Pre-ETS providers approved to provide virtual services to grow from less than 30 in July 2020 to 80 by January 2021. The Pre-ETS team continues to promote the use of virtual Pre-ETS delivery and features new resources through Transition TN. For example, in February 2021, Transition TN, in collaboration with the VR Pre-ETS team, released a new course for providers titled “Strategies for Effective Instruction” on TransitionTN.org. The lessons in the course included: Collaborating with Teachers, Choosing a Curriculum, Connecting with Students and Managing Learning Environments, and Virtual Instruction. Additionally, in April 2021, new student courses were developed and highlighted the Benefits of Going to Work, Types of Postsecondary Education, and Career Pathways and Goals. A new provider course on Job Exploration Counseling was also released.

Beyond a List of Abilities | A Testimony to the Power of Collaborative Impact

In her work as a Department of Human Services Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant (VRA) Nichole Earp meets and helps many Tennesseans with disabilities find independence and employment. Before a customer’s employment plan is formed with the help of Vocational Rehabilitation partners, most customer introductions start “on paper” with customer case notes and files prior to face-to-face interaction and need-based vocational planning. However, VRA Earp has learned that paper introductions are often insufficient “snapshots” of the individuals she assists, and creating positive outcomes requires a focus on the whole person rather than a concentration on a paper highlight of an individual. This past year, VRA Earp met Hayes Otelo, a young man whose case file noted a limited ability to interact with others and drive with below average general learning ability and significant difficulty in education and employment. As she came to know and work with Hayes, VRA Earp affirmed in her belief in a person-centered, partners supported approach to service and became further convinced of the limitations of paper introductions as a means of capturing a customer’s potential, personality, hopes and possibilities.

After receiving Hayes’ case at the onset of the pandemic, VRA Earp met Hayes face-to-face, and conducted a variety of assessments and online job shadowing activities. These initial valuations revealed Hayes’ interest in agriculture and concerns about his level of communication and job readiness skills. He was also concerned about his lack of a driver’s license. Typically, VR formulates employment plans that combine individualized services with training at Community Tennessee Rehabilitation Centers (CTRC) and work-based learning (WBL) with partner employers. However, the impact of COVID-19 limited work-based learning (WBL) and CTRC services. Acknowledging these

roadblocks, VRA East continued exploring WBL options but pivoted from established employment plan practices to an intense person-centered partner supported approach that to concentrate on what Hayes perceived as his biggest barriers to employment and independence.

VRA Earp formed an employment plan to address each of Hayes’ challenges based on his goals and interests. To build communication skills, Hayes engaged in multiple mock interviews over the phone and in person and practiced scheduling interviews by calling various staff members. Additionally, he used Big Interview software program and regularly participated in various work role play scenarios to hone communication skills. By the time his actual mock interview arrived, Hayes felt confident and impressed his interviewer. He also attended Work Plus Rehab for driver’s education and attained his license in April.

Considering his interests in agriculture, VRA East worked with Hayes to explore entry level certifications that he could work toward while WBL opportunities were curtailed by the pandemic. At the recommendation of the Tennessee Dept of Education (DOE), a VR partner, Hayes began the Career Safe 10-hour General OSHA course and certification.

“I was slightly concerned about how he would do in the program due to the information in his evaluations, but Hayes surprised me time and time again,” VRA Earp commented. “I actually begun the OSHA course at the same time he did, and every time he came in for job readiness classes, he would report that he was ahead of me. When it came time to take the final test, he aced it on the first try!”

Despite the pandemic, eventually, VRA Earp located a WBL opportunity for Hayes at Paris Landing State Park and ensured wages by signing him up for the American Job Center youth work experience program. VRA Earp also coordinated with TennCare to enroll Hayes in its Employment and Community First (ECF) CHOICES, an employment program for individuals with disabilities. This collaboration opened future access to an ECF provided job coach. However, the staff at Paris Landing State Park were impressed with Hayes’ work and, at the time of this story’s release, intended to hire him pending his completion of the paid you work experience.

Hayes’ story is just one example of the power of person-centered planning and partnership. Each Rehabilitation Services customer is more than a list of abilities on a piece of paper and each day Vocational Rehabilitation Assistants like VRA Earp empower individuals like Hayes to find and define their path forward as contributing members of our community. To learn more about Hayes’ story and the Tennessee Department of Human Services work across the state, visit our YouTube channel.

Achieving in Spite of

Project SEARCH is one of many partners that join forces with the Transition Services team to ensure job opportunities for young adults with disabilities as they transition from high school to the job market. Since the internship program began in the state six years ago, the Project Search achieved a five year record of 100% student placement by following a strict rotation format. Rotating through multiple job settings and training environments to help participating students gain work skills and find employment. However, the unprecedented challenges of 2020/2021 forced scheduling

and placements changes. Yet, the story of five Project SEARCH interns from Blount County Schools (BCS) and their work at Maryville College illustrates the versatility of the Transition Services to achieve bright outcomes in the lives of Tennesseans.

Prior to the pandemic, Project Search and Blount County Schools permitted interns in the Transition Services program to choose rotations that included the physical plant, Metz Café (four options) and clerical departments at Maryville College. This year, Maryville College implemented restrictions on personnel allowed on the campus. Consequently, internship rotations were limited to the Metz Café. An additional dilemma arose when potential internship hours were dramatically reduced when the college announced a November-January closure. Despite these challenges, the Transition Services, Project SEARCH, Blount County Schools and Metz Café teams maintained their determination to provide students to accumulate as much work exposure as possible through a variety of opportunities.

The Metz Café manager and Project SEARCH Team explored different rotations within the café and allowed interns to work in areas that had not been options before. Newly devised rotation stations included areas of the bakery, pizza bar, dish room, serving line, cutlery services and salad bar prep. Additionally, the traditional 10-week rotation schedule was amended and divided into three or four-week rotations. The abbreviated rotation allowed the interns to gain basic skills in a variety of settings, with the plan of layering more complex skills upon return to the rotations in January. When a classroom was not available on campus for the established complementary instruction, the schedule was adjusted to concentrate instruction into one day a week in the Project SEARCH classroom at the high school.

To fill the gap left by the November-January break, Transition Services worked with the William Blount High School Principal to create career exploration and job opportunities at the high school. Interns worked in 4-week rotations in the cafeteria and maintenance department and four of the five interns were offered jobs in respective departments.

Although the cafeteria had a hiring freeze, a need for additional help create an opportunity for three of the interns to be hired through ESS, a placement agency responsible for providing substitute workers in education settings. At the time of this story's release the interns had a 22 ½ hours per week work schedule with hopes of permanent placement following hiring freeze. Outside of the cafeteria, another intern received an job offer in the maintenance department and is currently working full time and benefits. In March, only one intern was still seeking employment in the community. The Project SEARCH team assisted the remaining intern in finding work at Archonic. Her job entails filing, labeling, packaging, and assisting with room sanitation. With her own office, she is currently working 16 hours per week.

The story of these five high school interns is a testament to dedication of the Transition Services teams and partners like Project SEARCH, Maryville College and the Blount County School system. Even in a pandemic year, teamwork, perseverance, and innovation prevailed resulting in 100% employment for participating Blount County students.



Aryn McAndrew
Project SEARCH Intern

Keeping Things Moving | TDHS Support Divisions

Most Tennesseans are most familiar with our customer-facing Program and Service Divisions, the sector responsible for interacting with the public and administering benefits on a daily basis. However, the success of our programs and services is directly reliant on the work of our support divisions and offices. These divisions enhance the function of direct services and foster innovative efficiency in service delivery and include: Operations, Quality Improvement and Strategic Solutions (QISS), Appeals and Hearings, Office of Inspector General, Office of General Counsel, Human Resources, Talent Management – Learning & Development, and Public Information and Legislative Office.

Office of General Counsel Leadership

Krisann Hodges
General Counsel

Rebekah Parkhurst
Deputy General Counsel

Dezanne Russell
Deputy General Counsel

Jacqueline Griffin
Office Manager

Using the Law for Good | Office of the General Counsel

The Office of General Counsel (OGC) provides legal consultation, advice, and representation to the Department in judicial and administrative forums across all Department programs and support divisions. Attorneys within OGC draft and promulgate Departmental rules related to the implementation of laws and programs; draft and analyze departmental legislation; draft and

review departmental contracts and all other agreements; review employee disciplinary action; process public records requests; coordinate with the Attorney General's Office on legal matters in federal or state court; and provide oversight and advice of child support law to the Child Support IV-D offices statewide. In addition, OGC is responsible for records management oversight through the Records Management Unit (RMU). RMU provides records management support to the agency by providing training and assistance to staff regarding the maintenance, storage, and destruction of records.

Transformative Achievements and COVID-19 Response

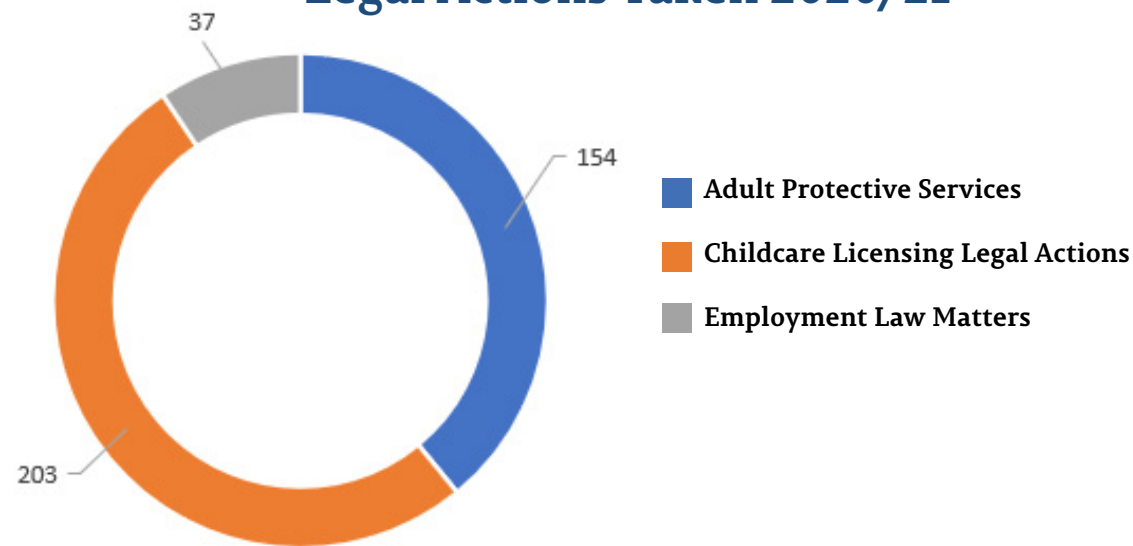
In addition to development and promulgation of several state rules to support transformation across TDHS Programs, the Office of General Counsel provided important support during many unexpected challenges in the past year. Here are a few highlights of the year's accomplishments:

- **Meeting an Elevated Need** | The COVID-19 Pandemic resulted in a significant increase in procurement and contract work with very abbreviated timelines due to declared State of Emergencies and increased benefits and programs issued at the federal level. This resulted in a need for increased legal review of contracts (and other agreements) as well as additional legal advice and support for programs/benefits related to the pandemic and/or other emergency or disaster services, benefits and/or programs. Over the past year, OGC has also seen increased, and complex, employment matters related

to TOSHA/OSHA, FFRC Protected Leave, as well as COVID-19 exposures related to staff or clients. We have experienced an increase in Unemployment Appeals, as well as claims incorrectly identifying DHS as the employer or fraudulent claims. OGC worked with DHS Human Resources to develop processes to identify these cases to OGC immediately and to immediately report potentially fraudulent cases to DLWD for investigation. These processes resulted in benefits generally being denied and prevented the award of ineligible or fraudulent unemployment benefits.

- **Meeting the Challenges of a Virtual Environment** | As a result of the pandemic, all Childcare Board of Review Hearings became virtual hearings. This transition included troubleshooting technical issues related to witness testimony, introduction of exhibits and Board deliberations and assisting Board Members, Administrative Judges, Attorneys, and witnesses with technical issues that arose during each hearing.
- **Increasing Training to Meet Current Needs** | OGC adjusted several internal projects to meet the challenges of the pandemic, such as provision of continued legal training for all DHS attorneys in both OGC and Appeals and Hearings virtually.

Legal Actions Taken 2020/21



Office of the Inspector General

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducts oversight of the Department’s independent accountability functions. Those functions include internal audit, external program review, claims management and investigations. This office also investigates referrals of potential fraud, waste, and abuse and handles adjudication. OIG also partners with other state and federal agencies and law enforcement entities as necessary on investigations. To accomplish its goals, the division is organized into four subdivisions: Audit Services, Background Investigation and Child Care Licensing, Claims and Special Investigations.

Office of the Inspector General Leadership

Todd McKinney
Inspector General

Frank Houle
Director of Program Integrity

Sam Alzoubi
Director of Audit Services



Tennesseans Served in 2020/21

- 26,164 Background checks completed
 - 169 External Audit/Monitoring Reports Completed
 - 114 Food Programs
 - 11 Block Grants
 - 31 Vocational Rehabilitation
 - 5 Child Care Certificate Program
 - 8 Family Assistance Programs (SNAP/TANF)
- 122 Internal Audit Reports Completed
 - 4 Pending Internal Audits
 - 52 Federal Tax Information Audits
 - 66 Motor Voter Act Audits
- \$11 million recovered in SNAP and TANF overpayment collections

Background Investigation and Child Care Licensing

The Background Check Unit conducts fingerprint and criminal background investigations on all current and/or prospective employees and/or contract workers who have access to Federal Tax Information (FTI). This includes employees who work for the Tennessee Department of Human Services, Tennessee Department of General Services (TDGS), Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE), Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), and Adult Protective Services (APS). The background check tracking system also records and tracks fingerprints submitted to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) from employees of child care agencies and, adult daycare providers.

Audit Services

The Office of Inspector General’s Audit Services Group is a 51-person team of audit and administrative support professionals led by the Director of Audit Services (DAS). The DAS has four reporting audit directors for each of the following divisions: Food Programs, Grants and Contracts, Internal Audit and Data and Special Projects.

The mission of Audit Services is to conduct audits and monitoring reviews of the Department’s external subrecipients, contractors, and internal programs’ processes to

bring accountability through its reporting and to aid Departmental management in the assessment of operating effectiveness of its internal controls. The Data and Special Projects team supports Audit Services' operations by providing analysis of raw data to enhance the value of the audit work performed through identifying potentially problematic transactions. In addition, special projects are initiated at the direction of the DAS to further help bring program integrity to the Department's programs and processes.

The DAS has designated the Certified Fraud Examiner as the preferred professional credential for auditing and monitoring staff. Within the audit services group, there are twenty-two (22) certified Fraud Examiners to ensure that grant recipients receive high quality auditing, monitoring, and feedback.

Transformative Achievements and Customer Experience Enhancements

- **Providing Flexibility** | The transfer process timeline for Child and Adult Care worker fingerprints was changed from 90-days to 180-days in an effort to elevate customer experience for background investigations for Child and Adult Care Agencies. This new timeline applies to employees fingerprinted within the last five years and employees who have worked for a Tennessee licensed childcare agency without an extended break in employment.
- **Protecting Tennesseans with Disabilities** | TDHS strengthened the screening process for current and prospective Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) employees and interns by adding criminal background investigations to the procedure. This requirement applies all current and prospect VR workers with duties that include unsupervised contact with VR customers or access to customer funds, personal property, or personal identification information. The new screening also includes supervisors for these VR employees. Additionally, applicants are screened to against the current List of Excluded Individuals and Entities (LEIE) and other safety registries.
- **Making Connections** | This year the Background Check and Child Care Licensing Units collaborated with the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, Treasury, Treasury Division of State Audit, Identigo and the CJIS Unit: NCIC/TIES Auditor to build knowledge on the scope and depth of background checks and related offender registries. The Units have also held regular meetings to share information on the spectrum of their duties.
- **Centralized Tracking Efficiency** | OIG introduced a new fraud analysis system, Pondera, that allows the OIG to track fraudulent activity across Department programs using data analytics.
- **Recovering \$10 Million** | The Department has partnered with federal and local agencies to conduct State Law Enforcement Bureau (SLEB) Fraud investigative activity.
- **Recovering \$375,158 in Fraudulently Obtained Funds** | The investigative work of the State Investigative Unit resulted in the recoup of fraudulently obtained Child and Adult Care Food Program funds.

Operations

The Operations team is responsible for managing the infrastructure that supports TDHS in helping Tennesseans. The division's subdivisions include: Appeals and Hearings, Quality Improvement and Strategic Solutions, Budget, Fiscal, Information Technology and Procurement/Facilities.

Operations Leadership

- Melisa Hucks**
Deputy Commissioner and Chief Operating Officer
- Mary-Glenn Hartup**
Interim Appeals and Hearings Assistant Commissioner
- Gary Wilson**
Quality Improvement and Strategic Solutions Assistant Commissioner
- Stephen Reksten**
Director of Procurement
- Winfield Shiers**
Budget Director
- Amanda Woody**
Director of Strategic Analysis
- Wayne Glaus**
Chief Information Officer of Information and Technology
- Krystal Krall**
Chief Financial Officer of Fiscal Services

Appeals and Hearings

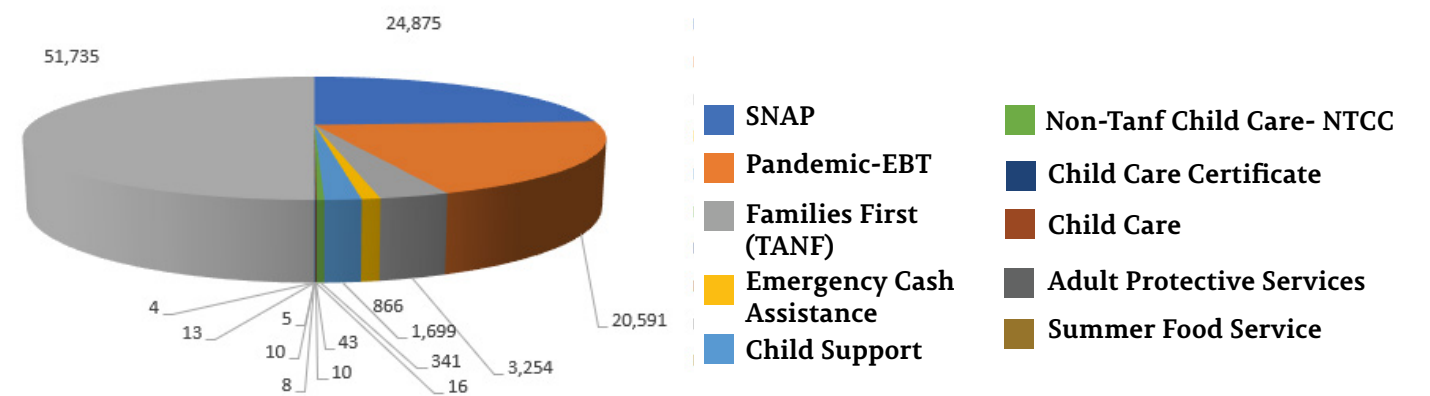
Appeals and Hearings handles appeals for many of the programs administered by the Tennessee Department of Human Services, including eligibility for SNAP, Families First, Child Support, Vocational Rehabilitation, and disaster/pandemic benefits.

Transformative Achievements and Customer Services Improvements

- **Agility in Meeting Customer Needs** | To respond to the immediate need of the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program, a disaster relief food program, the Appeals and Hearings division created an alternative account under SNAP in the division's ARTS case management program. Typically, a new food benefit program would warrant a separate program for case management. By creating a work around, the subdivision was able to process P-EBT appeals quickly without straining the ARTS case management system.

- **Updating Old Systems** | The subdivision is also in the process of replacing the ARTS case management system with a new system that will increase efficiency, reduce errors and decrease processing time.
- 25,733 Appeals processed covering 51,735 program issues

Program Issues Included in 2020/21 Processed Appeals



Office of Procurement

As a support arm for the Tennessee Department of Human Services, the Office of Procurement is dedicated to procuring or providing goods and services necessary for serving TDHS clients in an efficient, timely, professional, courteous, and fiscally responsible manner that is compliant with applicable law, rules, and policy. The office also manages mail handling, surplus property management, vehicle management, facilities management, and Emergency Response coordination. The Office is comprised of a non-professional services/commodity procurement sub-unit and professional services procurement sub-unit.

- **Keeping Contract Awards on Schedule** | This year, the Office of Procurement, set and met a goal to have the Departments goal of 98% of contracts awarded by July 1, 2021.
- **Awarding 318 Contracts** | The Department awarded 83 contracts for the State Fiscal Year in addition to 235 contracts that were awarded for the Federal Fiscal Year that started on October 1, 2020. These contracts ensured uninterrupted services for TDHS customers.
- **Staying Alert** | On March 3, 2020, the Department's Emergency Services Coordinator and Alternate Emergency Services Coordinators were activated to address the global pandemic by assisting with human needs requests sent to the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA). This year, the Coordinators remained active and vigilant to meet on going needs.

Facilities

The Facilities subdivision is responsible for facilitating the acquisition, maintenance, and disbursement of THDS properties and equipment.

- **Creating the "Model" Field Office** | As part of a continued commitment to providing innovative, impactful service to our customers, TDHS is improving Family Assistance field offices one facility transition at time. On April 30, 2021, TDHS expanded in Shelby County to open a second Family Assistance Office located at 4885 Stage Road in Memphis. This new "model" office demonstrates transformational vision for the future with a focus on innovative, life-changing service for customers and technological improvements such as self-help kiosks for customers to upload documents and a drive-up option for customers without a scheduled appointment. The office is also easily accessible via public transportation and strategically located near where our TDHS customers live. This office illustrates the TDHS vision for the future.
- **Transitioning Six Offices Across the State** | In addition to creating the "model" field office in Shelby County, TDHS successfully relocated the following offices into new and improved facilities or combined facilities to better serve our customers:
 - Sequatchie County Family Assistance Field Office - September 2020
 - Davidson County Family Assistance Field Office - October 2020
 - Hamblen County Vocational Rehabilitation Office - October 2020
 - Tennessee Rehabilitation Center Clarksville combined with the Montgomery County Family Assistance Field Office - October 2020
 - County Family Assistance Field Office - April 2021
 - Meigs County Family Assistance Field Office - May 2021

Budget

The Budget Unit is responsible for overall management of the Department's \$3.9 billion budget, including analysis and approval of contracts, personnel actions, and program initiatives having a financial impact. Alongside the development of the Department's annual State budget, the Budget Unit regularly monitors the Department's budgetary health and provides counsel to program and executive leadership on issues affecting the budget. In addition, the Budget Unit serves as the primary contact for administration and legislative requests for financial information and provides support to the Public Information and Legislative Office and legal staff on legislation impacting the Department, including fiscal note development.

Information Technology

The Information Technology Team is an extension of the Tennessee Department of Finance and Administration and includes the Strategic Technology Solutions (STS) Unit. It works to support TDHS staff and programs with technology systems, networks and related equipment to conduct business.

Transformative Achievements and Customer Service Improvements

This year, Information Technology successfully delivered two of the four major transformation projects, Vocational Rehabilitation and Child Support, as well as other smaller projects related to the overall Enterprise System Modernization (ESM) initiative.

Meeting the Challenge of COVID-19

- **Overseeing \$2 Billion in Aid** | As a response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Budget Unit was responsible for programming Federal relief funds into the state budget. As of June 30, 2021, TDHS has received more than \$2 billion in pandemic related relief funds that have directly benefited Tennesseans. TDHS programs receiving pandemic related funds include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Child Care Services, Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Summer Food Services Program (SFSP), Adult Protective Services (APS), and Tennessee Business Enterprises (TBE).
- **Coordinating with the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency** | Management and support of TDHS intensified critically during the COVID-19 pandemic. Continued interaction with the public was necessary to deliver programmatic services while maintaining adequate protection of both TDHS personnel and its customers. As such, TDHS personnel coordinated with Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) to acquire sanitization supplies including hand sanitizer, gloves, masks, and disinfecting wipes. A total of 659 shipments by June 30, 2021 along with pickup orders directly from the TEMA warehouse, helped maintain operations and continue service for Tennesseans served by TDHS.
- **Delivering \$295,629,099.81 in Benefits to 934,318 Students** | This year, TDHS continued the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Program (P-EBT), a federally funded COVID-19 relief program that provides food benefits to replace missed school meals. Similar to SNAP, this program uses electronic benefit cards to deliver benefits to qualifying households. Working with the Tennessee Department of Education, the IT Unit assisted in managing the successful delivery of P-EBT Round 2 (July-September 2020) and Round 3 (October 2020 - May 2021) funds to families across the state.

Quality Improvement and Strategic Solutions

The Quality Improvement and Strategic Solutions (QISS) subdivision provides oversight and direction to the Department's data analysis efforts, continuous quality improvement, and quality assurance.

Quality Improvement & Strategic Solutions Leadership

Gary Wilson

Assistant Commissioner

Jeffrey Hayes

Quality Management Director

John Preisel

Chief Data and Analytics Officer

Amanda McVay

Continuous Quality Improvement Director

Becoming a Tennessee Center for Performance Excellence Award Winner

In 2020, the Tennessee Department of Human Services became a first-time Level Two Tennessee Center for Performance Excellence (TNCPE) Award winner. The TNCPE Award is the state-level program utilizing the Baldrige Performance Excellence Framework. A Level Two award recognizes organizations that are starting to demonstrate commitment, deployment, implementation, and incorporation of performance metrics across services and programs utilizing the Baldrige Framework principles. The TNCPE process provides organizations with a detailed feedback report focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of key organizational and operational approaches and processes. The Baldrige Framework helps organizations improve their processes and results through a proven methodology based on program criteria: leadership, strategy, customers, measurements and analysis, operations, workforce, and results.

By utilizing the Baldrige Framework, TDHS is placing critical importance on continuous improvement across the agency. Performance excellence and quality achievement are integral components of the TDHS Mission and use of the Baldrige Framework as an organizational improvement tool, moves TDHS toward a transformational workplace culture shift focusing on identifying risks as opportunities, and gaps as avenues of achievement. The TNCPE Award is a shining example of TDHS's commitment to making a difference in the lives of the citizens we serve to help gain self-sufficiency through employment, education, and support services. Our efforts to revolutionize the customer experience by increased modernization efforts, principles from the Baldrige Framework and a focus on continuous process improvement will prepare the agency to seamlessly provide customer-centered solutions to our most valuable asset-our customers.

HR/TMLD

Abby Sparks

Assistant Commissioner

Delores Stokes

Director of Talent Management – Learning & Development

Amy Neufeld

Director of Human Resources

The Power of Human Resources, Talent Management – Learning & Development)

In Human Resources, Talent Management, and Learning & Development (HR/TMLD), the guiding principle is that TDHS employees are the most important resource and make the mission possible. To that end, HR/TMLD manages all processes impacting the work-life cycle of a TDHS employee. This includes focused support driven by agency strategy to ensure that TDHS has the ability to attract, recruit, select, develop, engage and retain staff.

Transformative Achievements and Customer Service Improvements

- **Health and Wellness Council** | Based on the demand for ongoing employee wellness opportunities, the Health & Wellness Council continued a weekly 10-minute fitness break and a Yoga For All break in conjunction with the Tennessee Department of Health and Tennessee Department of Education in 2021. Employees also participated in virtual activities provided by Working for a Healthier Tennessee. Over 100 employees participated in the 2021 DHS Mission Spirit and Health and Wellness virtual wellness week. TDHS leadership team members hosted daily virtual activities: Motivation Monday, Take a Walk Tuesday, Water Wednesday, Think Positive Thursday, and Foodie Friday. TDHS won three awards from Working for a Healthier TN in 2021. TDHS is the Working for a Healthier TN Division A winner in the areas of: Healthier Eating, Physical Activity, and Tobacco Cessation.
- **Alternative Workspace Solutions** | AWS participation increased during 2020-2021; As of August 2021, 82.30% of employees are working remotely in some capacity.
- **Staffing** | During SFY 2021, TDHS HR hired and onboarded 249 new employees, of this total, 57 were rehires to the state, and 314 existing employees received promotions. We assisted 60 employees to retire during 2021.
- **Child Care Re-Organization** | TDHS HR/TMLD assisted in the planning and implementation of a successful Child Care Services team reorganization to support their transformation goal of better quality of service to child care providers and families. Major accomplishments include:
 - Created new TDHS Licensing Consultant classification - reclassified and filled 122 positions
 - Upgraded Field Supervisor 1 classification to Field Supervisor 2 and reclassified and filled 20 positions
 - Created Customer Response Team – 2 Field Supervisor 1 and 10 Child Care Specialists

- Increased number of Field Supervisor 1's in the field by 4 including the 2 for the Customer Response team
- Increased number of Child Care Specialists from 39 to 63 total including the 10 for the Customer Response team
- **Learning and Development** | 5,096 employees and contractors completed learning sessions between July 1, 2020 and June 20, 2021. 465 courses were provided in virtual/web-ex, classroom, online (self-directed) formats. Virtual formats and facilitation continued to be enhanced to provide optimal outcomes for learners.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** | The TDHS Human Resources, Talent Management-Learning Development division launched a series of 40 Listening Sessions from November through December 2020 in which 282 employees attended sessions to discuss Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity at TDHS. A Diversity and Equity Council has been created with 22 Council Members and 56 Champions.
- **TDHS COVID-19 Response Team** | TDHS Human Resources in conjunction with PILO and OGC created a COVID-19 Response Team (CRT) to effectively manage all TDHS employee COVID-19 cases and exposures. The CRT created a centralized mailbox along with a system for communication, coordinated office cleanings, tracking system and review of all inquiries related to TDHS COVID-19 cases. To date, since the start of the pandemic, the CRT has triaged and provided guidance in 2,178 cases, exposures, or potential exposures.

The Power of Information (PILO)

The Public Information and Legislative Office (PILO) facilitates public, media, legislative, and customer requests. The communications team works to implement communications strategies that are supportive of the Department's mission and program needs. The office also focuses on legislative priorities for the Department, including the analysis of legislation affecting the Department, and representing the Department before the Tennessee General

Assembly. Finally, the customer service team collaborates across program lines and directly with customers to ensure timely, thorough, and compassionate customer service.

Transformative Achievements and Customer Service Improvements

Public Information & Legislative Office

Whitney Page

Chief of Staff

Marcia McShane

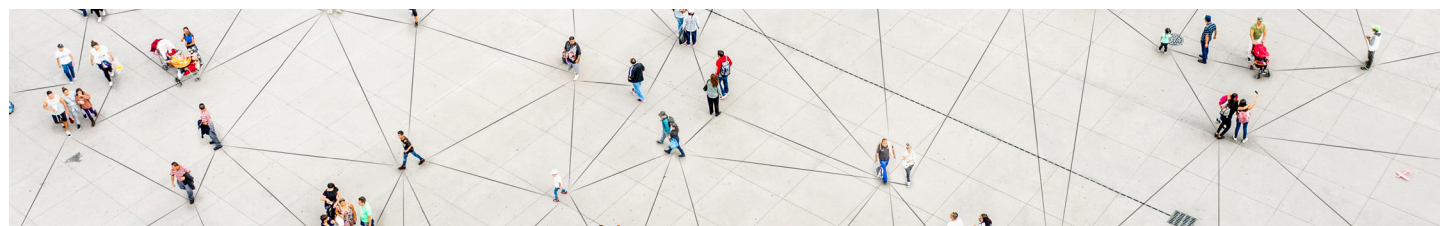
Assistant Commissioner

Devin Stone

Director of Communications

Pamela Fusting

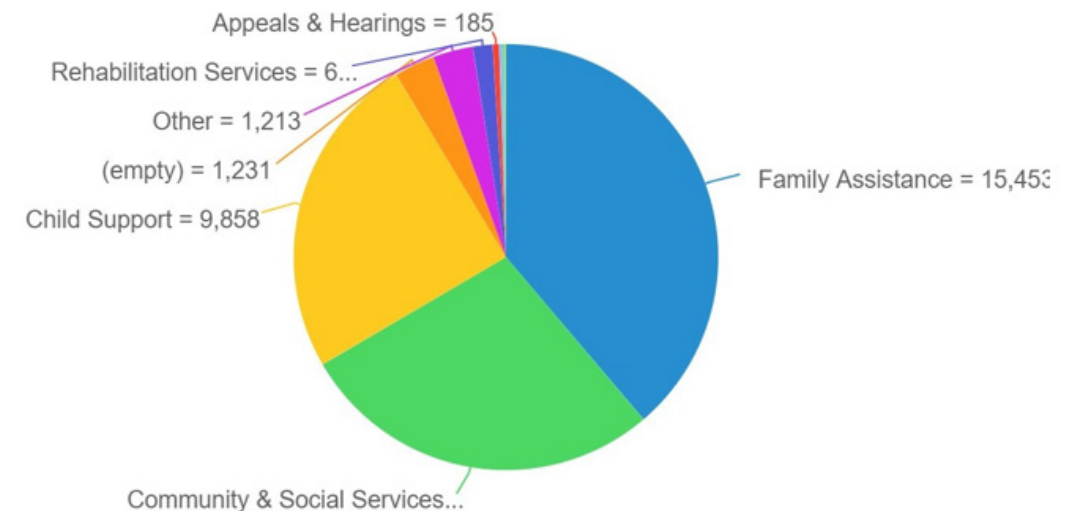
Director of Operations and Customer Experience



Customer Service

- **24/7 Customer Service** | The Public Information and Legislative Office (PILO) Customer Service Team worked with all TDHS divisions to develop additional content for its newly deployed chatbot AVA, now enabling AVA to respond to customer inquiries 24/7 about any program or service within the Department. TDHS saw a dramatic increase in the number of customer interactions online with AVA throughout SFY21. During that timeframe, AVA responded to **1.3** million user messages. Of that total, **49.6%** of the user conversations occurred outside of normal business operating hours, demonstrating the extended reach AVA provided the Department in responding quickly to customer needs. AVA is now available to answer customer questions on the TDHS public-facing website, the P-EBT School Portal, the P-EBT Parent Portal, and most recently, on the Department Facebook page through the messaging app.
- **P-EBT Customer Support** | As TDHS deployed its online P-EBT Parent Portal, allowing parents self-service options such as the ability to check eligibility information and verify or change a card mailing address, PILO launched a Customer Experience Survey on the portal to gauge customer perception and track feedback trends. The response was significant. More than forty thousand surveys were sent to portal visitors during its first month online. Based on a **14%** response rate, **90%** of the respondents reported a good or excellent overall experience using the Parent Portal. **92%** of the respondents indicated with good or excellent marks that the portal was easy to navigate, and **88.5%** found the information provided on the Parent Portal to be helpful. Qualitative feedback from open-ended comments also informed TDHS improvements post-launch, such as the added display of anticipated monthly P-EBT issuance dates to help customers better understand which benefits would be issued and when.

FY21 PILO Customer Service Inquiry Breakdown



- **Customer Service Inquiry Management** | PILO continued to refine its Customer Service inquiry management process in FY21, deploying several new enhancements to its Customer Service Management system to enable separate documentation and tracking of Child Care Certificate inquiries, Paternity Hotline calls, Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) questions, and more. In addition, PILO led development efforts to add a new customer table to its Customer Service Management System to allow the Child Support Division to utilize the tool while managing work with re-entry clients.

Communications

- **P-EBT Communication Support** | The Communications Team played a lead role in informing eligible families and the general public of the availability of P-EBT benefits throughout 2020 and 2021. Communication efforts included creation and distribution of press releases, the creation of a P-EBT website with regular updates based on changes in P-EBT eligibility and distribution dates, a multitude of social media posts (paid and organic) and replies to customer inquiries regarding the program, development of P-EBT flyers and distribution to partner organizations and school systems and much more. The Communications Team also helped coordinate informational webinars with local school systems and Public Service Announcements broadcasted on radio stations across the state.
- **Managing Communication to Department Partners** | In partnership with division subject matter experts, the Communications Team manages the distribution of newsletters and special announcements to hundreds of departmental partners via an email marketing system. The newsletters and special announcements are a vital communication tool to ensure partners have the latest information necessary to provide services in compliance with state and federal requirements, as well as opportunities to support their engagement with the Department and Tennesseans.
- **Maintaining Regular Communication Efforts** | Produced videos for various divisions; manage DHS websites both internal and external on a daily basis. Distributed press releases often to announce Department initiatives.

Legislative

- **Passage of the TANF Opportunity Act** | Members of the TDHS Legislative Team played a key role in educating legislators on the use of TANF funds, the TANF program and components necessary in building the TANF Opportunity Act, highlighted earlier in this report.
- **Representing the TDHS During Legislative Session** | The Legislative Team worked to educate members on legislation affecting the Department and worked with members to amend legislation, as needed.



Getty Images | Lover's Leap

A Brief History

of the Tennessee Development of the Department of Human Services

Tennessee has long been known as the “Volunteer State” for its willingness to step in when help is needed. Since its founding in 1796, state administrators have understood that we are stronger when our most vulnerable are supported.

For the first 31 years of the state’s life, the administration of “poor relief” was a responsibility of state counties and a court system that extended into the most remote sections of the state. In 1827, new legislation allowed counties to establish almshouses to provide for citizens who could not care for themselves due to disability or other factors. A century later in 1925, the Welfare Division was created under the state Department of Institutions to license child care institutions, maternity homes, jails, workhouses, and almshouses. The organization was also responsible for organizing county welfare committees.

The Great Depression saw a larger number of Americans in need of assistance and the state utilized a Federal Reconstruction Finance Corporation loan to assist Tennessee families. This support was continued through the 1933 Federal Emergency Relief Act that established the Tennessee State Relief Administration (TSRA), an organization that later transitioned to become the Tennessee Welfare Commission before morphing into the Department of Institutions and Public Welfare in 1937 and subsequently, the Department of Public Welfare in 1939.

In May 1975, the agency’s name again changed to the Department of Human Services. Over the next forty years, the Department’s services grew to include child support programs in 1977, Rehabilitation Services in 1983 and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families in 1996.

Today, the Department encompasses an extensive number of divisions all aimed at one purpose: building strong families by connecting Tennesseans to employment, education and support services.



505 Deaderick Street, Nashville, TN 37243-1403

