



# Advocate

August 2015

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## Bullying/School Starts

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**Students who are loved  
at home,  
come to school to learn,  
and students who aren't,  
come to school  
to be loved.**

Nicholas Ferroni

## School Starts

School's out for the summer, was the joyous refrain of a 70s rock song, but Alice Cooper is old enough to collect Social Security, and school is now in for the last of summer.

Children going back to school and educators face many challenges their grandparents did not. Schools exist to assure children develop the knowledge and skills to be successful in the world. The state needs to support good principals and teachers to educate children, but awareness of the burdens children arrive at schools with is important for schools to achieve their goals.

## School Safety and Bullying

Safety is a basic need, necessary for children to be able to learn. Tennessee law requires schools to have anti-bullying and harassment policies. The Tennessee Department of Education (DOE) lists recommendations for parents and resources for educators to help protect students from lifelong trauma.

Four groups of students are involved in bullying: victims, bullies, bullies/victims and bystanders. According to the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network, all four groups are at increased risk of mental disorders in adulthood. The group at highest risk were students who both were bullied and bullied others.

The largest group of students affected by bullying are bystanders. DOE recommends parents:

- Encourage children to report incidents of bullying they observe immediately to school officials;
- Have children support the victim by including him or her in social activities.

Resources on bullying:

- STARS Nashville: Students Taking a Right Stand, <http://bit.ly/1fIPZDb>.
- Tennessee Department of Education, Bullying and Harassment, <http://1.usa.gov/1SLGW0x>.
- Pacer's National Bullying Prevention Center, <http://bit.ly/1JwnZi8>.
- Stop Bullying Now: <http://1.usa.gov/1Jwrvt9>.

## Anti-Bullying Policies

Tennessee law requires school systems to have policies prohibiting harassment, intimidation, bullying or cyberbullying. Policies should include a definition of the problem, statement of consequences, procedures for investigation and plan for publicizing the policy.

Legislation passed in 2012 required school systems to annually submit the number of bullying incidents during the school year. In school year 2013-14, more than 10,000 cases of school bullying were reported. Investigation determined bullying occurred in more than two-thirds (69 percent) of the reports.

A recent report on national anti-bullying policies found that in 2011, 110 (81 percent) of the state's schools districts had anti-bullying policies. Nationally, nearly three of every 10 systems did not have anti-bullying process. The report credited Tennessee with providing model policies or guidelines for use by school systems. Tennessee's law does not specify protected categories of students, even though some groups are much more likely to be bullied than others. According to the state report, a specific category was identified in only a fourth of the cases. Of these, the largest number, 1,329, involved sex- or gender-based discrimination; 665 involved electronic technology (cyberbullying); 326 involved race, color or national origin; and 188, disability. Nationwide, fewer than half of local school systems with policies specifically listed perceived or actual sexual orientation as a protected category.

Having a school anti-bullying curriculum results in a 25 percent reduction in bullying.

- TDOE, *Bullying and Harassment Compliance Report*, <http://1.usa.gov/119KjK2>
- TDOE, *Sample Bullying and Harassment Policy*, <http://1.usa.gov/1SNE6bG>.
- GLSEN, *From Statehouse to Schoolhouse: Anti-Bullying Policy Efforts in U.S. States and School Districts*, <http://bit.ly/119Jzoq>.

## Coordinated School Health

Tennessee legislation authorizes local education agencies to implement coordinated school health programs for their schools. This legislation also required schools to integrate 90 minutes of physical activity per week into their instructional programs. Nearly every aspect of the school and its activities may be involved in the coordinated school health program: nutrition, health education, healthy school environments, staff wellness, counseling and guidance, etc.

- TDOC, *Coordinated School Health*," <http://1.usa.gov/1KzP9X8>.
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Coordinated School Health*, <http://1.usa.gov/1Aksq97>.

## Soup's On

Beginning in the 2014-15 school year, all schools with more than 40 percent of students with family incomes qualifying them for free lunch could provide subsidized meals to all students under the Community Eligibility Program. Tennessee was reported as having high participation in the first year of its program. According to a report by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), in school year 2014-15, more than half (55 percent) of eligible school districts participated in the program, and 72 percent of eligible schools provided meals to more than 400,000 children.

School meal participants are less likely to have nutritional deficiencies and more likely to eat fruits, vegetables and milk, according to research. The program encourages participation, eases administrative burdens and provides for children who may lack access to healthy food for reasons – busy lifestyles, parental stress, etc. – other than income.

In 2012, Knoxville schools began to offer universal school breakfast in classroom, which was funded by the Walmart Foundation. Although 45 percent of students were eligible for school breakfast, only a quarter of the student body participated. Gathering students in the classroom to eat breakfast together starts the day with a communal meal and assures students do not have to struggle with hunger as they attempt to attack math, etc. A wealth of research supports the contribution of a healthy school breakfast to students' abilities to learn and behave in school.

- TDOE, *Community Eligibility Provision*, <http://1.usa.gov/1LZHstG>.
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *Take Up of Community Eligibility This School Year*, Feb. 25, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1INTdTm>.
- Food Research and Action Center, *Journal of Poverty Law and Policy*, "Universal Free School Meals: Ensuring that All Children Are Able to Learn," <http://bit.ly/1VO2MFp>.

## State KIDS COUNT Progress Continues



The Annie E. Casey Foundation 2015 KIDS COUNT® Data Book released July 21 shows Tennessee ranks 36th in the country for child well-being, the same as in 2014.

The KIDS COUNT Data Book ranks child well-being across four domains with Tennessee ranking 38th in Economic Well-Being, 36th in Education, 30th in Health, and 37th in Family and Community. The state improved or remained the same on 11 of 16

measures, while conditions worsened on five indicators.

A bright spot for the state was its ranking of 20th in the Education indicator of high school students graduating on time.

“Good public policies improve outcomes for Tennessee children,” said Linda O’Neal, executive director of the state’s KIDS COUNT® affiliate, the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. “Requiring children to stay in school until age 18 improves high school graduation rates and the percent of children who live in families where the household head has a high school diploma, both indicators where Tennessee scored better than the national average.”

There is also good news related to Health, where the state achieved its highest domain ranking at 30th. Tennessee is tied with 15 other states for the lowest percentage of teens who abuse alcohol or drugs, a tribute to prevention efforts across the state, yet too many adolescents in the state are still struggling with addiction issues.

- Annie E. Casey Foundation, [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).
- Annie E. Casey Foundation, *2015 National KIDS COUNT Data Book*, <http://bit.ly/1exoUCf>.

## Medicaid is 50

Medicaid, known in Tennessee as TennCare, is 50 years old, as is its partner, the health insurance program for the elderly, Medicare. More than 726,000 Tennessee children, 42 percent of all Tennessee children, were served by TennCare in 2013, meaning they had access to care to quickly address problems and prevent long-term disability. Built into the program, now called TennCare Kids, is a regular schedule of healthy child checkups, including dental checkups. In 2014, about half of all births in Tennessee were covered by TennCare, helping assure children entered the world healthy.

- TennCare Information: <http://www.tn.gov/tenncare/>.
- The (Nashville) Tennessean, “At 50, Medicare, Medicaid still confuse, divide,” <http://tnne.ws/1LT3VXE>.

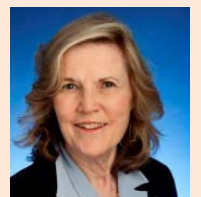
## Updates



TCCY welcomes Russette Sloan (at left) as its newest employee. Sloan is an executive administrative assistant and is the face at TCCY’s front desk and frequently the voice answering TCCY’s phone. Prior to coming to TCCY, she was a customer service representative with Hunter Insurance and Financial Services in Mt. Juliet. She has four children.

On June 18, TCCY’s Youth Transitions Advisory Council and the Council on Children’s Mental Health held a combined meeting to increase understanding of the shared goals and interests and collaboration among the stakeholders in each group. For more information, contact [Steve.Petty@tn.gov](mailto:Steve.Petty@tn.gov) or [Melissa.McGee@tn.gov](mailto:Melissa.McGee@tn.gov).

TCCY congratulates new Department of Children’s Services Commissioner Bonnie Hommrich, at right, and looks forward to working with her to improve the lives of children and the community. TCCY looks forward to continuing to work with former Commissioner Jim Henry as he transitions to his new role as Gov. Bill Haslam’s chief of staff.



## Mark Your Calendar

- Aug. 2-5, **32nd Joint Conference on Juvenile Justice (TJCSA)**, hosted by the Hamilton County Juvenile Court at the [Chattanooga Marriott Downtown](#) & [Convention Center](#).
- Aug. 12, 12:30 p.m.-3 p.m., **Youth Transitions Advisory Council** meeting, Goodwill Industries, 937 Herman St., Nashville. Contact (615) 532-1685 or [Steve.Petty@tn.gov](mailto:Steve.Petty@tn.gov).
- Aug. 14, 8 a.m.-3:45 p.m. CDT, **TCSW Summer Spritzer-Nashville**, Goodwill Career Solutions Lifsey Training Center, 937 Herman St., Nashville. Contact [tlawson@tcsw.org](mailto:tlawson@tcsw.org). Register at <http://conta.cc/1IK763k>.
- Aug. 20-21, 1 p.m.-12 p.m., **Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth quarterly meeting**, Andrew Jackson Building, 502 Deaderick St., Nashville. Contact [Natasha.M.Smith@tn.gov](mailto:Natasha.M.Smith@tn.gov).
- Aug. 22, TCSW Summer Spritzer-Memphis**, Youth Villages Operations Centers, 3320 Brother Blvd., Memphis. Contact [tlawson@tcsw.org](mailto:tlawson@tcsw.org). Register at <http://conta.cc/1JUx8j9>.
- Aug. 25, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., UCCCY presents **Early Brain Development and Adverse Childhood Experiences**, Upper Cumberland State Office Building and Regional Health Facility, 1100 England Dr., Cookeville. Contact [John.Rust@tn.gov](mailto:John.Rust@tn.gov) or (931) 646-0955.
- Aug. 27, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., **Council on Children's Mental Health**, Midtown Hills Police Precinct, 1443 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, South, Nashville. Info: (615) 532-3073 or [Melissa.McGee@tn.gov](mailto:Melissa.McGee@tn.gov).
- Sept. 18, MCCY and TriStar present **"Adverse Childhood Experiences and Toxic Stress on Development Conference,"** with Loraine Lucinski, Patti van Eys and Melissa McGee, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. CDT, HCA TriStar Skyline Madison Campus, 500 Hospital Dr., Madison. Contact [Susan.Cope@tn.gov](mailto:Susan.Cope@tn.gov) in August for link to registration information.
- March 8-9, **Children's Advocacy Days**, War Memorial Auditorium. Contact [Richard.Kennedy@tn.gov](mailto:Richard.Kennedy@tn.gov).

## In the News

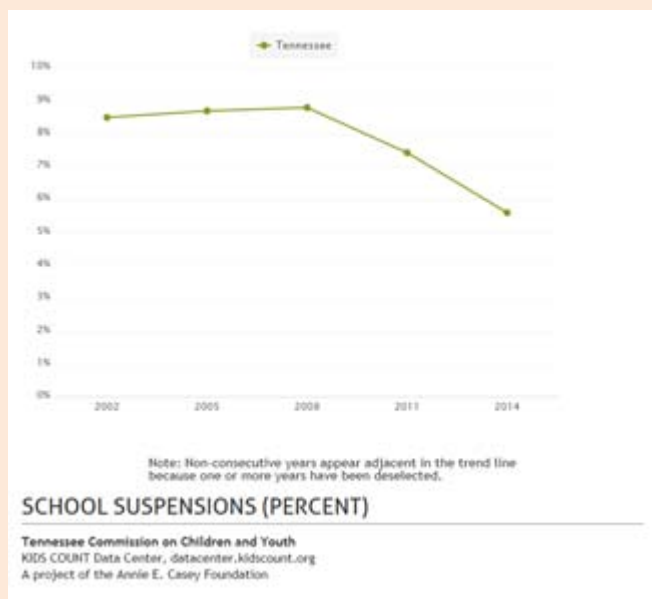
- Memphis Commercial Appeal, **"Norris says state's Kids Count ranking of 36th is 'unacceptable,' "** <http://bit.ly/1JLldkW>.
- WBBJ TV, **"Report: Tenn. ranks 36th for child well-being":** <http://bit.ly/1HS3oAz>.
- WREG, **"Report: More Tennessee children living in poverty, but improvements in other areas,"** <http://bit.ly/1CTLGzu>.
- Murfreesboro Daily News Journal, **"Our View: Efforts to spread prosperity should continue,"** <http://on.dnj.com/1ON5d6y>.

## Research Information

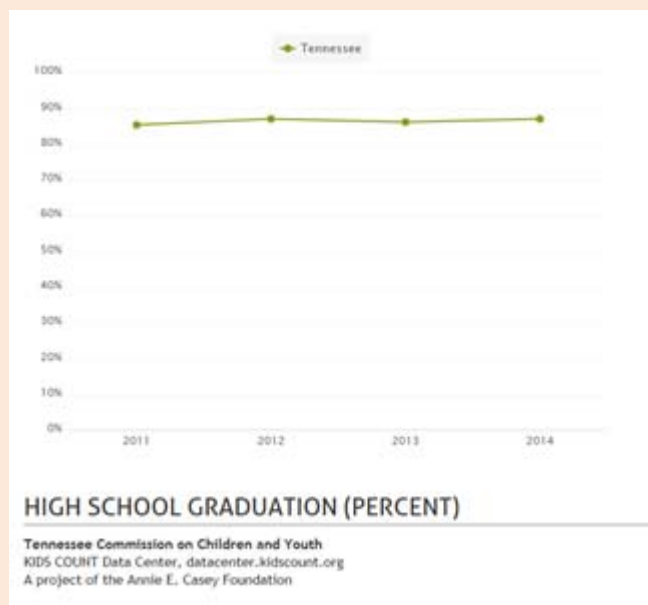
- Carsey School of Public Policy, **"Rates of SNAP Receipt Stabilize or Drop in All Regions for First Time Since Great Recession,"** <http://bit.ly/1DLX9fT>
- Pennsylvania State Eberly College of Science, *PennState Science*, **"Increasing prevalence of autism is due, in part, to changing diagnoses,"** <http://bit.ly/1Mwlb3>.
- Journal of the American Medical Association**, **"Changes in Self-Reported Insurance Coverage, Access to Care, and Health Under the Affordable Care Act,"** <http://bit.ly/1VQe1gy>.

# Tennessee KIDS COUNT Facts

## School Suspensions



## High School Graduation



More data on Tennessee child well-being are available at <http://bit.ly/15alkVu>.

No person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability, or ability to pay, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity operated, funded, or overseen by the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY). It is the intent of TCCY to bind all agencies, organizations, or governmental units operating under its jurisdiction and control to fully comply with and abide by the spirit and intent of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

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