



# The Advocate

Vol. 13 No. 3

A newsletter on children's issues

October 2003

## Tennessee Literacy Programs Help Families Read

The family that reads together succeeds together.

That might be the motto for Tennessee's Family Literacy Programs. These programs aim to break the cycle of low literacy skills and poverty. They focus on the family as a unit and serve both children and parents. Programs work to create a setting and family conditions to support development and learning by children within the family context.

The relationship between parental education and the success of their children has been established by national statistics. Students' reading scores go up as the level of home literacy efforts increase, according to an early childhood longitudinal study by the U.S. Department of Education. Literacy efforts measured included:

- ✎ Number of times parents read to, sung to, and told stories to children;
- ✎ Number of children's books and children's audio materials (records, audiotapes, and CDs) contained in the home.

The average reading score for poor children living in homes without any literacy efforts was 19, but for those exposed to all efforts on the scale, the score was 21. Nonpoor children in homes with no literacy efforts scored 19, but those exposed to all efforts scored 26.

Fall kindergarten reading scores for children of parents with less than a high school education were 17.3 compared to scores of 28.3 for children whose parents had graduate or professional degrees. The highly

educated parents had a average of 3.7 on the 5-point home literacy index, but the parents who had not completed high school had an average of 2.1 on the scale.

Research demonstrates the effect of literacy activities in the home: children who are read to three or more times a week are nearly twice as likely as others to show three or more skills associated with literacy competency.

The level of parental education affects children's access to education and persistence to attain higher educational goals. Children whose parents dropped out of school are twice as likely to drop out as children whose parents have some college. High school students whose parents did not go to college have lower educational aspirations and are less likely to complete a degree.



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## Family Literacy

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Efforts to improve family literacy have shown some success. Nationally, the percentages of children ages 3 to 5 who participated in home literacy activities with a family member three times a week went up between 1993 and 2001. This included increases in the percentages of children read to; told stories; taught letters, words, or numbers; and taught music or songs across all races, income levels, family types, and incomes. The percentage of children read to frequently by a family member, as reported in the National Household Education Survey in 2001, went up to 84 percent. The percentage for nonpoor children was 87 percent compared to 74 percent for poor children.

### Family Literacy

Family literacy programs have a number of goals:

- ✎ Breaking the intergenerational cycle of low literacy skills and poverty;
- ✎ Focusing on the family as the unit of service, including both children and parents;
- ✎ Creating community-based collaborations;
- ✎ Building solid community relationships to support families;
- ✎ Serving families with special needs, including those for whom English is not their native language, migrant families, and others.

Not only do efforts to educate parents help them to improve their incomes and ability to care for their families, but enhancing parents' skills will lead parents to help children set higher educational goals. The National Center for Family Literacy reported that children in family literacy programs made gains in developmental areas (language and literacy, creativity, social relations, and initiative) that are three times

greater than would be expected as a result of normal maturation.

A significant part of the family literacy effort is teaching parents how to educate their children and to be full partners in their children's education. Researchers have found that, contrary to the opinions of many educators and policymakers, low-income families value education more highly than do middle-income families. They may be hampered from helping their children gain the most from schools by their lack of educational experience and lack of positive experiences with education.



Family literacy activities provide a context for positive interactions between children and parents. For example, research has found that children who were more fluent and positive about reading came from parents who viewed reading as fun, kept stories moving, and encouraged questions and humor while reading. Some studies found that low-income parents were less likely to use reading and telling stories as entertainment and opportunities for conversation and were

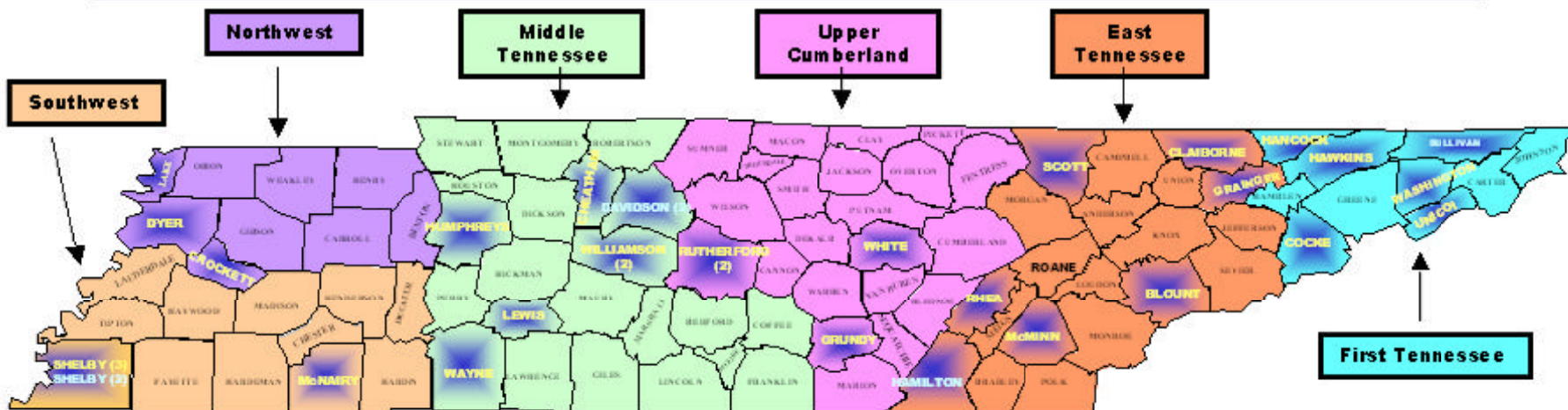
more likely to emphasize work and practice aspects of reading readiness. The young child who sees reading as entertainment is more likely to independently seek out more opportunities to enjoy it.

### Family Literacy in Tennessee

Tennessee Family Literacy programs include 27 Even Start Family Literacy Projects in 24 counties and six One-Room Drop-In School programs in four counties

Continued on Page 4.

# Tennessee Department of Education Family Literacy Programs Even Start & One-Room Drop-In Schools, 2003-2004



**Southwest**

**Even Start**  
McNairy  
Shelby (1)  
Memphis (2)

**ORDIS**  
Shelby (2)

**Northwest**

**Even Start**  
Crockett  
Dyer  
Lake

**Middle Tennessee**

**Even Start**  
Cheatham  
Humphreys  
Lewis  
Wayne  
Williamson (1)  
Franklin SSD (1)

**ORDIS**  
Davidson (2)

**Upper Cumberland**

**Even Start**  
Grundy  
Rutherford  
Murfreesboro (2)  
White

**East Tennessee**

**Even Start**  
Blount  
Claiborne  
Grainger  
Athens-McMinn  
Rhea  
Scott

**ORDIS**  
Hamilton

**First Tennessee**

**Even Start**  
Cocke  
Newport City  
Hancock  
Hawkins  
Unicoi  
Washington

**ORDIS**  
Sullivan

10/22/2003



## Family Literacy

Continued from Page 2.  
(see map on page 3). Head Start programs are also considered family literacy programs.

### Even Start

Even Start Programs are aimed at families at risk because of poverty, educational disadvantages, low English proficiency, disability, teen pregnancy, or homelessness. To be eligible, a family must have:

- ✎ At least one child who is younger than age 8;
- ✎ A primary caregiver who does not have a high school diploma or is not proficient in English.

Even Start program activities must include:

- ✎ Interactive literacy activities (Parent and Child Together or PACT) between parents and children;
- ✎ Training for parents about how to be the primary teachers for their children and to be full partners in the education of their children (Some research reports that a significantly large proportion of parents who enroll in family literacy programs show little initial understanding of their roles as parents, and especially the role of teacher.);
- ✎ Parent literacy training to lead to economic self-sufficiency; and

### Poverty and Illiteracy in Tennessee

In Tennessee, 19 percent of children under 18 live in poverty. The number of very young children in the state who live in poverty is 26 percent. Out of a typical group of 20 children who live in poverty and do not receive quality early childhood education:

- ✎ 11 will repeat one or more grades;
- ✎ 9 will need special education because their IQ is less than 85;
- ✎ 7 will commit five or more crimes and will require incarceration;
- ✎ 16 will not have the skills required for post-secondary education;
- ✎ 11 will not graduate from high school.

Source: Tennessee Dept. of Education



- ✎ An age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.

Nationally, approximately 800 Even Start sites serve about 1 million parents and children.

### One-Room Drop-In Schools

Tennessee has six One-Room Drop-In Schools (ORDIS) in housing projects in four counties; two in Nashville, two in Memphis, and one in Chattanooga and Kingsport. They are open 11 months a year and provide a licensed teacher, computer technology, and other resources. The schools include:

- ✎ After-school and summer homework help and enrichment for children in kindergarten through grade 12;
- ✎ Adult Literacy, Adult Basic Education, and GED preparation for adults and school drop-outs; and
- ✎ Drug and alcohol abuse prevention and education.

Other activities and resources include SAT and ACT preparation, job skills training and counseling, lending libraries, long-term suspension supervision, community education, tax preparation help, emergency referrals to social services, community liaison services, and neighborhood “drop-in” assistance.

Program guidelines include having a flexible schedule that works for families and creating an advisory council. The council should include residents, housing authority administrators, educators, civic and business leaders, and media representatives. The ORDIS programs work with the housing project’s residents’ association and link to local schools.

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## Family Literacy

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Family literacy programs in Tennessee are part of the Tennessee Family Literacy Consortium. The Consortium includes state and private colleges and universities, state educational agencies, adult literacy programs, nonprofit agencies, and local education agencies. The Consortium provides support for practitioners.






Somerville Elementary School is an example of local family literacy programs. Activities include focusing on reading instruction, education for all educators on how children read, providing access to appropriate reading material, after-school tutoring, and a summer program bridging the kindergarten and the first grade. The program also invites parents to four meetings per year to educate them on teaching their children and help them become more familiar with the school and learning activities.

The Claiborne County program includes circulating boxes of resources for child-care providers and quarterly meetings with child-care providers to teach them how to model reading. The Family Literacy Council meets quarterly with the Early Childhood Council.



### Literacy Research

Correlational findings on family literacy are:





-  Reading material in the home is related to reading performance.
-  Education levels of parents are related to a child's later academic success.
-  The amount of time parents spend reading to their children is related to the later academic performance of those children.
-  The amount of time that children spend watching TV is related negatively to reading and academic performance.
-  Children of single-parent families perform less well than children from two-parent families.

### Motheread/Fatheread Tennessee

In addition to the program offered through the Tennessee Department of Education, Humanities Tennessee offers the Motheread/Fatheread program. The focus of the program is on increasing literacy skills and also improving family communication and promoting reading and story sharing in the home. A Motheread parent course involves a group of mothers who gather once a week in a comfortable environment, such as a library, community center, or shelter. The classes meet for two-hour sessions for 8-12 weeks. Parents read aloud together books chosen from a list of 100 multicultural books, then participate in discussions and activities that relate the book's story to their own lives. Thirty-eight agencies across the state participate in the program. The motto of the program is "The Power of the Story, the Power of the Heart." Activities in the Northeast region are supported by the Northeast Council on Children and Youth.

### Parent-Child Interactions Associated with Literacy Success

Research has defined the nature of interactions between parents and children that lead to the children showing improved literacy skill. They include:

-  Parental reading to and with children;
-  Complexity of language and strategy used between parents and children;
-  Parental conceptions of the roles of education and literacy; and
-  Literacy modeling and support present in the home environment.

# Lessons Learned from Successful Family Literacy Programs

## Recruitment

Targeted active recruitment activities are needed to bring in participants. “ ‘Build it and they will come’ won’t usually work.”

- ✍ Positive word-of-mouth resulting from a program that met and expanded learners’ goals is the most effective recruitment strategy.

Other useful recruitment techniques include outreach by respected community organizations (churches, etc.) and food-related events (breakfasts, lunches, snacks, or potluck dinners).

## Retention

- ✍ Successful programs with high retention rates provide services, such as transportation, meals, quality child care, counseling, home visits by teachers, social workers, and peer support groups.

Program needs assessments provide frameworks that participants view as useful to them and their children. Valuing learner input and regularly recognizing participant achievements builds attendance rates.

Parents’ commitments to literacy programs improve with the realization they are meeting their own goals and those of their children.



Social events and interaction among fellow learners and staff provide a strong support system and became, in effect, an extended family.

Celebrating small victories bolsters self-esteem and retention.

## Program Quality

Effective programs include pre- and post-testing, specified goals and objectives, and opportunities for learners to achieve their goals. Research-based curricula with topics that are important to learners are the most successful. Because families bring varying reading levels, curricula have to be tailored to meet individual needs.

Introducing family members to the public library and helping them get library cards is important. However, family members must begin to own books, books they take home and keep.

Some programs bring families into a computer lab so parents and children together can learn a skill they see as important.

Successful programs have staff with expertise in early childhood and adult education as well as access to counselors, social workers, community liaison people, and other volunteers.

**Continued on Page 8.**

Children whose mothers complete high school earn higher scores on national achievement tests and perform better in school than those whose mothers did not graduate from high school

Kindergarten students whose mothers have more education are more likely to score in the highest quartile in reading, mathematics, and general knowledge.

**Source: National Center for Family Literacy**

## How Brain Function is Stimulated by Reading Ritual

- 1. Create a Bedtime Reading Zone!** Read in your child's bedroom where he/she is surrounded by his/her favorite things, a blanket, stuffed toy, or nightlight.  
**Stimulates Multi-Sensory Brain Development.** Being in a familiar place stimulates all the senses at once, making the experience pleasurable and memorable, creating positive associations with reading (e.g., the child can smell his/her favorite blanket, see his/her night-light, and feel his/her favorite toy by his/her side).
- 2. Get Close!** To provide your child with a feeling of security, have him/her sit close to you or on your lap.  
**Reduces Secretion of Cortisol to the Brain.** When a child feels insecure, a hormone called cortisol that interferes with learning is secreted as a defense mechanism. Creating a warm, close bond during bedtime reading reduces the secretion of cortisol.
- 3. Find Your Child's Pace!** Start with short reading sessions and gradually build up to longer sessions as his/her attention span expands.  
**Increases Zone of Proximal Development.** This "zone" is the distance between what the child learns independently and what is learned with assistance. By building up reading time gradually, you are helping to prepare his/her brain to do tomorrow independently what he/she is doing with assistance today.
- 4. Act Out!** Create variations in your voice while reading the story and acting out the characters.  
**Stimulates Auditory Perception Development.** This makes the story more interesting and more fun; it also helps your child develop critical listening skills.
- 5. Read with your EYES and your FINGERS!** Run your finger under the words as you read the author's name, title, key words, and phrases.  
**Trains Left-to-Right Eye Progression.** In Western cultures, we read from left to right. Running fingers under the text helps train a child's eyes to automatically follow words and symbols from left to right.  
**Stimulates Phonemic Awareness:** Foster the understanding that speech is made up of different individual words and sounds. Hearing sounds in words is one of the first steps when learning to read.
- 6. Be Repetitive!** Read favorite books more than once. In fact, read them often.  
**Organizes High Order Thinking.** When a child reads a book over and over, he/she can learn to eventually predict the outcomes, draw upon prior knowledge, and learn how to recognize sequences.  
**Background Knowledge Development.** Helps build memory function by acquiring and storing information.
- 7. Make a Point!** Point out pictures, shapes, colors, and page numbers, sounding them out as you read.  
**Visual Perception Development.** Develops an understanding of printed material. Sometimes referred to as "print awareness."
- 8. Word Power!** Enunciate your words; however, try to speak as normally as possible while reading aloud. Make sure to pay close attention to grammar, as your child is paying close attention to you.  
**Initiates Oral Language Development.** When a child listens to a parent read, he/she is listening to spoken language, a process that can help with his/her own ability to express thoughts, learn correct grammar, and communicate clearly using proper syntax.
- 9. Share and Compare!** Make comparisons as you read. For example, ask "Which tree is taller?" or create comparisons that relate to real life. "You have blonde hair. What color hair does Goldilocks have?"  
**Encourages Analytical Thinking.** Comparing and contrasting helps children create associations and find meaning in these associations.
- 10. Play a Game!** When you complete a story, play a game whereby you ask the child what happened at the beginning, middle, and end.  
**Encourages Higher Order Thinking.** When you create a game like this, you are stimulating higher order thinking because he/she has to dissect the story and tell you in his/her words what happened at the different points in the story. This may be difficult at first, but soon he/she will learn how to process information in these different categories. Listening and reading comprehension skills are also enhanced. 📖

Source: National Center for Family Literacy

## Lessons Learned

Continued from Page 5.

Teachers who hold high standards for learners and demonstrate sensitivity to the cultures of the participants, creativity, initiative, and commitment are necessary for successful programs. Strong family literacy programs have ongoing staff development and staff with “the ability to accept others as they are and to treat them as they are capable of becoming.”

### Evaluation

A good evaluation plan with regular assessments of progress strengthens learners confidence by recognition of success, as well as the quality of the overall program.

Good program evaluation usually includes both quantitative and qualitative measures, i.e. standardized tests, staff observations, and student self-assessment.

Including family literacy programs in a broader effort designed to attack problems such as homelessness, welfare dependency, or joblessness can also establish it as key to the future of the community. ❏



Source: Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy

## Resources

Tennessee Family Literacy Programs, 710 James Robertson Parkway, 7<sup>th</sup> Fl., Nashville, TN 37243, (615) 532-2717, <http://www.state.tn.us/education/sp/spevenstarhome.htm>.

The Condition of Education 2003, NCES 2003-067, Washington, DC, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2003067>.

Tennessee Family Literacy Consortium, <http://cls.coe.utk.edu/tnfamilit/>.

National Center for Family Literacy, 325 W. Main St, Ste. 300, Louisville, KY 40202-4237, (502) 584-1133, [www.familit.org](http://www.familit.org).

Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, [www.barbarabushfoundation.com](http://www.barbarabushfoundation.com).

### Help TennHelp Help Families

The Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services and the Tennessee chapter of National Association of Social Workers are collaborating on an online directory for individuals and professionals.

TennHelp.com is a statewide, web-based database of social service resources, which will be available in early 2004. The directory will be a statewide listing of services families and children need to help support strong healthy families. It will include nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and governmental organizations. Services must be accessible to the public and have a permanent location. ❏

## Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth Regional Coordinators

### Northeast Tennessee Council

Diane Wise  
1233 Southwest Ave., Extension  
Johnson City, TN 37604  
(423) 979-3200 ext 105  
[Diane.Wise@state.tn.us](mailto:Diane.Wise@state.tn.us)

### East Tennessee Council

Robert Smith  
531 Henley St., 7th Floor  
Knoxville, TN 37902  
(423) 594-6658  
[Robert.E.Smith@state.tn.us](mailto:Robert.E.Smith@state.tn.us)

### Southeast Tennessee Council

Marilyn Davis  
540 McCallie Ave., Suite 643  
Chattanooga, TN 37402  
(423) 634-6210  
[Marilyn.Davis@state.tn.us](mailto:Marilyn.Davis@state.tn.us)

### Upper Cumberland Council

Kathy Daniels  
1000 Neal Street  
Cookeville, TN 38501  
(931) 520-4445  
[Kathy.Daniels@state.tn.us](mailto:Kathy.Daniels@state.tn.us)

### Mid-Cumberland Council

Jo Stanley  
710 James Robertson Parkway, 9th Floor  
Nashville, TN 37243-0800  
(615) 532-1579  
[Jo.Stanley@state.tn.us](mailto:Jo.Stanley@state.tn.us)

### South Central Tennessee Council

Elaine Williams  
Post Office Box 397  
Columbia, TN 38402-0397  
(931) 388-1053  
[Elaine.Williams@state.tn.us](mailto:Elaine.Williams@state.tn.us)

### Northwest Tennessee Council

Dana Cobb  
P. O. Box 586  
Huntingdon, TN 38344  
(731) 986-4243  
[Dana.Cobb@state.tn.us](mailto:Dana.Cobb@state.tn.us)

### Southwest Tennessee Council

Rodger Jowers  
225 Dr. Martin Luther King Drive  
Jackson, TN 38301  
(731) 423-6545  
[Rodger.Jowers@state.tn.us](mailto:Rodger.Jowers@state.tn.us)

### Memphis/Shelby County Council

Gwendolyn Glenn  
170 N. Main St., 9th Floor  
Memphis, TN 38103  
(901) 543-7657  
[Gwendolyn.Glenn@state.tn.us](mailto:Gwendolyn.Glenn@state.tn.us)



# Meetings and Events

## Council Activities

For updated information on Regional Council activities, contact the regional coordinators listed on page 7.

### Mid-Cumberland

Monthly meetings are held in counties in the region.

### Northeast

- Oct. 27, Parenting Training for the Trainer, Carter County Health Dept.
- Nov. 14, Risky Behaviors in Pre-Teens/Teens Seminar, tba.
- Dec. 5, Quarterly Council Meeting, DOH on STDs, Kingsport Library.

### Northwest

- Nov. 7, Gangs, Methamphetamines & Abuse, Boling University Center, Rm. 206, U.T. Martin, 8:15 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

### Southeast

- Hiwassee Council meeting, Court Appearances, Bradley County Commission Room Courthouse, Cleveland, 1 p.m.
- Nov. 5, SE Council meeting, Methamphetamines, Diagnostic



**The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth**  
Cindy Durham, Chair  
Gallatin

Angi Agle  
Oak Ridge

Trudy Hughes  
Maryville

Betty Anderson  
Covington

Drew Johnson  
Johnson City

Joe Askins  
Fayetteville

Jim Kidd  
Fayetteville

Natasha Blackshear  
Nashville

Mary Lee  
Dickson

P. Larry Boyd  
Rogersville

Christy Little  
Jackson

Murray Butler  
Henderson

Jerry Maness  
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Beverly Cosley  
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Sharon T. Massey  
Clarksville

Tabitha Dean  
Cordova

Linda Miller  
Memphis

James B. Ford  
Franklin

Susie Mitchell  
Johnson City

Susan Glassman  
Germantown

Marie Mobley  
Goodlettsville

Tim Goldsmith  
Memphis

Joetta Yarbro  
Dyersburg

Johnny Horne  
Chattanooga

Linda O'Neal  
Executive Director

Center, Chattanooga, 11:30 p.m.

### Southwest

- Nov. 7, Communities Caring for Every Child's Mental Health," Dept. of Transportation Auditorium, Jackson, 8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.

### Upper Cumberland

- Oct. 24, Annual Networking Conference, Nashville Community College, Cookeville.
- Nov. 14, Methamphetamine Abuse Training, Nashville Community College, Cookeville.
- Dec. 5, Legislative Breakfast, tba.

### Commission Meeting

Feb. 26-27, tba.

### CPORT Schedule

- Oct. 6-10, Knox County. Exit Conference: October 23, 10:30 a.m.
- Nov. 3-7, South Central Region

### DMC Task Force Meeting

Feb. 10, 2004, DMC Task Force Meeting, Andrew Johnson Tower. Contact Ron King at (615) 532-1581.

### Special Events

#### TCSW Regional Training Conferences

- Oct. 24, North East Region, Holiday Inn, Johnson City. Contact (423) 547-5814 or [diane.sells@state.tn.us](mailto:diane.sells@state.tn.us).
- Oct. 28, Middle Region, location tba, Nashville. Contact (615) 741-2633 or [richard.kennedy@state.tn.us](mailto:richard.kennedy@state.tn.us).
- Nov. 5, West Region, Miracle Temple Ministries, Memphis. Contact (901) 577-2500 ext. 150, [SSmith@porter-leath.org](mailto:SSmith@porter-leath.org).
- Nov. 12, South East Region, Chattanooga Trade/Convention Center. Contact Bo Walker at 865-637-1753 or email 423-655-2822 or email [bwalker@partnershipfca.com](mailto:bwalker@partnershipfca.com).

#### State Events

Nov. 2 - 3, Conference on Youth, Embassy Suites, Cool Springs. Contact

(toll-free) (866) 355-9315 or [www.mccsa.com](http://www.mccsa.com).

- Oct. 16, Community Response to Family Violence, King Building, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Chattanooga, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Co-sponsored by the SCCY. Contact (423) 875-0120 or [cboatwright@comcast.net](mailto:cboatwright@comcast.net).
  - Oct. 16, "How to Negotiate with Vendors and Suppliers," Clarion Hotel in Memphis, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Contact (800) 873-7545, (913) 677-3200, or [www.skillpath.com](http://www.skillpath.com).
  - Oct. 23-24, Hospice of Chattanooga, Inc. presents "Vision for the Future Conference 2003," Chattanooga Marriott, Chattanooga Convention Center, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Contact (423) 892-4289 ext. 150, (800) 267-6828 ext. 150 or [www.hospiceofchattanooga.org](http://www.hospiceofchattanooga.org).
  - Oct. 23, CASA "Sexual Safety in Foster Care." Brentwood United Methodist Church, Nashville, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. For more information contact (615) 242-8884 or [www.tncasa.org](http://www.tncasa.org).
  - Oct. 29, Mid-Cumberland Regional Suicide Prevention Network, Nashville, 1:00 p.m. Contact (615) 400-0466 or [ccfincorp@aol.com](mailto:ccfincorp@aol.com).
  - Oct. 30, Rural West Regional Suicide Prevention Network, Union University, Jackson, 1:00 p.m. Contact (731) 661-5397 or [mope@uu.edu](mailto:mope@uu.edu).
  - Nov. 2-3, Tennessee's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference on Youth, Embassy Suites, Cool Springs. Contact (866) 355-9315 (toll free) or [www.mccsa.com](http://www.mccsa.com).
  - Nov. 5, South East TN Regional Suicide Prevention Network. Contact T(423) 421-8363 or [tatumtim@hotmail.com](mailto:tatumtim@hotmail.com).
  - Nov. 17-19, Rural Health Assn. Of TN 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference," Contact (615) 309-7567 or [www.rhat.org](http://www.rhat.org).
- For more updated information on TCCY and child advocacy events, see the TCCY Web Events Calendar at [www.state.tn.us/tccy/events.html](http://www.state.tn.us/tccy/events.html).**

**Commission on Children & Youth**  
**Andrew Johnson Tower, Ninth Floor**  
**710 James Robertson Pkwy.**  
**Nashville, TN 37243-0800**  
**(615) 741-2633**



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