



Advocate

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May Is...

Between the bluster of winter and the doldrums of summer are a few months – not too hot, not too cold, not too crowded with major holidays. Activists have chosen these months to remind people of their issues and encourage action. Among the national May observances of special interest to child advocates are Foster Care Month, Mental Health Awareness Month and Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month.

Foster Care Month

The National Foster Care Month website calls for “a time to recognize that we each can play a part in enhancing the lives of children and youth in foster care.”

As much as we work to prevent abuse, 8,400 Tennessee children were in state custody at the end of 2013. The Department of Children’s Services strives to provide the best possible care for these children in the most appropriate environment. For about two of every three children in custody in 2012, this was a placement in a family setting, including foster families. One of every eight children in care lived with a relative in kinship care.



Foster parent appreciation and recruitment events have been scheduled across the state in May and June. For more information about becoming [Foster/Resource Parent](#) for Tennessee children, please call toll-free 1-877-DCS-KIDS (1-877-327-5437).

During fiscal year 2012-13, more than 1,000 youth aged out of foster care at 18 years old, meaning they entered adulthood without the support of a family. Three-fourths of them were eligible for extended services, and 300 accepted them, a significant increase from fiscal year 2010-11. TCCY’s Youth Transitions Advisory Council (YTAC), staffed by [Steve Petty](#), works to improve services for youth aging out of state custody. The 2013 YTAC report is [online](#).

More extensive [data](#) on out-of-home care in Tennessee are available at the KIDS COUNT Data Center. Foster care appreciation events are scheduled in DCS regions across the state. Other foster care information resources include:

- [Tennessee Department of Children’s Services](#);
- [National Foster Care Month](#);
- [National Foster Parent Association](#).

Mental Health Awareness Month



May 4-10 was National Children's Mental Health Awareness Week. The National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, one of the sponsors of Mental Health Awareness Month, has chosen "Building a Circle of Wellness," another way of stating the goal of creating a system that surrounds children and families with the support they need. Information from the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) is in the agency's newsletter, [Update](#).

The Council on Children's Mental Health, chaired by Commissioner Doug Varney and TCCY's Linda O'Neal and staffed by Dustin Keller, works to encourage family-centered and youth-guided, community-based culturally and linguistically competent services and supports. Access to the Council's most recent [report](#) is available on TCCY's website.

Mental Health Awareness resources:

- [Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services](#);
- Resources to help youth, and their families, with the traumatic transfer from high school to post-secondary education – <http://bit.ly/1itqDYr>;
- Substance and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) [resources](#);
- [The National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health](#);
- National Alliance on Mental Illness [Children and Adolescent Action Center](#).

Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month

Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month provides an opportunity to celebrate success. Although rates continue to be too high, the teen birth rate in Tennessee declined 42% between 1991 and 2010. A pregnancy triggers massive changes in any life, but a teen pregnancy can short circuit a young woman's opportunities and also have a substantial impact on young fathers. Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month is an effort to prevent teen and unplanned pregnancy and, thereby, reduce social problems, including poverty (especially child poverty), child abuse and neglect, father-absence, low-birth weight, school failure and poor preparation for the workforce, according to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. In fact, teen childbearing in the United States costs taxpayers (federal, state, and local) at least \$9.4 billion in 2010, according to an analysis by the National Campaign.



Teen pregnancy prevention resources:

- [The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy](#);
- [Advocacy for Youth](#);
- [Future of Sex Education](#);
- [US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Adolescent Health](#).

Tennessee Ranks	
(Compared to Other States)	
Teen Pregnancy Rate	34
Source: National Campaign	

Thanks to TCCY intern Taylor Pitts for her contributions to this story.

Walk Me Home Enrichment Fund

Research supports the role of [extracurricular activities](#) in improving school achievement and attachment, positive psychosocial health and behavior, and youth development, especially for at-risk youth. These experiences can be especially meaningful for foster youth, but costs are often not covered by stipends resource families receive to cover expenses of raising foster youth. The National Foster Parent Association (NFPA) has created a fund to help pay for band fees, school trips, sports league fees, art and music classes and prom expenses for graduating seniors. The NFPA is a national resource for foster families. More information about the organization and the Walk Me Home fund is available at <http://bit.ly/1miWiNn>.

Other May Observances

- [Teacher Appreciation Month](#);
- [International Day of Families](#);
- [Law Enforcement Appreciation Month](#);
- [National Prevention Week](#), May 18-23;
- [Better Sleep Month](#);
- [National Physical Fitness and Sports Month](#).

Updates

First Lady Crissy Haslam has launched the **First Lady's Update** newsletter to share information related to healthy parenting in support of her [Parents as First Teachers](#) initiative. To subscribe, email Amanda.Kerns@tn.gov or sign up on the First Lady's website at <http://www.tn.gov/firstlady/contact.shtml>.

[Tennessee Court Appointed Special Advocates'](#) statewide organization celebrated 25 years improving the lives of children at its recent conference.



About Us. Sevier County Juvenile Court **Judge Dwight Stokes** (upper left) is nearing the end of his last term as a member of the Commission. He has made invaluable contributions, especially to the agency's efforts to address Disproportionate Minority Contact/Confinement. He will continue to be involved with the DMC Task Force.



TCCY staff gathered for lunch on Administrative Professionals Day (April 23) to honor **Diane Baham**, administrative services assistant III, and new employee, **Sarah Rudd**. Rudd (right) recently joined TCCY as administrative services assistant II.



Sujit Das (lower left) has joined TCCY as data manager. He is part of the KIDS COUNT team and will also assist other TCCY divisions with data issues.

Mark Your Calendar

May 18-24, National Prevention Week dedicated to increasing public awareness of, and action around, substance abuse and mental health issues: <http://1.usa.gov/1jp4zye>.

May 20-22, Safe States Alliance Annual Meeting, Hyatt Regency Atlanta. More information: <http://www.safestates.org/?2014AnnualMeeting>.

May 21-22, Family Matters: An Educational Forum focused on Family-Driven Care, UT Health Services Center Student Alumni Center, Memphis. Pre-registration (required): <http://bit.ly/1srRcQK>.

May 23, 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m., East TN Council on Children and Youth presents Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome: 2014 Overview and Update, Family Justice Center, Knoxville. More info, contact lindsey.cody@tn.gov.

May 23, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Mid-Cumberland Council on Children and Youth Lunch and Learn, "Play Therapy: Entering a Child's World," Mental Health Cooperative, Nashville. Register by May 19 to susan.cope@tn.gov.

May 28, 2:30 p.m., In-Home Tennessee (IHT) Implementation meeting, Youth Villages, Nashville.

May 28-30, 21st Annual National Foster Care Conference: "Footsteps to the Future," Hilton Daytona Beach. More information: <http://www.danielkids.org/page.aspx?pid=443>.

May 29-30, Tennessee Disability MegaConference, Nashville Airport Marriott. Information: <http://bit.ly/1jjNwiv> or (615) 248-5878 ext. 22. Online registrations are no longer available.

June 2-5, When Words Matter: Emerging Issues in Forensic Interviewing, Baltimore, MD. More information: <http://bit.ly/1orbyWj>, rakieffe@gundersenhealth.org or (507) 457-2898.

June 5-6, Neuroscience and Education: The Connection, presented by Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Currey Ingram Academy, Brentwood. Registration fee \$175. **Contact:** holly.mccathren@currey Ingram.org or (615) 507-3180, ext. 258.

June 6, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Disproportionate Minority Contact Summit, Hilton Memphis. Register at <http://bit.ly/1hkKipj>. More information: Craig.Hargrow@tn.gov.

June 8-13, TWRA/TWRF TN Outdoors Youth Summit (TOYS), Montgomery Co. TWRA complex. Fee \$300/student, scholarships available. Registration: <http://bit.ly/1jm5vEb> Info: (931) 284-2057 or jereme.odom@tn.gov.

June 10, 6:30-8:30 p.m., **Darkness to Light: Stewards of Children**, South College, West Campus, Knoxville.
Contact Ambler Brown (865) 986-1505 or abrown@tncac.org.

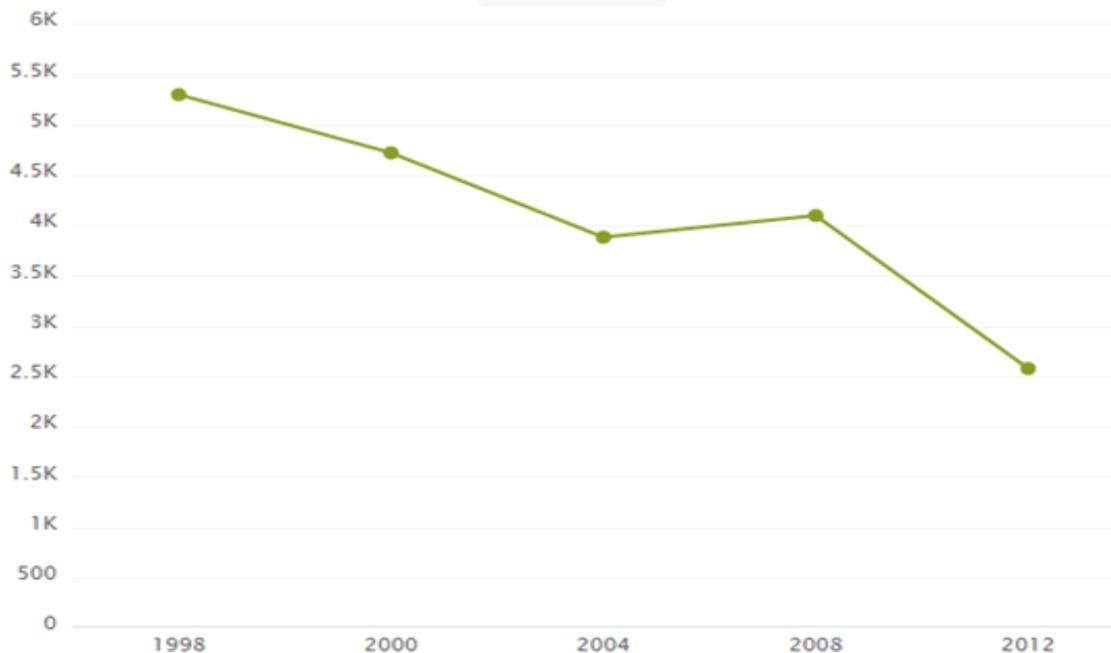
In the News

The (Nashville)Tennessean, “TN examines child deaths with more care,” <http://tnne.ws/1qiV6xA> (subscription).
The (Memphis) Commercial Appeal, “Troubled youngster turns corner for good in North Memphis,” about 2014 Youth Excellence Award winner Edward Johnson, <http://bit.ly/1uHGjfl> (subscription).

Research Information

Generations United/Alliance for Children and Families, *Intergenerational Family Connections: The Relationships that Support a Strong America*, <http://bit.ly/1nK55aW>.
National Research Council, *The Growth of Incarceration in the United States: Exploring Causes and Consequences* <http://bit.ly/1sqqAhc>.

Teen Pregnancy



Note: Non-consecutive years appear adjacent in the trend line because one or more years have been deselected.

TEEN PREGNANCY (NUMBER)

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

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